Development Activities Kit

Employee Performance Program

Practical assignments supervisors can use to help coach and guide employee performance and professional development.
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Development Activities support the Employee Performance Program by providing supervisors with assignments to help coach and guide employee job performance and professional development.

The Employee Performance Program provides a series of structured conversations, each related to a specific job performance or professional development objective. Associated Development Activities provide practical assignments you can use to support performance and development goals.

Compliance with Unit, College, or Department Procedures

The Employee Performance Program supports and supplements any program or reporting process that your unit, college, or department may have in place.

Your Role as a Supervisor

As a supervisor your role is to help the employees reporting to you understand their job responsibilities and achieve job performance goals while guiding and providing coaching on performance improvement and professional development activities. This begins on day one when you welcome a new employee.

You can find additional resources for new employees and the You and UIC New Employee Orientation at:

hr.uic.edu/developing_and_guiding_employees/start/

Resources Online

Visit the UIC Human Resources web site and navigate to Developing and Guiding Employees.

http://hr.uic.edu

Questions and Support

For questions related to the Employee Performance Program process and materials, contact:

oe@uillinois.edu

For questions related to the programs or reporting process in your unit, college, or department contact your human resources representative.

Policy 602: Employee Performance Review

Academic Professional and Civil Service employees should receive a Performance Review each year between May 15 and August 15.

hr.uic.edu/policies/
About Development Activities

*Development Activities* are practical assignments you can use to achieve performance improvement and professional development objectives.

Find these conversation guides: [hr.uic.edu/developing_and_guiding_employees/development/](http://hr.uic.edu/developing_and_guiding_employees/development/)

As a supervisor, your contribution to employee development encompasses learning activities that happen in the workplace on a daily basis; including strategic work assignments, opportunities for collaboration, and exposure to novel challenges and situations.

The *Development Activities* provided in the *Employee Performance Program* are tools that supervisors can use to support employee performance improvement and professional development.

Each *Development Activity* listed includes a description, suggested applications, tips for the supervisor, and information to share with the employee to help ensure a successful learning experience.

### When to Use?

The *Development and Feedback* conversations help to identify job performance gaps and professional development opportunities.

Once you have identified a performance or development objective you can select an appropriate *Development Activity* as a follow-up to support learning and performance improvement.

### What to Document?

During the *Development* or *Feedback* conversation, a specific *Development Activity* may be assigned to an employee. Document:

- the activity assigned
- expected action steps
- end goals or learning objective
- the timeline for completion

Include in the documentation how and when the employee should follow-up with the supervisor regarding the learning achieved.

### How to Follow Up?

Follow-up meetings are suggested to confirm completion of the *Development Activity* and to discuss with the employee what was learned and how it will be applied to job performance.

### Outcomes

There are many different types of *Development Activities*. Assign the activity you believe to be best suited to the employee’s needs.

Each activity introduces the employee to a learning situation. By guiding the employee through the experience and subsequently reviewing what was learned the new knowledge and behaviors can be applied to achieve improved job performance.
Coaching is a one-on-one relationship wherein a more experienced individual is assigned to work together with a colleague to complete job related-tasks. A coaching assignment may be short-term or limited to a specific job function. Both individuals should have a clear understanding of the specific area(s) of performance that are being targeted for improvement.

Coaching is based upon mutual agreement and is not appropriate for every situation. Coaching may occur along or outside a reporting line. Coaching is a means for learning and development, not an opportunity to correct behavior. It may be a helpful development activity to use when an employee is struggling in a position, seems unchallenged with routine, is causing friction among team members, or having difficulty on particular tasks.

### Developmental Applications

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>To Strengthen Performance of a Competent Individual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assigning a coach can help an employee learn practices for completion of work assignments.</td>
<td>Coaching can be used to inspire innovation and provide insight with respect to job responsibilities.</td>
<td>Assign a high performing employee to coach another employee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify gaps in knowledge or skills required for specific work assignments</td>
<td>• Transfer knowledge from an individual who has been successful completing a particular task</td>
<td>• Acknowledge the expertise of a high-performing individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Share information that will support the employee’s success</td>
<td>• Identify best practices, learn better, more efficient ways of completing work assignments</td>
<td>• Strengthen teamwork and communication within the group</td>
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</table>

### Tips For Supervisors

- If you are the coach, develop objectives, direct the discussion, and assist in developing an action plan.
- If you are assigning someone else to coach your employee, guide the coach on the objectives and outcomes you are expecting.
- In all cases:
  - Follow up with the employee to find out what is working, what is not working.
  - Share observations and reinforce positive progress.
  - Identify possible modifications to the action plan.
  - Ask the employee what was helpful about the coaching session and what could be improved.

