

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ADMINISTRATIVE/CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL POLICY

SUBJECT: Progressive Discipline Policy
BOARD OF TRUSTEE APPROVAL: 01/22/2025

Page 1 of 3
EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/23/2025

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify guidelines for employee conduct and to outline appropriate disciplinary steps.

Employment with Highland Community College is “at will,” which means it is subject to termination by either Highland Community College or the employee at any time, for any reason. Nothing in this policy provides any contractual rights regarding employee discipline or counseling, nor should anything in this policy be read or construed as modifying or altering the employment-at-will relationship between Highland Community College and its employees.

Nothing in this policy is intended to, nor should be construed to limit or interfere with employee rights as set forth under all applicable provisions of the National Labor Relations Act, including Section 7 and 8(a)(1) rights to organize and engage in protected, concerted activities regarding the terms and conditions of employment.

Responsibilities of Employees

It is the duty and the responsibility of every Highland Community College employee to be aware of and to abide by existing policies and work rules.

It is also the responsibility of employees to perform their duties to the best of their ability and to the standards set forth in their job descriptions or as otherwise established. Employees are encouraged to take advantage of all learning opportunities available and to request additional instruction when needed.

Responsibilities of Supervisors, Managers and Directors

The immediate supervisor, manager or director should approach corrective measures in an objective manner. If the employee’s performance of assigned tasks is an issue, the supervisor, manager or director should confirm that proper instructions, appropriate orientation and adequate training have been given and that the employee is aware of job expectations. Both single incidents and patterns of poor performance should be of concern.

If misconduct is the issue, the supervisor, manager or director should take steps to ensure that the employee is aware of the College’s policies and regulations regarding employee conduct.

If, in either case, appropriate instruction or information was not communicated, the supervisor, manager or director should immediately develop a plan for delivering such instruction or information and should review the content with the employee.

Progressive Discipline Process

Highland Community College supports the use of progressive discipline to address issues such as poor work performance or misconduct to encourage employees to become more productive workers and to adapt their behavior to College standards and expectations. Generally, a supervisor gives a warning to an employee to explain behavior that the supervisor has found unacceptable. There are two types of warnings: verbal and written.

A verbal warning occurs when a supervisor verbally counsels an employee about an issue of concern. A written record of the discussion, noting the date, event and recommended action, is placed in the employee's personnel file for future reference.

A written warning is used for behavior or performance that a supervisor considers serious or when a verbal warning has not helped change unacceptable behavior or performance. The supervisor, in consultation with human resources (HR), may place the employee on a performance improvement plan (PIP) not to exceed 90 days. Within this time period, the employee must demonstrate a willingness and ability to meet and maintain the conduct and work requirements specified by the supervisor and the organization. The supervisor and employee should meet regularly to assess the progress of the PIP. If the employee has met the goals and expectations described in the PIP, the supervisor will document that he or she has successfully completed the PIP. If established goals are not met, dismissal may occur.

Highland Community College reserves the right to administer appropriate disciplinary action as needed. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Employee Conduct That Can Result in Disciplinary Action

Highland Community College has established general guidelines to govern the conduct of its employees. No list of rules can include all instances of conduct that can result in discipline, and the list of examples below is not exhaustive. Furthermore, sound judgment and common sense should prevail.

Examples of employee conduct that would lead to discipline and the usual course of disciplinary action have been separated into groups according to the usual severity and impact of the infraction. Violations may be handled differently depending on the group they are in and the specific circumstances. Highland Community College reserves the right to determine the appropriate level of discipline for any performance or conduct issues, including oral and written warnings, suspension with or without pay, demotion, and discharge.

Group 1

Disciplinary process:

1st offense: Documented verbal warning.

2nd offense: Documented written warning.

3rd offense: Three-day suspension.

4th offense: Termination of employment.

Examples:

- Failing to follow practices as needed for the specific job assignment.
- Contributing to unsafe conditions.
- Loitering or loafing while on duty.
- Disregarding the organization's dress code.

- Damaging or using organization-owned equipment without authorization.
- Abusing lunch and break periods.
- Violating other rules or policies not specifically listed.

Group 2

Disciplinary process:

1st offense: Written warning.

2nd offense: Suspension.

3rd offense: Termination.

Examples:

1. Failing to report injuries or damage to or an accident involving College equipment.
2. Violating any safety rule.
3. Acting negligently.
4. Engaging in horseplay that results in personal injury or equipment damage.
5. Engaging in vulgar or abusive language or conduct toward others.
6. Using facility communication systems in violation of College policy.
7. Using excessively abusive, threatening or obscene language.
8. Being absent or tardy or leaving early without notification or permission.
9. Not following department guidelines concerning notification of an absence.

Group 3

Disciplinary process:

1st offense: Dismissal.

Dismissal is the immediate termination of an employee for a serious breach of responsibility, unsatisfactory performance or misconduct. A supervisor or department head may suggest dismissal options with the HR department.

Examples:

1. Being absent for three or more days without notification or permission (also referred to as a voluntary quit or job abandonment).
2. Physically fighting or threatening violence in the workplace.
3. Demonstrating insubordination.
4. Dishonesty, including deception, fraud, lying, cheating or theft.
5. Violating timecard procedures.
6. Sabotaging the facility, grounds or equipment of Highland Community College.
7. Falsifying College records, such as employment applications and timecards, in any way.
8. Possessing, being under the influence of or drinking intoxicants on the job.
9. Sleeping while on duty.
10. Concealing defective work.
11. Disclosing Social Security numbers or other confidential information.
12. Soliciting gifts or tips from business-related contracts.
13. Using the facility's computer systems, including accessing confidential computer files and data, without authorization.
14. Demonstrating gross misconduct or other serious violations of Highland Community College policies or procedures.
15. Failing to comply with licensure and certification requirements.