



Bulletin: October 1, 2009

CEU protests timing of employer coaching initiative

Climate of continuous change is overwhelming employee ability to cope and adversely affecting working conditions

As outlined in our last bulletin, during the September 28th meeting with Diana Miles, Pam Cohen and Ian Monroe, the issue of performance management was discussed. Sandra Wright, CEU President, expressed a deep concern that the employer was intending to roll-out a performance management program at a time when many employees are struggling to do their jobs.

The union asked how the employer can do performance management when clear standards have not been developed under CMS, and there are ongoing program fixes and process changes?

Pam Cohen assured the union the employer was not going to initiate a program of performance management. They were engaging their managers to start a process of “coaching for success”. She acknowledged that coaching and performance management are two very different processes.

Speaking to the union’s concerns about the potential for more psychological harm, Diana Miles indicated she would work with managers to stress the overall purpose of coaching is to assist employees to develop job skills and that discipline is not the focus or outcome.

CEU stresses need for supportive coaching

While we heard upper management’s assurances, the CEU is worried the Board will focus more on performance management than coaching, and that if not handled properly, this kind of action may become a tipping point toward a higher level of psychological harm for CEU members.

To counter those worries, the CEU met with the employer again on September 29, 2009 seeking to clarify what the Board meant when they committed to focus on coaching to assist with job skills, and not move to discipline.

According to the employer, coaching starts with a conversation between the manager and the employee about all aspects of their job. It is meant to identify strengths as well as



weaknesses and should be open enough to identify other issues that may need to be addressed, including health issues.

This information will help to develop training, coaching or mentoring and will support the employee. The process will be completely transparent and if documentation is produced, the employee will receive a copy. All notes or other documents produced during this process are for coaching reasons only and will not be used for any other purpose.

The employer stated the ultimate goal of coaching is to develop a relationship between the manager and employee that fosters a positive environment so employees can succeed. If the employer decides to go down a different road, such as performance management, nothing gathered in the coaching process will be used in that different arena.

“While we accept coaching can positively support employees, we are concerned about the timing of this initiative. Many managers have not done this before. WES employees are not used to it. They are already feeling frustrated and vulnerable due to the pressures of CMS and many employees will believe they are being blamed for the lack of productivity and not CMS. We have learned from experience that coaching, if not done correctly, can lead to undue psychological harm,” said CEU President, Sandra Wright.

CEU hopes this coaching plan will result in positive outcomes and success for members. Our worry is CMS will not produce the results the employer intended, and coaching will turn into performance management – employees will be blamed for low production not CMS. That must never happen!

Next steps

- Please continue sending your emails describing both positive and negative issues relating to this subject and we will forward your concerns to WES (identifiers can be removed at your request)
- CEU will closely monitor whether the coaching program is carried out as described
- Contact your steward if you have any concerns about the coaching you receive

