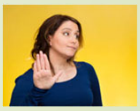
Difficult & Challenging Employees



Martha Silverthorn
Tri-Creek school Corporation
Director of Food & Nutrition Services

1

We All Have Them . . . They May Be Sitting Next To You!

- This Session will not INSTANTLY Fix All Your Employee Issues!
- If you are NEW to being a Supervisor – Employee Challenges will be part of your job!
- If you have more than ONE employee – Employee Challenges will be part of your job!

- I will share my best practices and personal stories.
- We can learn from each other!
- Conference is all about networking!

2

Where It All Begins! How to Avoid Problems?

Do you know the ❤ of your Department?

- Do you know the names of your employees?
- Do you know anything about your employees? They have a story!
- Do they feel you care? Do you ask them pointed questions when visiting a kitchen?
- Are always finding "something wrong" when you visit your kitchens?
- If not your strength. . .find someone on your staff that can help you.
- Do you know the strengths and weaknesses of your employees. . .

example: Trisha needs to hear praise about what she does daily. . .

Mary needs a smile . . .Tonya needs me to ask how her family is doing. . .

3

Where It All Begins! How to Avoid Problems?

Do you know the ❤ of your Department?

Fun incentives build Morale

- Each kitchen - employee promotions such as a bulletin board asking each employee to bring in a baby picture. . .everyone guesses who is who.
- Kindness Bulletin Boards: "Catch someone being kind – write it on a kindness ticket and post on the bulletin board"
- Birthday Cards for Employees
- Coffee Break – put all employees names in a hat. . .draw a name once a month and go work for that employee to give them an "Extra Coffee Break"

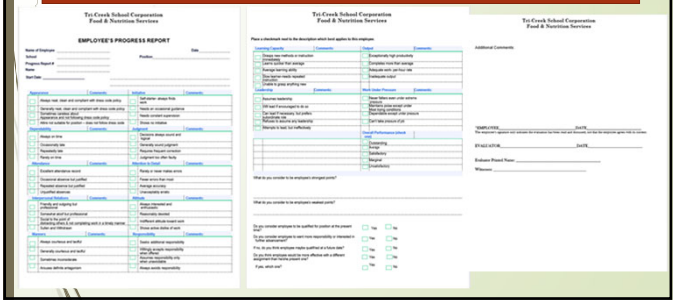
4

Where It All Begins! How to Avoid Problems?

- **Hire Slow. . .Fire Fast!**
  The best advice I have ever been given. . .
  Not always practical in schools. . .
- **Who is hiring the Food Service Staff?**
  You know what kind of personality and experience/knowledge is needed for the job.
  You should be doing the hiring!
- Talk to HR: Is there a probationary period policy and probationary evaluations and FOLLOW THROUGH!

5

Progress Reports (2 Week/1 Month/ 3 Month)


Tri-Creek School Corporation
Food & Nutrition Services

EMPLOYEE'S PROGRESS REPORT

Tri-Creek School Corporation
Food & Nutrition Services

Tri-Creek School Corporation
Food & Nutrition Services

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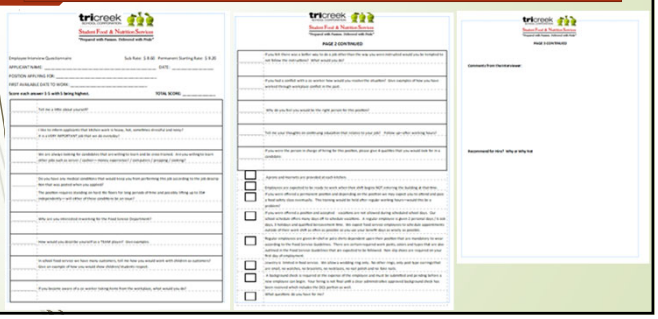
Where It All Begins! How to Avoid Problems?

Interview Process – Where it All Begins

- Who is doing the Interviewing?
- When possible more than one person interviewing.
- Do you ask questions relative to working for the Food Service Department?
- Are you listening to their answers and making eye contact to read between the lines of their answers?
- Calling references?
- Where best to put this persons personality? Each school kitchen has it's own personality based on the personality make up of the current staff members.

7

Interview Questions



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How to Avoid Problems?

Clear Expectations

- Have you given CLEAR expectations?
  Job duties/Job description
  *make sure you are clear that **"other duties may be assigned"**
  How are you communicating expectations? "Be Kindergarten Clear"
- Don't expect more from your employees if you have NOT taken the time to be clear and thorough with your Expectations.
- Time MUST be invested in employees to avoid future problems!

"High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectation. ~Charles Kettering

"Assuming is the root of all disappointments." ~Reginel Reyes

9

How to Avoid Problems?

Training & Orientation

- Do you just throw them to the sharks?
- Offering Training to help be successful?
- Manager New Employee Success List?

