

'Coaching & Counseling Session Checklist'

(Based on OPM and DOI Performance and Conduct Checklists and Policy)

Before the Session:

- Analyze the facts of the issue and decide if it is a performance or conduct issue. For guidance, refer to the "Performance & Conduct Determination Sheet". You may also need to review DOI regulations governing performance and conduct.
- Although this session may only involve oral counseling and is not serious enough for a written warning, consider contacting your Bureau HR Office. You may also want them to review the Performance Standards to ensure there are no problems.
- Find out what guidance the employee has been given on performance or conduct as he/she may not be clear on standards or expectations.
- If the Critical Elements, Performance Standards or Standards of Conduct may need some clarification to the employee, write notes as to how you will clarify.
- If you have operating manuals, guides or tools, take a look at them to see how they could be used to help the employee improve performance. If it is a conduct issue, get clear on the relative Standard of Conduct.
- Be clear on your intentions in the session. Your goal is to change behavior not to punish. Prepare to go into the session as a "partner" with the employee with the mutual purpose and goal of improved performance and conduct.
- Write out a general script and practice what you will say. Make sure you can explain Performance Elements and Standards so they are specific, clear, measurable and realistic.
- If this is an employee who normally doesn't want specific details, still be prepared to provide specific facts and examples as to the purpose of the session.
- Try not to have the conversation right before a weekend so that the employee has to have anxiety over this for several days.
- Allow adequate time for your comments and feedback from the employee. To ensure confidentiality, have the meeting in a private location and also so you won't be interrupted.

Conducting the Session:

- Set a relaxed tone up front with light conversation. Do not sit behind a desk but instead, sit so that both of you are equal partners in the conversation.
- Set and maintain a constructive tone by being calm, professional and focused.
- Begin with positive feedback before describing the issue. (Optional and will be dependent on the employee.)
- Objectively describe the situation(s) and behavior(s) that is/are causing you to have this session. Stick to the facts and be very specific.
- Describe the nexus or related impact to the “efficiency of your organization”. In other words, how are the actions affecting performance expectations or standards of workplace conduct?
- Optional: Ask employee for self evaluation
- Listen actively to the employee. Clarify and paraphrase what is said. Seek cooperation, not confrontation.
- State the specific desired behavior or conduct you are looking for.
- Get confirmation from the employee at critical times in the session. Do not proceed too far without this agreement.
- Ask employee if there is anything you are doing as the supervisor that is a barrier to expected performance or conduct.
- Develop a plan with the employee and elicit ways to improve performance or conduct. This includes identifying any other barriers.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, end on a positive note by emphasizing that improving the employee’s performance or conduct is a mutual goal for the employee and the organization. Restate your confidence in them.
- If this is a first time oral coaching, use your discretion as to writing this up and putting it in the “Supervisory Drop File”. A second or third oral counseling session however, should warrant a note to file or signed commitment from the employee to improve.

After the Session:

- Follow up with an encouraging email thanking the person for their time and stating your confidence in their abilities and effort to improve performance or change conduct.
- Follow up with the employee at appropriate times with coaching and encouragement for change in behaviors and improvements.