

Policy: Progressive Discipline

Policy Number: PER 002

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| Department: | Human Resources | Bylaw #: | 26-05 and 26-28 |
| Effective Date: | | Version: | |
| Approved by: | Counties' Council | Approval Date: | April 23, 2026 |
| Legislative Authorities: | <i>Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA), Income Tax Act (Canada) and applicable CRA guidelines, Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), and all other applicable legislation.</i> | | |

Policy Statement

The Counties recognizes that a fair and consistent progressive discipline approach is essential for fostering accountability and sustaining a positive work environment. By providing clear expectations and ongoing support, the Counties are committed to helping employees address and improve identified concerns.

Purpose

The Counties have adopted a policy of progressive discipline to ensure that employees have the opportunity to correct any identified work-related problems that may arise, and to ensure an appropriate, progressive and fair approach to discipline is implemented when necessary.

Definitions

Director/Division Head: includes the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Chief of Paramedic Service, Treasurer, Director of Maple View Landings, Director of Community and Social Services, Director of Public Works and Director of Corporate Services for the purpose of this policy.

Progressive Discipline: an escalating corrective action process designed to improve identified issues.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville including but not limited to full-time, part-time, casual, students, volunteers, and interns. Where applicable, if there are any discrepancies between this Policy and the governing Collective Agreement for unionized employees, the Collective Agreement will prevail.

Policy

1. Any disciplinary measures taken by an employee's supervisor shall be appropriate to their cause and shall follow, where applicable, the principle of progressive discipline.
2. Progressive discipline is intended to correct inappropriate conduct and to prevent its recurrence by increasing an employee's awareness that conduct must be improved and/or corrected, and that failure to do so may lead to termination of employment.
3. The Counties shall maintain a practice of disciplinary action, which becomes increasingly more severe based on the seriousness of the violation and/or repetition of misconduct regardless of whether the nature of misconduct is the same. For clarity, this means the level of discipline may progress for each infraction even if the misconduct being disciplined is different or unrelated.
4. Depending on the situation and the seriousness of the violation, the Counties reserves the right to skip steps in the disciplinary process and move straight to termination of employment where necessary.
5. The following is a list (although not an exhaustive list) of conduct considered to be misconduct:
 - a. failure to comply with the Counties' policies, practices and procedures;
 - b. failure to appear for a scheduled shift without following applicable procedures;
 - c. failure to comply with a directive, or assignment;
 - d. failure to fulfil job position requirements;
 - e. excessive culpable absenteeism;
 - f. habitual lateness;
 - g. negligence in the handling of money and/or the Counties' assets;
 - h. negligence or abuse of the Counties' property and equipment; or
 - i. violence or harassment.

6. Although not an exhaustive list, the following represent serious misconduct and may be grounds for immediate dismissal:
 - a. Theft;
 - b. Alcohol or drug abuse;
 - c. Misuse of the Counties' property;
 - d. Workplace Violence and/or Harassment
 - e. Resident or Patient Abuse
 - f. Unethical conduct; or,
 - g. Insubordination.

7. The levels of discipline and associated steps are listed below and will be documented on a standard letter format:
 - a. Verbal Warning
 - b. Written Warning
 - c. Final Written Warning with Possible Suspension (without pay)
 - d. Termination

8. With each violation and step the employee will be provided with an opportunity to explain the situation and their actions. The initial discussion with the supervisor will endeavour to:
 - a. Promote a fair, consistent and constructive response to unacceptable conduct;
 - b. Ensure that the employee understands the expectations of the Counties;
 - c. Empower the employee to solve the problem;
 - d. Resolve issues in a timely manner; and,
 - e. Treat the employee fairly by giving them a reasonable opportunity to improve and avoid discipline.

9. At each step of the discipline process, the employee will be provided with a written letter and action plan (if warranted) outlining:
 - a. The problem/misconduct/undesirable behaviour with specific examples (when/what happened);
 - b. Associated Counties' policy and related documents outlining standards, behaviours and expectations to be met;
 - c. Timeframe to improve the identified issue with established follow-up dates/meetings (as applicable);

- d. Further discipline and consequences should the problem, behaviour or misconduct not be resolved;
 - e. All steps and action taken by the Counties to help the employee improve and meet expectations;
 - f. The employee will be provided with a copy of the discipline, and another will be placed in the employee's file by Human Resources; and,
 - g. The employee is to sign the letter as proof that the letter was received by the employee.
10. Disciplinary letters will be removed from the employee's personnel file eighteen (18) months after being placed on the employee's file so long as the employee remains discipline free for the eighteen (18) month period for Non-Union employees or as governed by the group collective agreement. Otherwise, the disciplinary letter will remain on the file until such time that the employee remains discipline free for eighteen (18) months. In the event an employee is on a leave of absence greater than three (3) months, the time period will be suspended at the commencement of the absence and recommence once the employee has returned to their former duties and status.
11. A violation requiring discipline after the final written warning, and upon exhaustion of all steps in the progressive discipline process will result in termination of employment with the Counties.
12. Before an employee is disciplined, the Supervisor/Manager/Director must meet to discuss the issue, as well as the content of the letter, with Human Resources. Advance discussion with Human Resources is not required where verbal correction is provided "in the moment" by a Supervisor to immediately correct behaviour, particularly behaviour creating a safety risk to the employee, others, or Counties assets.
13. Supervisors are responsible for reporting discipline to Human Resources. If a supervisor provides an employee with discipline in the absence of the Department Head, then the Department Head must be informed immediately upon their return.
14. Disciplinary letters are to be provided to employees as soon as reasonably possible after the Counties becomes aware of the misconduct, or once the investigation is completed (as applicable), with a copy to Human Resources. The letter may be signed by the supervisor or the Department Head.