Other Ways to Provide Opportunities for Success

- Job Shadowing for a couple days for them to be comfortable?
- Checking in with new employees?
- How is it going? Is there anything I can clarify or help with?
- Checking with managers on their progress? IDEA: Checklist for Success
- Document areas that need improvement and have a one on one

10

SUCCESS FORM

Food Service Dept Guidelines				
Food Service Website for Employees				
District Website				
CSU Requirements *give website list of Free Training Opportunities				
SPSPac Calendar				
Reimbursable Meal Training				
	2 Week	1 Month	3 Month	
Progress Reports Date & Sign				

New Employee SUCCESS Form

Date: _____

Employee Name: _____ School _____

Description	Date Completed	Supervisor	Follow Up/Initials	Follow Up/Initials
Locker				
Time Clock Instructions *Rules & Policies				
Tour of Kitchen				
Instructions on Door to Enter				
Key Fob				
Chain of Command - Manager is the 1st stop				
Uniform Inspection				
Dress Code Nails Jewelry Shoes Pants				
Hair Nets/ Visor/ Hair				
Breaks/Meals				
Washing Hands Properly - Hand Sink Rules				
Glove Usage				
Safety of Disposals				
Safety of Blades				
Safety of Knives				
Safety of Can Opener & Opened Cans/Lids				
Safety of Walk in Coolers & Freezers - How to Get Out				
Be Smart Use A Cart				
Cleaning Products				
Ian/Safe "Small" Book				
Email Access				
Skyward Personnel Time Off				
Time Off - How? When? Text or Call				
Important Phone Numbers: Martha/Julie/Manager				
Weather Days Cancelled / 2 Hour Delays				
Support District Handbook				

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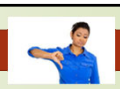
"The Complainer/Negative Nelly"



A chronic complainer can make for a miserable workplace.
They seem to thrive on the negative work-talk and are like moths to light with anyone who will listen.

Define results and expectations: Set clear standards and expectations – AT THE TIME OF EMPLOYMENT!

Agreeing with him or her is rarely the right approach.

- Making a direct appeal for support is only playing into this character's game. By seeking approval this fuels the problem as the complainer now is able to brag to others that his/her approval was actively requested.

Ignoring the issue and allowing the steady beat of complaints to background noise.

- Ignoring or rationalizing the behavior is ignoring the growing damage from the steady drip of complaints.
- Instead of rationalizing or excusing the behavior, focus on eliminating it.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS for workplace performance and engagement:

- Often chronic complainers emerge in environments where standards of performance and behavior are poorly defined and where accountability is NOT enforced.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY is determined proactively, BEFORE THE FACT, not REACTIVELY, AFTER THE FACT.**

*When a mistake is made, the response is not about finger pointing and excuses – it is about solving the problem and learning from mistakes.

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"The Complainer/Negative Nelly"

- Make sure ALL employees are aware of and understand what results the organization is trying to achieve and what the expectations are for ALL employees.
- It is our responsibility to work with employees to overcome barriers so they can be successful. Have you done everything in your power to help them be successful?
- Be Open to Feedback and Problem Solving – It is important that we listen. Is there a legitimate complaint that we need to address?
- Consequences and Accountability – ultimately there should be a culture of accountability and consequences for poor performance.
- Don't put complainers together if possible!
- Chronic complainers often survive and thrive in environments where supervisors tend to operate at a distance and struggle to gain traction when they are not present and involved.

DOCUMENT. . .DOCUMENT. . .DOCUMENT

13

Yep. . .I really can't make this stuff up!

Disgruntled "Fired" Employee

14

"The Gossip"

When Chitchat Becomes Gossip . . .

How to tell the difference:

When light conversation and idle chitchat elevates to negative, inflammatory and embarrassing to the person being spoken of, this has now ventured into gossip terrain.

- Does the chitchat rejoice in the misfortune of others? Yep, gossip.
- Does it have a negative emotional charge or seem to perpetuate conflict or negative? Yep, gossip.
- Does it hurt or damage the one being spoke of? Would you say it in front of this person's face? Gossip.
- Is it an unsubstantiated rumor about another employee's work situation (a promotion or demotion)? Uh-huh, gossip!

These are most likely disgruntled workers who didn't get something their way, disagreed with a change of direction and are now holding grudges, or didn't get that promotion they felt entitled to.

They are quick to gossip, and even quicker to hammer leadership for "dumb decisions." They spread their

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"The Gossip"

Some Negative Consequences of workplace gossip include:

- Gradual decline of trust and morale.
- Work productivity goes down because people are emotionally caught up in the drama like teenage kids.
- Watch for hush-hush chatter in corners where disgruntled employees will gossip or infected employees will stop by to get the latest, thus wasting precious company time.
- Anxiety and tension are high as rumors circulate and people walk on eggshells without knowing what is and isn't fact.
- Divisiveness as people take sides.
- Unexpected turnover and loss of good talent who left due to the toxic work environment.

