



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

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du Canada



ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

“I feel like I can’t provide any constructive criticism to my team when everyone is trying their best to cope during the pandemic.”

1

Approach the conversation with compassion

In the COVID-19 context, poor performance is unlikely to happen in a vacuum. It’s possible that stressors outside of work are affecting the employee’s performance – be it parenting challenges, financial strain, pandemic anxiety, or something else. That said, it is still possible to offer constructive feedback while being mindful of these contributing factors. **Give your team members the benefit of the doubt and approach performance conversations with empathy and understanding.**

2

Provide specific examples

No one responds well when feeling attacked. So, instead of making broad statements about poor performance, point to specific examples of projects or situations that could have been handled better. Allow the employee an opportunity to explain, or at least provide more context around what happened. **If performance is especially poor, having a number of examples may help employees better understand where your concern is coming from.**

3

Work collaboratively to find solutions

Once you’ve established the reasons for your concern, work with your employee to find solutions.

- Let them know you want to work **with** them to improve the situation.
- Be open to suggestions that you might not have considered, like allowing the employee to decline certain meetings so they have more time to focus on their work.
- Adjusting their hours to make it easier for them to manage their personal obligations.

Give the solutions a trial period, then check in to see if they are helping or if it’s time to try something new.

For additional support, check out the [Supporting Employee Success guide](#).



4 Provide additional training or professional development opportunities

Employees are more likely to respond positively to your concerns when they feel supported in their efforts to improve.

Where appropriate, **consider offering them training to build new skills or upgrade existing ones** (e.g., in writing, public speaking, and project management). Even something as simple as a book suggestion can be useful for supporting an employee's professional development (especially if your budget allows you to cover the cost).

You may also consider **pairing up the employee with another team member to help them improve in a certain area** (providing that team member has the capacity to assist). In a virtual setting, it can be a useful way to build team camaraderie as well.



5 Document progress

After giving an employee feedback, training, and coaching to improve performance issues, follow up regularly to document any progress. While you need to note when performance is not improving, **it's especially important to celebrate any wins.**

- For example, if time management has been an issue, be sure to acknowledge any instances where a task was completed with time to spare.
- If a specific skill was the challenge, note any evidence of practice and training that are paying off, such as clearer writing or more skilful project management.



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Financial contribution from

Health Canada
Santé Canada