### Tips For Employees

- Identify the goals to be achieved through the coaching activity.
- When participating in a coaching relationship with a supervisor or colleague, it is important to be open to feedback, even when it is not something you want to hear.
- Ask for help and let the coach know how their experience and knowledge can help you with your job responsibilities.
- Be willing to try new challenges or to new approaches to problem solving.
- Be appreciative of the time the coach is spending with you and work to make the relationship mutually beneficial.
Competency Development

Competencies are those capabilities that govern how an individual manages personal performance in the workplace. Using the Core Competencies and Management Competencies identified at UIC as a guide, supervisors can support the development of employee’s capabilities as a professional by encouraging awareness of competencies and by identifying development opportunities.

Developing competencies related to job responsibilities will help an employee better manage all aspects of performance in the workplace. Greater proficiency will contribute to performance outcomes, whatever an employee’s particular job responsibilities may be.

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<tr>
<td>Identify a competency likely to impact performance in employee’s current job position.</td>
<td>Identify competencies that will help an employee become more well-rounded and capable.</td>
<td>Identify a competency that will be helpful for an employee in his or her preferred career path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For example, an employee who does not listen well in customer interactions might participate in training related to customer service or communication.</td>
<td>• For example, an employee may benefit generally from learning about time management, collaboration, or diverse work styles.</td>
<td>• Provide an opportunity for an employee to participate in an advanced development course.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide an opportunity for an employee to learn about management competencies.</td>
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Tips For Supervisors

- Discuss how competencies apply in the work environment and situations in which greater capabilities might prove beneficial.
- Provide flexibility in the employee’s work schedule to allow them to pursue online or classroom development opportunities within the confines of University policies.
- Visit the UIC Human Resources web site Performance Goals and Career Planning section to access to professional development opportunities organized by competency.

hr.uic.edu/managing_my_performance/

Tips For Employees

- Be open to new learning.
- Look for ways to connect learning competencies with everyday job responsibilities.
- Share with your supervisor take-aways from learning opportunity.
Cross-training is the training of an employee to be proficient in tasks or processes that fall outside of their current job responsibilities. Cross-training can help individuals develop an appreciation for job positions other than their own and achieve a better understanding of how their work impacts their colleagues. In this regard, cross-training can also promote a culture of teamwork and shared success.

Cross-training initiatives should be well thought out and have the purpose of making a department more nimble and able to respond to unexpected demands or unplanned absences.

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<tr>
<td>Have an employee train in tasks and processes that are dependent on the work they produce.</td>
<td>Demonstrate confidence by asking an employee to be prepared to assist colleagues in other roles if needed.</td>
<td>Assign an employee to cross-train others on the tasks of processes of their job position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help an employee understand the importance of their work and meeting deadlines.</td>
<td>• Provide an opportunity for an employee to increase their value within the organization.</td>
<td>• Reward the performance of an employee by acknowledging their expertise in a role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide an employee with greater context to understand the performance requirements of their current job.</td>
<td>• Strengthen team relationships.</td>
<td>• Challenge an employee by placing them in the role of a subject matter expert and instructor.</td>
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### Tips For Supervisors

- Cross-training:
  - is meant to help an employee be more well-rounded about the organization as a whole, not to add to employee responsibilities on a daily basis.
  - acknowledges and increases an employee’s value to the organization, which can lead to greater engagement.
  - may uncover hidden talents and reveal leadership skills.
  - helps employees appreciate colleagues’ job responsibilities and provide better support.
  - helps an employee learn new skills and prepare for the next step in their career.

### Tips For Employees

- This activity is to help gain understanding of department-wide operations, not to increase current workload.
- Learn how other’s responsibilities align with their own responsibilities within the department.
- Be mindful of others in the department and their role in completing projects or tasks.
- Look for ways to improve department actions to increase productivity and efficiency.
Job journaling is a highly underutilized productivity tool. Keeping a record of daily activities can help an employee identify which tasks occupy their time and where potential opportunities for performance improvement might be found. Job journaling can also help diagnose job performance strengths and weaknesses. A journal provides a basis for the supervisor and employee to have a detailed conversation about the employee's work and to discuss specific tasks or behaviors that impact performance outcomes.

