

Peer Roundtable: Staff Discipline

Virtual

April 12, 2023

Attendees

1. Stacy Struck, Prairie Lakes Transit
2. Pat LaCourse, Brown County Heartland
3. Jennifer Torrez, Prairie Five RIDES
4. Ron Decker, TRUE Transit
5. Joanne Brackey, SMART
6. Kirk Kuchera, SMART
7. Jeremy Monahan, Prairie Lakes Transit
8. Ted Nelson, Prairie Five RIDES
9. Paul Coyour, Prairie Five RIDES
10. Beth Heinrich, Morris Transit
11. Klara Grochulska, MnDOT OTAT
12. Melinda Estey, MnDOT OTAT
13. Mariah Kathan, MnRTAP

Challenges:

- Handling confrontation
- Making sure that staff feel that policies are fair, especially when some staff have special accommodations that may look unfair to others
- Coaching staff to handle feedback better
- Handling staff behavior when it comes to public perception
- Handling recurring issues with staff
- Disciplinary action after accidents/incidents. Knowing when to take disciplinary action and what kind of action to take.
- Driver shortage means that some incidents that would be fire-able in a different market aren't.

Solutions:

- Written warning after repeat incident/accidents, followed by retraining specific to the issue.
- Having policies that are uniform and specific, especially around incident/accidents. Staff morale will take a hit if they see that you aren't enforcing the policy across the board.

- Consider the driver's fault when deciding what disciplinary action to take. If they caused the accident by their behavior, the consequences should be more severe.
- Have a clear definition of what constitutes good and bad behavior on the job and reinforce that through training.
- Communicating to drivers that if they hide an accident/incident, then they will be fired.
- Having a culture of sharing feedback as learning opportunities so that the person receiving the feedback understands that it's coming from a place of wanting them to succeed in their job. Your objective as a supervisor is figuring out what that staff person needs.
- Performance improvement plans are helpful as a last resort. It gives leadership a good structure to remember to follow up on areas for improvement. Typically, a PIP is put together after two consecutive incidents. The transit director puts it together with their supervisor, it identifies what was discussed and dates of next meetings, and the driver signs it. Kirk offered to share his template with those who need it.
- Yearly evaluations to reflect on the past year and performance.
- 3-month point evaluations for new employees.
- Random observations on buses by agency trainers to evaluate their performance
- Keeping disciplinary conversations on topic and not getting distracted by other issues the staff person may want to bring up.
- As a manager, don't discipline someone when you're angry, take a deep breath before disciplining, and keep a clear head.
- Reminding people when you're disciplining that this isn't personal, it's professional.
- Calling on your peers to be a place to vent to someone not on your staff before you go into a disciplinary meeting.