15. Where a meeting is convened with a unionized employee and the subject matter may be documented on the employee's record regarding conduct, the supervisor will offer to the employee that a Steward or Alternate Steward can attend as a witness, and the employee may request that a Steward or Alternate Steward attend as a witness, in accordance with the collective agreement. The Counties will honour this request in keeping with the provisions of the collective agreement. If the employee would like union representation, Human Resources will be present at the meeting as well. If the employee refuses union representation, the Supervisor and Human Resources will have the employee sign a document to that effect.

Suspension Pending Investigation

1. A suspension pending investigation is not disciplinary but is intended to allow the Counties time to examine a serious issue thoroughly and to determine appropriate action. Suspensions pending an investigation are provided with pay (for scheduled shifts only).
2. The Human Resources Manager will consult with the Director/Division Head to determine the need for a suspension during investigations.
3. Employees placed on suspension pending an investigation are required to:
 - a. Not have contact with anyone from the Counties other than a specifically designated point of contact;
 - b. Temporarily turn over their workplace keys, identification and credit cards (if applicable); and,
 - c. Leave all Counties' property, equipment, information, etc. on the Counties' premises.
4. Any property, equipment or information belonging to the Counties that is at the employee's residence must be turned over to the Counties until such time as the investigation is completed.
5. If an employee is placed on a suspension pending the results of an investigation, the employee will be notified of the decision, a stated timeline for the investigation and the actions that predicated the decision. During the investigation, the suspended employee will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegations. If the investigation is not completed during the stated timeline, the Counties reserves the right to extend the suspension, as necessary.

6. As the suspended employee will be suspended with full pay, they will be required to be available for interviews during this period. The suspended employee will have the right to be accompanied to any interview by a support person, a representative of the Counties, or a Union Steward, in the case of a unionized employee. Should the suspended employee need to leave town or is otherwise unavailable for interviews, they must submit a request and be granted approved leave. If the suspended employee fails to be available, the Counties will proceed with the investigation and make a determination based on the information available.

Termination of Employment

1. The final stage of progressive discipline is termination of employment. Termination of employment with the Counties which may occur following an employee committing multiple violations of Counties' policy, or another applicable reason, after the logical steps for progressive disciplinary action have been taken or immediately following a severe violation. The employee will be escorted from the Counties' property immediately, maintaining the dignity of the terminated employee by not making it obvious to other employees that the employee has been terminated, or for what reasons.
2. The Counties may consider serious offences as cause for immediate termination without progression through the progressive discipline process.

Appeals

1. If a non-union employee believes they have been wrongfully disciplined, they may file a written appeal with the HR Supervisor. Written appeals must contain:
 - a. Details of the discipline;
 - b. Events surrounding the discipline; and,
 - c. Why the employee feels the discipline is not warranted or appropriate.
2. The HR Supervisor shall review and respond to all written appeals in writing within ten (10) business days.
3. If an employee is dissatisfied with the response or resolution, they may submit an appeal to the next level of uninvolved management or to the HR Manager for review, following the same process outlined above. If a unionized employee believes they have been wrongfully disciplined, the established grievance procedure can be accessed.

Roles and Responsibilities

Warden is responsible to:

- Follow this policy for disciplinary matters involving the Chief Administrative Officer.
- Serve as the next level of management where the Chief Administrative Officer is administering discipline.

Chief Administrative Officer is responsible to:

- Make final decisions regarding any termination of employment.
- Report or designate the reporting of criminal matters to the appropriate authorities.
- Keep Counties' Council apprised of Human Resources matters, particularly those related to termination for cause.
- Process progressive discipline of Directors with the support of Human Resources.

Directors, Managers or Supervisors are responsible to:

- Communicate and enforce the Counties' policies and procedures, ensuring employees receive clear, unambiguous instructions on expected behaviour.
- Guide employees in their workplace behaviour, ensuring the manner of guidance is appropriate and constructive, and provide timely feedback and support.
- Monitor employee conduct, maintaining proper, complete, and accurate documentation that may be relied upon for discipline.
- Administer progressive discipline fairly and consistently, with support from Human Resources, in accordance with policy and legislation and ensure follow-up.
- Offer a unionized employee the presence of a Union Steward or Alternative Steward to attend as a witness where the subject matter discussed may be documented on the employee's record regarding conduct.
- Support employees in meeting expectations through ongoing guidance and training and collaborate with Human Resources when applying policy or addressing complex situations that may require discipline.

Employees are responsible to:

- Understand and follow all the Counties' policies and procedures.
- Attend disciplinary meetings as requested by their supervisor, manager or department head.

- Meet stated expectations and seek guidance when needed.
- Maintain a respectful and accountable workplace environment.
- Communicate openly with supervisors regarding workplace concerns.

Human Resources Department is responsible to:

- Ensure fair and consistent administration of progressive discipline in compliance with this policy and legislation.
- Provide advice on disciplinary matters as needed and in administering progressive discipline, act as the final authority on escalated or complex disciplinary cases.
- Assist or lead, as appropriate, the process for investigating complaints or allegations against employees.
- Draft, review and approve the content and appropriateness of all disciplinary documentation before being issued.
- Receive and maintain copies of all disciplinary letters for oversight and recordkeeping, ensuring disciplinary communication is stored in the employee's file.
- Facilitate training and development to support employees.

Union Representatives (where applicable):

- A Union Steward or Representative may be present to support employees during disciplinary meetings or investigations, as requested by unionized employees.

Approval and Review

This Policy is approved by Council and reviewed by the Directors and CAO annually, or as required.

Procedures and forms associated with this Policy are operational in nature and may be revised from time to time by Human Resources.

Inquiries

Questions, concerns or suggestions may be directed to the Departmental Manager or Supervisor, or Human Resources.