A journaling assignment is typically short in duration and may encompass the employee's daily activities or be limited to specific responsibilities or assignments. The objective is to understand the work being done, if priorities are correct, and if each activity is contributing to the completion of a relevant task, responsibility, or goal.

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<tr>
<td>Job journaling may be used to help a struggling employee evaluate how they are using their time.</td>
<td>Use journaling to help an employee discover professional development objectives.</td>
<td>Challenge an employee to use journaling as a process improvement tool and demonstrate innovative problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask an employee to keep a journal of their activities for a selected period of time. Review and discuss the journal together to come up with an action plan to help employee prioritize their time better.</td>
<td>• Use the journal to explore areas of performance wherein the employee demonstrates most or least confidence.</td>
<td>• Provide an opportunity for the employee to use job journaling to investigate and identify potential process improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create opportunities to better utilize the employee’s strengths and to develop those areas wherein they lack confidence.</td>
<td>• Share how journaling can provide insight to work processes and improve critical thinking and problem solving skills.</td>
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Tips For Supervisors

• Define what activities and details should be included, what period of time the journal should be kept, and the intended objective of the assignment.

• Be careful to not create additional stress.

• Journaling helps:
  • Identify mistakes or challenging situations
  • Review and retain learning
  • Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
  • Become more self-aware
  • Improve communication skills by organizing and preparing thoughts before sharing them

Tips For Employees

• Be thorough when journaling. Record each activity, not just what you think you may be important.

• Use the exercise to help improve time management and prioritization skills.

• Use the information in the journal to find opportunities to improve efficiency.

• Journaling is a useful way to share information with your supervisor about how you spend your time and what your job entails.
Temporary expansion or contraction of an employee's job responsibilities can be helpful in achieving performance improvement or development objectives. Allowing an employee to focus exclusively on a particular set of tasks for a time concentrates attention on learning while simultaneously reducing stress. Assigning additional responsibilities provides an opportunity to pursue development goals that lie outside an employee's usual routine while also challenging prioritization and time management skills.

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<td>Reduce a struggling employee's workload to help them focus on a particular job responsibility.</td>
<td>Assign a limited scope project that leverages the strengths or expertise of the employee.</td>
<td>Provide an employee with a special project that targets a specific development objective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide the employee additional time and resources to learn the skills required.</td>
<td>• Ask the employee to research a job related topic, process, or resource and present recommendations.</td>
<td>• Assign a task that requires the employee to acquire new knowledge or skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For a specified period, provide more guidance to an employee to support their improvement in a certain area of their job.</td>
<td>• Ask the employee to develop documentation, communication, or presentation materials.</td>
<td>• Assign a task that requires competencies that are underutilized in the employee's current role.</td>
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Tips For Supervisors

• You may need to temporarily reassign some of an employee's workload to other individuals. Take care to not overburden the employee's colleagues or disrupt work outputs of the department.

• Be mindful of how the shift in responsibilities may affect each individual's workflow.

• Clearly communicate that a temporary reduction in job responsibilities is a positive step that provides an opportunity to focus on performance improvement. It does not represent a lack of confidence, demotion, or punitive gesture.

• Discuss with the employee and clearly define the intended outcome of the temporary shift in job responsibilities. Set clear goals and objectives, when follow-up will occur, and how long the assignment will last.

Tips For Employees

• Any temporary shift in responsibilities is not meant to change your workload long-term.

• Share concerns with supervisor about changes to work flow.

• Embrace the assignment as a means to grow as an employee.

• Work with your supervisor to ensure you understand the assignment and what is expected.

• Ask about colleagues or other resources that can contribute to your success.
Watching someone perform a job for a few hours or days is called shadowing, and it is an excellent way to learn about department operations, get exposure to other careers, and make professional contacts. Shadowing involves going to someone’s workplace to observe the activities and responsibilities of their job.

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<tr>
<td>Create an opportunity for the employee to job shadow a colleague or customer who depends on that employee’s work.</td>
<td>Provide the opportunity for the employee to job shadow colleagues in the department with other roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Create an opportunity for the employee to job shadow a supervisor or individual within the employee’s career path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn about the impact your work has on others</td>
<td>• Learn about the functions of the department or unit</td>
<td>• Learn about the decisions necessary to produce results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn about the impact your work has within the organization</td>
<td>• Learn about other roles and areas of expertise</td>
<td>• Learn about the business factors that impact the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn about the work habits of a productive colleague</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Learn about the skills needed to pursue a career path</td>
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Tips For Supervisors

• Be mindful to not impede the job responsibilities of the person being shadowed.
• Create a plan with objectives for both participants. Time will need to be well spent, with clearly established outcomes.
• Request and document feedback from both participants on how session went and what was learned.

