




PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

General Order Number: 11-09	Effective Date: March 21, 2025
Division: Personnel Management	
Chapter: Performance Improvement Plan	
By Order of the County Fire Chief: Tiffany D. Green 	Prior Revision: January 2010

POLICY

This General Order establishes the policy and procedures for creating a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for an employee/member who has demonstrated a need for improvement in any area of their performance while conducting their duties. A Performance Improvement Plan is a tool to allow a member with performance deficiencies to succeed with clearly defined expectations. It may be used to address failures to meet specific job performance requirements (JPRs) or to correct conduct or behavior-related concerns.

SCOPE

This General Order establishes guidelines for implementing a PIP to address underperformance among Department Sworn, Civilian, and Volunteer members.

DEFINITIONS

EAP/VAP – Employee/Volunteer Assistance Program that provides counseling services for the employee.

Employee/Member – A subordinate member who receives direct supervision from another employee/member.

Performance Assessment Form (PAF) PGC Form # 2247 – A document prepared by a supervisor that documents the employee's current performance, the actions taken to improve the employee's performance, supervisor recommendations, and a status report on any performance progress by the affected employee.

Position Descriptions – Essential function category assigned to specific positions within the Department.

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – A formal document citing recurring performance issues. The document must include SMART objectives and a timeline that an employee must achieve to regain satisfactory standing within the Department.

Past Performance Appraisal (PPA) – Performance evaluation for employee completed by immediate supervisor annually, during the employee's month of hire.

Performance Related Violation – As defined by the Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 16, Personnel Law, Section 16-194.



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Performance Standards – Standards necessary for an employee to gain a satisfactory performance rating on the annual PPA. Standards are located as subsections under each essential function on the employee job description (PGC Form # 544) i.e., A1., A2., A.3, etc.

S.M.A.R.T. Objectives – Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound objectives. These can be used to provide benchmarks to improve an employee/member's performance. Supervisors and employees/members should agree upon the objectives to ensure a mutual commitment to them.

PROCEDURES/RESPONSIBILITIES

I. General Provisions

A PIP is not a disciplinary action. Failure to successfully complete the PIP may result in an unsatisfactory PPA subject to the disciplinary process, including formal charges and potentially demotion or termination of employment or affiliation with the Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department. Supervisors must follow this order and identify, address and correct performance deficiencies. All PIPs will be reviewed by the Human Resources Office, the Operational Performance Office, and the appropriate Deputy Fire Chief or their designee to ensure it is aligned with the appropriate job description and to ensure fairness and equity of the plan.

A. Performance-Related Violations

1. Performance-related violations occur when a member's performance has become “less than satisfactory” concerning executing any or all of the duties, tasks, and/or responsibilities outlined in their position description.
2. Where the member's actions, inactions, and/or attitudes constitute a representative course of conduct characterized by a general inability, incapability, and/or unwillingness on the part of the employee to maintain a minimum standard of performance with respect to the quality and/or quantity of any or all of the duties, tasks, and/or responsibilities properly assigned to the employee; or
3. Where the member unjustifiably fails to carry out a particular work assignment that was within the scope of the duties, tasks, and/or responsibilities adequately assigned to the member; or
4. Where the member loses or fails to maintain any of the requirements or standards outlined in the qualification requirements statement, as defined in Section 16-102 (a)(39), applicable to the employee's position.

B. Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

1. A PIP may be warranted for the following Operational Performance issues such as:
 - a. An employee/member's repeatedly failing benchmarks applicable to the member's Position Description (544), or other applicable policy, for example, an Intern or Field Training Officer Guide.



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- b. A sworn employee/member's failure to complete mandatory training in Probationary Firefighter Study Course.
 - c. Failure to follow and execute General Orders/Personnel Law/Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) law.
 - d. Pattern or trends in any delayed responses or service.
 - e. Driving privileges revoked due to excessive accidents/reckless operations.
 - f. Operational removals for items not specifically noted.
 - g. Repeated errors in routine tasks.
 - h. Inability to perform necessary aspects of the job.
 - i. Routinely failing to follow direction/instruction given by the supervisor.
 2. A PIP for Non-Operational issues may include but not be limited to:
 - a. Attendance issues.
 - b. Report writing/completion trends.
 - c. Failed physical or failure to meet Fit for Duty standards.
 - d. Conduct related issues that may coincide with discipline.
 - e. Performance-related issues that may hinder a member's overall Employee Annual Performance Appraisal rating.
- C. When to Initiate a Performance Improvement Plan
 1. A PIP should be initiated by an immediate supervisor when any of the following occurs:
 - a. When an employee/member performs below the "Satisfactory" level for a mid-point or annual performance evaluation.
 - b. When a sworn member/employee, due to inaction or wrong actions, endangers their life or another person's life.
 - c. An employee/member who is currently performing at or above the "Satisfactory" level for the annual performance evaluation but begins to demonstrate performance-related deficiencies that, if not corrected, will result in an overall "Needs Improvement" on the annual Past Performance Assessment (PPA).
 2. A PIP would be indicated to raise the employee/member's performance in the areas of concern so the employee may maintain an overall "Satisfactory" rating.
 - a. When an employee/member is performing below the "Satisfactory" level for the Probationary Firefighter Study Course, Paramedic Internship process, or any other program that will result in a promotion for the employee.
 - b. Any Operational removal from service beyond the investigation period
 - c. Operational removal can occur at the discretion of the Duty Chief or Emergency Services Command Deputy Fire Chief to investigate and gather facts around an incident.
 - (1) If the investigation finds that the employee/member needs remedial training, the employee may remain operationally restricted until a PIP is formed and completed.