How to Get Rid of Gossip

1. Enact 'zero-tolerance' policies on workplace gossip. Employees should face the risk of disciplinary action or even termination. COMMUNICATE A ZERO TOLERANCE WORK PLACE!
2. Set an Example – Make sure Managers/Supervisors are setting an example.
3. Reinforce a work environment that addresses the issue and promotes a positive culture.

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"The Gossip"

How to Get Rid of Gossip conti.

4. Make sure your Managers know to inform you if there is a growing gossip issue. And then follow through with action to stop it.
5. Educate your team on the negative consequences of gossip.
6. Encourage Positive Gossip: The flipside of negative gossip is to create a culture where people share positive stories about work, customers, & life. An example would be sharing about an employee that went above and beyond in serving a customer. Positive talk not negative will reinforce the cultural values & behaviors you want to promote.
7. Do Not Give Attention to the Gossiper – Gossipmongers thrive on attention and will prey on open and inviting ears.
8. Address the perpetrators – Stand up to the perpetrators and address the behavior. Do not allow this employee to deflect blame on others.

YOU MUST ADDRESS IT HEAD ON!

17

"The Drama Queen"

The "Drama Queen" easily sucks others into their over-dramatic circle.

How to Deal with a Drama Queen:

1. Avoid asking a drama queen how they are feeling/doing.
   Drama Queens are dramatic by nature and need an audience. This invites a drama queen to vent or complain.
   Try to minimize interactions that encourage sharing.
   Be polite but avoid small talk. Say "Good Morning" but do not follow up with "How are you doing?"
2. Recognize Exaggerated Language
   Drama Queens tend to use exaggerated language, blowing small matters out of proportion.
   For example, they may say things like, "My boss hates me, so I'm going to get fired."
   They may lash out at your when they are feeling dramatic, saying things like, "You never listen to me anyway."
   This is a Drama Queens way of blaming problems on someone else rather than their own choices.
   They probably made a poor choice at work and, while they were reprimanded, they will not be fired. Accusing you is a way to distract themselves from a negative situation.

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"The Drama Queen"

How to Deal with a Drama Queen:

3. Stick to the FACTS.

When speaking to the Drama Queen they will over exaggerate the circumstances – remind them you need just the 'facts'.

4. Do NOT Reward Negative Behavior.

Drama Queens often act out for attention.
They often act more upset or invested in a situation than they actually are.
Engaging with this behavior only rewards it.
Even negative reactions are feeding to the need for attention.
Disengage when they act out. Take a few deep breaths and remind yourself you don't have to react to bad behavior.

The Drama Queen wants to be the center of attention. Do not respond – simply ignore – they will get the message.

Don't be afraid to give honest feedback. Just simply say that it's not your business.

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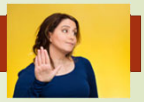
"The I Don't Like Change"



- Resistance to Change is a natural reaction.
- Change is uncomfortable and requires new ways of thinking and doing.
- People have trouble developing a vision of what life will look like on the other side of a change.
- People tend to cling to the known rather than embrace the unknown.

Understanding that change:

Creates Anxiety and Uncertainty
Employees lose their sense of security. They prefer the status quo.
The range of reactions, when change is introduced is unpredictable.

No employee is left unaffected by most changes. Even the most cooperative, supportive employees may experience resistance.

Resistance to change often happens when change is introduced too quickly.

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"The I Don't Like Change"

Your Expectations to Change:

Know that the employees reaction is a normal.
Introduce change with a positive attitude.
Over time support will happen.

Your thinking and approach can affect the degree of resistance.

Communication & Input Reduce Resistance

When possible ask for input. When employees feel they have a voice there may be less resistance.
Ultimately, when change is going to happen give clear information about the change in advance. Share the "why" and "how" this will affect the department.
Have a time line for implementation.
**Don't just "spring" change on employees. . .this will cause resistance even with the most positive team members.

Make clear that the expectation is that everyone is expected to be positive and work together for the success of the change.

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Dealing with Issues

- Don't sweep issues under the rug. . .it will come back to bite you. . . tenfold.
- Deal with Issues and challenges Swiftly and Timely.
- Sometimes it is best to sleep on an issue rather than to say or do something you will regret.
- Yes it is uncomfortable but it can't be avoided.

22

Document. . .Document. . .Document

Documenting is key to all employee issues!

Documenting will save you! *Unemployment and progressive discipline.

Document conversations with Managers about employees.

Have Managers keep a calendar and write on the calendar when they have had a conversation with an employee. Key when it turns to a corrective action plan or a write up.