Tips For Employees

• People often rearrange their schedules to accommodate you. Be punctual and appreciative of their time.
• Dress appropriately for the environment.
• Be attentive throughout your entire time together.
• Offer to excuse yourself if it sounds like the person you are shadowing could use some privacy for a phone call or meeting.
• Follow-up with a thank-you note or email to everyone who spent any time with you.
• You should take notes throughout the day to keep track of what you learn and observe.
By attending meetings as an observer or participant an employee can gain insight into workplace dynamics, cooperative problem solving, or intra-departmental collaboration. Employees may also gain a better appreciation for the work they do in the context of the department, unit, or entire organization. Inclusion in meetings, even if as a silent observer, can help an employee feel better valued and capable of making meaningful contributions.

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<tr>
<td>Inviting an employee to attend a meeting about a subject related to their job can help them learn more about the context of their work.</td>
<td>Assign the employee to attend a meeting as a subject matter or procedural expert.</td>
<td>Providing an opportunity for a high achiever to present at or lead a meeting on a topic where they are the subject matter expert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask the employee to come as an observer and to take notes to review with you later.</td>
<td>• Let them know about the agenda for the meeting and ask them to be prepared to answer questions about their area of expertise.</td>
<td>• Ask the employee to prepare a presentation and present at the meeting, providing analysis, process improvement ideas, or compare and contrast current with proposed future state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What insights did they take away from the meeting?</td>
<td>• Ask them to prepare a document or short presentation that might be shared in the meeting.</td>
<td>• Have the employee organize and facilitate a meeting about a topic or process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How does it apply to their work?</td>
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Tips For Supervisors

• Be sure that taking the employee away from their job responsibilities to participate in a meeting will enhance their work.

• Share with the employee information that will help them be more comfortable in the meeting, e.g., why the meeting is relevant, who the participants are, the agenda, what to prepare, or the participation expected of them.

Tips For Employees

• Dress appropriately for the environment.

• Turn off your cell phone.

• Be considerate and courteous.

• Take notes and discuss with your supervisor what you learned.

• Remember that you are representing the department.

• If you are assigned to present or speak be prepared and well-practiced.
Mentoring is a relationship between a senior employee (mentor) and a less experienced employee (mentee) formed for the purpose of supporting the mentee’s development. Mentor relationships can inspire the employee to grow, deepen their organizational understanding, and motivate individuals to exceed work expectations. It benefits employees by providing opportunities to gain organizational insight and new perspectives. It benefits the organization by growing the employee’s ability to contribute. A new employee paired with a peer mentor will acquire institutional understanding, as well as practical knowledge and skills, more quickly. Pairing a promising established employee with a seasoned mentor can speed the achievement of the employee’s full potential.

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<tr>
<td>Assign a more experienced employee to mentor the employee who is new or could benefit from further development.</td>
<td>Encourage the employee to become a peer mentor to a new employee or suggest participation in a structured mentoring program to support their professional growth.</td>
<td>Suggest participation in a structured mentoring program or introduce the individual to someone who can support their aspirations and future goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help the mentoring pair access mentoring tools and resources.</td>
<td>• Assign a new employee as a mentee to a current employee. Provide guidance on setting up a mentoring plan.</td>
<td>• Be the catalyst to guide the employee into the mentor relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Share specific work related goals with the mentoring pair and allow them to set up a mentoring plan to help the employee meet those goals.</td>
<td>• Ask them to share institutional knowledge with the new employee.</td>
<td>• Provide information about established structured mentoring programs and supporting resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage the struggling employee to ask for advice and to be open to suggestions given by their peer mentor.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduce the mentor and mentee.</td>
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Tips For Supervisors
• Respect the confidentiality of the mentor relationship.
• Mentors should be a more senior colleague outside of the mentee’s reporting structure.
• The most effective mentor will help the employee meet their goals and development needs according to the employee’s ability level.

