

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE: February 23, 2012
TO: Supervisor Joe Sanfelippo, Chairman, Committee on Personnel
FROM: Kerry J. Mitchell, Director of Human Resources
SUBJECT: File No. 11-414, Follow-Up Report from 1/27/2012 Personnel Committee Meeting

Per Supervisor Lipscomb's request, I am responding to questions regarding the proposed Grievance Procedure changes presented at the January 27, 2012 Personnel Committee Meeting.

(1) Justification for selecting a threshold of 10-day suspensions before the grievance process can be initiated.

The threshold of 10-day suspensions was selected for the new grievance procedure based upon Civil Service Rules. Rule VII, Section 1, states "Nothing shall limit the power of the department head to suspend a subordinate for a reasonable period not exceeding ten (10) working days." It was also based upon State Statute 63.10 (1), "Nothing shall limit the power of the department head to suspend a subordinate for a reasonable period not exceeding 10 days." However, I intend to complete a thorough review of past suspensions to determine whether or not managers have utilized suspensions appropriately or excessively, as a part of the disciplinary process. Supervisors and managers will be trained on the appropriate use of suspensions. I have not been made aware of problems with excessive suspensions that are less than 10 days.

(2) Discuss options for lesser discipline measures related to employee violations and how those could be addressed under the proposed grievance procedure or the employee handbook

The County is establishing an Open Communication policy that outlines the importance of managers and employees maintaining open lines of communications, especially as concerns arise. It will outline the multiple options employees have to resolve workplace problems. Here are examples of what will be included:

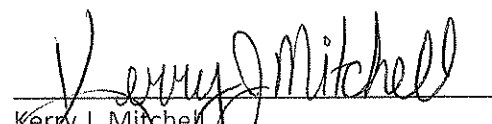
- Encouragement to bring concerns directly to your manager, or to escalate up the management chain if problems are not resolved.

- If you are concerned about discussing a problem with your manager, reach out to the Human Resources representative assigned to your department for assistance in resolving the issue. This person may be able to resolve the problem through facilitating discussions between parties, or may need to perform an investigation to bring resolution.
- If these routes do not work, or for some reason you are not comfortable working with your HR representative, you can reach out to Employee Relations for assistance.
- The formal grievance procedure will also be available to employees regarding issues relating to (1) workplace safety; and (2) matters involving the interpretation, application, or enforcement of the language found in Chapter 17 of the Milwaukee County General Ordinances, where there are no provisions to address such issues.

(3) Describe the categories of employee issues that would no longer be handled through the internal processes.

Any and all employee issues/concerns may be handled through internal processes. The County wants to encourage all employees to attempt to resolve problems and concerns through internal processes. While all employees have the right to utilize legal avenues to address concerns (Equal Rights Division, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, etc.), it is our sincere hope that they attempt to utilize internal means of resolution first.

Attached, please find some examples of the types of employee concerns that may arise in the workplace to illustrate the difference between the current approach and the recommended approach to escalating concerns. Moving forward, employees will have multiple options and avenues to resolve complaints and concerns. The key to success in this new model is adequate training for both employees and managers, and the accountability of all parties. I would be happy to answer any questions about these proposed changes.


Kerry J. Mitchell
Director of Human Resources