

behaviour to the employee. This action ensures that employees are aware of the standards to which they must adhere. The disciplinary process begins once one of these established standards has been breached. Prior to taking action, it is imperative that managers distinguish between matters which are purely related to performance and issues which are disciplinary in nature. Non-disciplinary performance issues should be dealt with through the performance appraisal process. The following process will aid the manager in dealing with discipline as a situation arises.

(b) Investigate the Situation

- (i) Obtain the relevant facts and documentation surrounding the situation as quickly as possible. This should be done by interviewing the employee(s) concerned. Ensure that the employee is aware of the reason for the interview. The sole purpose of this interview is to obtain first-hand knowledge of the situation and/or events which occurred. This is not a disciplinary interview. The matter may also be raised informally with other individuals who may be able to provide pertinent information to the case.
- (ii) Conduct the investigation as soon as possible after the misconduct has occurred. Delays in the investigation generally lead to lost evidence, misinterpretation, and, forgotten details by witnesses. More importantly, delays in the investigation and/or the disciplinary process may lead the employee to the conclusion that his misconduct has been overlooked and/or condoned. Too great a time gap between the breach of discipline and the manager's investigation and subsequent response, tends to disassociate the misconduct from the corrective action. As a result, a disciplinary penalty may be difficult to justify.
- (iii) Do not accept hearsay evidence. Facts which are gathered must come from those individuals who are directly involved and/or have first-hand knowledge of the incident. This does not imply that third-party information should be completely disregarded. In fact, such information may lead to first-hand information which has not been obtained. However, hearsay evidence should not enter into the decision-making process. The manager should always attempt to substantiate and corroborate all information gathered during the investigation.
- (iv) Document all interviews and keep records of all information which has been gathered.