II. Immediate Supervisors Responsibilities

A. Supervisor Review and Initiation

1. The immediate Supervisor **MUST** review job and performance expectations with all subordinates annually.
2. The supervisor must have consistent and fair written documentation of failures of satisfactory performance and any training or other efforts made in response to mitigate the issue(s) and shall use the Performance Assessment Form #2247 to document all portions of the PIP process.
3. Notify the employee, verbally and in writing, of unsatisfactory performance and that a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is needed.
4. Notification of unsatisfactory performance must be documented in a single, or a collection of multiple Performance Assessment Form(s) (PAFs).
5. Unsatisfactory performance must be reflected in the employee's Past Performance Appraisal (PPA).

B. Formal Creation of the PIP

1. The supervisor will communicate with the member's/employee's immediate supervisor, the Chain of Command, the Operational Performance Office (OPO), if applicable, and the Fire/EMS Department Office of Human Resources (HR) to discuss the PIP, including specific unsatisfactory performance events, a specific plan to train and improve performance, and a timetable for improvement.
2. The Deputy Chief/Civilian Manager or his or her designee must approve of the Performance Improvement Plan.
3. The Operational Performance Office (OPO) or the Civilian Manager will maintain records of and track timelines created in the PIP.
4. The Fire/EMS Department Human Resources (HR) Office will be consulted to ensure equity, timeliness, fairness, and the PIP's applicability to the employee's 544 and operational responsibilities.

C. Execution of the Performance Improvement Plan

1. Once the PIP has been approved, the employee's immediate supervisor will then present the plan to the employee and begin execution of the PIP.
2. Based upon the timelines established in the PIP, a PAF will be completed, at minimum, every 30 days tracking the employee's training and progress and sent to the Fire/EMS Department Human Resources Office and the Operational Performance Office for documentation, copying the Chain of Command for awareness.
3. Supervisors should consider using the following resources to assist the employee during the Performance Improvement Plan process:
 - f. Training and Leadership Academy
 - g. Operational Performance Office
 - h. Fire/EMS Department Human Resources Office
 - i. Peer Support/EAP
 - j. Establishment of a mentor for the employee



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III. Subordinate/Member Responsibilities

- A. Each member is responsible for the following:
 - 1. Participate in the job expectation meeting with the immediate supervisor.
 - 2. Review Position Description (Form 544).
 - 3. Review Employee's recent Past Performance Appraisal.
 - 4. Review the employee's unsatisfactory events that lead to the necessity of the Performance Improvement Plan.
 - 5. Participate in the development of the Performance Improvement Plan and timeline.
 - 6. Identify any barriers that have led to unsatisfactory performance.
 - 7. Offer insight into personal learning preferences.
 - 8. Provide input during the PIP development meeting.
 - 9. Participate in actions required as listed in the Performance Improvement Plan.

IV. Assistant/Deputy Fire Chief Responsibilities

- A. Each Assistant / Deputy Fire Chief, as applicable, is responsible for the following:
 - 1. Work with the employee's supervisor to review the employee's performance.
 - 2. Assist with the development and/or review of the Performance Improvement Plan.
 - 3. Provide input and guidance to the immediate supervisor as necessary.
 - 4. Should meet with employee every 30 days during timeline established in Performance Improvement Plan to discuss progress.

V. Submit PIP to HR Manager/Office for Review

- A. The Human Resources Office is responsible for the following:
 - 1. Monitor the progress of the Performance Improvement Plan with the immediate supervisor.
 - 2. Provide guidance to the supervisor to ensure equity, timeliness, fairness, and the PIP's applicability to the employee's 544 and operational responsibilities.
 - 3. The employee's personnel file should contain a copy of the performance improvement plan for up to three (3) years, including all Performance Assessment Forms (PAF) completed before and during PIP.
 - 4. Work with employees and supervisors during the established timeline on the Performance Improvement Plan.
 - 5. Human Resources may grant an extension to the PIP at the request of the supervisor or the employee.
 - 6. Work with the Office of the Fire Chief and Office of Law to create a route of demotion or termination if the Performance Improvement Plan fails to show improvement to a satisfactory level, at minimum, during the established timeline on the PIP.



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REFERENCES

Personnel Law Section 16-194
General Order 11-03, Career Disciplinary Process
General Order 11-24, Volunteer Disciplinary Process
Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 16 Personnel Law
PGFD/EMS Probationary Firefighter Study Course
Job Description, PGC Form #544
Past Performance Appraisal (PPA), PGC Form #854

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1 - PGC Performance Assessment Form # 2247

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

- A. ☐ Probationary Midpoint (Mandatory)
B. ☒ Periodic Performance Assessment (Optional) **90-day Follow-up**
C. ☐ Rating Justification (Mandatory for Above or Below Satisfactory Appraisals)

NAME _____

ASSESSMENT PERIOD _____ DEPT. Fire/EMS Department

CLASS TITLE/GRADE _____

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: (Supervisor must refer to appropriate duties/tasks described in employee's position description which constitute the basis for this assessment.)

SAMPLE**SAMPLE****SAMPLE****SAMPLE****SAMPLE**

Fire Fighter Smith was given a needs improvement for "Fulfills Employment Requirements" for being above the County standard for height in proportion to weight. Fire Fighter Smith has been engaged in a regular physical fitness program and now meets the required standards. .

(Use Additional Sheets If Necessary)

SUPERVISOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Continue to maintain or increase the levels of participation in physical fitness related activities.
2. Continue to adhere to a dietary guideline to maintain weight.

NOTE: An employee may submit written comments to be attached to this form if received within five working days of its issuance.

Supervisor's Signature_____
Date_____
Employee's Signature_____
Date