Tips For Employees
• Be professional at meetings; dress appropriately, arrive on time and give your full attention.
• Prepare; set the direction and have goals ready to share with your mentor.
• Take an active part in conversations and participate with an open mind.
• Keep all mentoring conversations confidential, and never complain about your mentor to others.
Development Activities

Setting Goals

A shared understanding of objective and measurable goals provides employees clear focus and direction. Re-viewing or reassessing the goals related to a job position, project, or task can help an employee to better prioritize their time and efforts. Encouraging employees to think about and establish their own goals can lead to greater self-sufficiency and personal accountability.

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<tr>
<td>Collaborate with the employee to create meaningful goals that will help to better focus work efforts and encourage development.</td>
<td>Allow the individual to set their own goals and reporting metrics.</td>
<td>Provide a work assignment to the employee that requires development of goals and an action plan to achieve them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify a task that is proving to be challenging and identify roadblocks.</td>
<td>• Show the employee where to find the resources to set actionable goals and expectations.</td>
<td>• Review the proposed project goals action plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss how to set measurable and purposeful goals.</td>
<td>• Ask the employee to propose their own performance goals related to specific job responsibilities.</td>
<td>• Establish a clear timeline, reporting process, and metrics to measure progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish new goals that better support performance outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Allow decision making autonomy, but hold the employee accountable for results.</td>
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Tips For Supervisors

• Goals need to be specific, have a clear measurement of success, and be time bound.
• Set or reset goals as needed throughout the year to support employee focus and productivity.
• Encourage employees to set clear, concise and complete foals that include a measure for success.

Tips For Employees

• Be open to resetting goals as department needs change or as projects and tasks are completed.
• Ask questions and clarify information if you are unclear about the expectations.
• Be sure to understand how goals impact work already in progress.
• Discuss priorities with supervisor.
Team Assignments

Team assignments provide an opportunity to foster creativity, cooperation, and shared learning. When individuals collaborate toward a shared goal the team builds trust and establishes stronger relationships. Team assignments also require individuals to acknowledge and accommodate diverse viewpoints and work styles. Participation as a team leader of project head can provide the opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Developmental Applications

**To Help Someone Reach Performance Expectations**
- Assign an employee to participate in a team project with more experienced colleagues.
  - Create an opportunity for the employee to learn from colleagues.
  - Create supportive relationships within the group.
  - Provide an opportunity for the employee to make meaningful contributions.

**To Strengthen Performance of a Competent Individual**
- Assign the employee to participate in a cross-functional or intra-department team project.
  - Expose the employee to diverse work styles and viewpoints.
  - Allow the employee to represent your area as a subject matter expert.

**To Challenge a High Performing Individual**
- Assign the employee to serve as a team leader.
  - Provide a leadership development opportunity.
  - Demonstrate confidence by allowing the employee to be accountable for results.

Tips For Supervisors
- Be mindful that team members do not feel one person is dominating activity or that teamwork means “someone else will do it”.
- Be aware that conflict may arise on team assignments and you may need to moderate the discussion while still allowing the team to resolve the issue.
- Praise creative ideas and new ways of thinking about things.

Tips For Employees
- Team assignments require each employee to be accountable their individual role in the project as well as the success of the entire team.
- Take advantage of the opportunities to share your strengths towards completion of the team’s goal.
- Be open to collaboration with others.
Technical Training

Technical skills encompass the knowledge required within a particular field of work or profession (e.g., accounting, nursing, electrical engineering, licensed commercial driving, etc.). Most job positions require specialized knowledge and some require certifications or licensing. These skills or credentials are indicated in the job description as minimum qualifications and are often learned in a formal educational environment or through apprenticeships and internships.

*Technical Training* provides an employee with an opportunity to increase the skills and knowledge related to his or her field or profession.

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<tr>
<td>Target a technical skill that is impeding the employee's job performance.</td>
<td>Provide access to intermediate or advanced learning that contributes to the employee's job responsibilities.</td>
<td>Provide access to learning that supports the employee's career goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help the employee identify and participate in an appropriate learning opportunity.</td>
<td>• Assign a task that requires the individual learn a new technical skill to complete it.</td>
<td>• Discuss with the employee areas of interest and career goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Once completed, discuss how what was learned will contribute to better job performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide an opportunity for the employee to participate in learning that may not be directly related to current job responsibilities.</td>
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Tips For Supervisors

- Make sure that the learning activities support functional aspects of the individual's role.
- Provide time for the employee to participate in learning activities.
- Be supportive and available for questions.

Tips For Employees

- Take initiative to stay informed about new developments, certifications, tools, or processes related to your job responsibilities.
- Be open to learning.
- Share with your supervisor what you have learned and how it contributes to your job performance.