Know your Districts Corrective Action/Discipline Procedures.

If you have a Union – Know the Contract! Don't be afraid to deal with issues. The contract is your tool and friend!

Document. . .Document. . .Document

23

Corrective Action

Tri-Creek School Corporation
Student Food & Nutrition Services

Corrective Action

Date: _____ Supervisor: _____

School: _____ Employee(s): _____

Area of Concern and Corrective Action:

(Corrective Action to be Taken immediately)

Follow Up Date: _____ Time: _____

Employee(s) Signature: _____

Your signature is receipt that you were given this document and it was explained to you fully. It does not mean that you agree, only that it was given to you and explained. This document will be retained in your employee file.

Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Area of Concern:
Important to explain this thoroughly and clearly.

Corrective Action to be Taken:
What are the employees expectations. . . clearly give written expectations.

Use Employee Handbook/Guidelines whenever possible to reference the issue.

Make sure you go over this in person and have a witness.

Give them the opportunity to ask questions BUT do not allow them to deflect blame to anyone else.

Use words like "we want you to be successful".

Make sure you schedule a follow up.

24

Write Ups (Not Easy But Necessary)

- Don't put them off.
- A necessary evil of the job!
- Take time (if you can depending on situation) to write it. . .then leave it. . .come back, review and make changes. *Never act in anger!
- Reference documentations regarding prior verbal conversations. . . this is why we document those conversations.
- Write out what you plan to say and stick to it! Be in charge of the conversation not the employee! Do not let them deflect blame!
- Make sure you are very very clear! In what the issue is and what your expectations are.
- Make sure they know they CANNOT retaliate in any way.
- Always have a witness! *Enlist someone from CO HR if necessary. If part of a Union make sure you have offered a Union representative to be present.

25

NOTICE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION

EMPLOYEE NAME: _____ DATE OF NOTICE: _____

SUPERVISOR NAME: _____ JOB POSITION: _____

TYPE OF WARNING: ☒ WRITTEN WARNING ☐ FINAL WRITTEN WARNING ☐ TERMINATION

TYPE OF PROBLEM OR VIOLATION:

☐ INSUBORDINATION ☐ QUANTITY OF WORK ☒ POOR ATTITUDE ☐ DRESS CODE VIOLATIONS

☒ UNPROFESSIONAL, DISRESPECTFUL & INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR IN WORKPLACE

Food Service Department Guidelines:

Professional Conduct, page 7: Employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner at all times.

Professional Conduct and Customer Service

Employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner at all times. All students, parents and staff should be treated with patience, friendliness, kindness and respect. Profanity is never to be used while on duty.

It is the policy of the Food Service Department that all employees treat one another, fellow staff and students with mutual respect and a high standard of courtesy. A positive attitude is required at all times. Employees are expected to perform their assigned duties at or above satisfactory levels while following acceptable standards of workplace behavior.

Examples of **unacceptable** behavior are:

- Yelling at another employee, student, or parent
- Using offensive language or name calling
- Withholding information or assistance
- Yelling across the kitchen or cafeteria
- Subjecting fellow employees to continual complaints and negative comments. If an employee has a problem, he or she should take the problem to the immediate supervisor and follow the chain of command.
- Bullying and or Harassment of any kind

PRIOR NOTIFICATIONS AND INCIDENTS

Level of Discipline	Date	Subject
None to date		

DETAILS OF OCCURRENCE:

EXPECTATIONS TO BE FOLLOWED STARTING IMMEDIATELY:

This disciplinary action is a formal written warning. If your employees conduct and behavior does not improve and these changes must be long term on a daily basis the next step in progressive discipline will occur which could include immediate termination. Any retaliation toward any co-worker will be grounds for progressive discipline including immediate termination.

Employee(s) Signature: _____ Date: _____

Your signature is receipt that you were given this document and it was explained to you in full. It does not mean that you agree, only that it was given to you and explained. This document will be retained in your employee file.

Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

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Take Aways

- Know the Heart of your program - which is your employees!
- Hire Slow. . .Fire Fast
- Give clear detailed EXPECTATIONS. If you have not given clear expectations don't expect what they do not know!
- DOCUMENT. . .DOCUMENT. . .DOCUMENT
- DON'T PUT IT OFF! Deal with challenges Timely and Swiftly!
- DON'T react without thinking and taking a step back!
- If possible SLEEP on any documentation that you will be delivering. . .re-read and adjust! This goes with emails too! There is no face to emails so be careful!
- Have a written script to stay on track!
- It is hard but DON'T let the employee deflect blame to others! Keep to your script.
- ALWAYS communicate a message of "we care and want you to be successful".
- Be Kindergarten Clear!

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Martha Silverthorn
msilverthorn@tricreek.k12.in.us
219-750-1336

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