Conducting Performance Evaluations
The Value of Performance Evaluations

1. Evaluates the effectiveness of the staff member in order to provide rewards (recognition of efforts, sometimes preparing for promotion).

2. Provides developmental feedback for staff (positive, constructive feedback, and potential)

3. Provides for on-going documentation in the situation where a staff member may need to be let go or not reappointed.

4. Allows staff members an opportunity to evaluate and give feedback to their supervisors.

Problems with Performance Evaluations

1. Conflict because we wish to have staff help supply information which at times can be damaging to their performance review.

2. Ambivalence and Avoidance
   a. Supervisors are not trained to conduct evaluations and are hesitant to use them.
   b. Supervisors wish to maintain a good relationship with their staff members.
   c. Staff may be ambivalent about receiving negative feedback.
   d. When negative feedback is given, the staff member may focus only those negative points during and after the evaluations meeting.

3. The staff member takes a defensive staff and (1) engages in blaming; (2) apologizes; or (3) minimizes the source of the data on which the feedback is based.

4. The supervisor provides a non-evaluative evaluation containing no constructive feedback or specific information.

Potential Solutions to Problems

1. Separate the evaluative component from developmental and conduct two separate meetings.

2. Focus on specific behaviors or goals which have been set and mutually agreed upon.

3. The performance evaluation is open-ended. The staff member has the opportunity to evaluate the supervisor) supervisor models non-defensive behavior). A neutral site is chosen to conducts the performance evaluation and the supervisor ensures that a two-way dialogue occurs.

4. Performance evaluation should only be a review of what has been already discussed on an on-going basis. The supervisor should not surprise the employee with any information during the performance evaluation.
Potential Rating Errors in performance Evaluations

1. **Central tendency**—rating all employees as average
2. **Regency of events**—recalling only recent events as a basis for rating
3. **Halo Effect**—rating an individual similarly on all points
4. **Leniency or Strictness**—biased towards either end of the spectrum, all marks gravitate towards high or low.

Department of Residence Life System

1. Obtain feedback from people who the staff member works for or with to gain insight into others perceptions of how the individual staff member is approaching various job responsibilities.
2. Evaluation instruments attempt to link specific statements in job description with objective outcomes in the evaluation.
3. The self assessment of the staff member is an important piece in preparing for the evaluation session.
4. The evaluation is a combination of numerical ratings and summary comments for specific areas of job responsibility. The evaluation also provides a summary of strengths and areas of improvement. The end point of the instrument is the establishment of an action plan for the next evaluation period.

Conducting the Evaluation

**Tell and Sell Method**

An evaluative method in which the supervisor provides feedback and then tries to persuade the staff member to accept the information as valid.

**Tell and Listen Method**

An evaluative method in which the supervisor communicates information and then allows the employee to respond. The supervisor encourages the staff member to disagree. After giving feedback, the supervisor: (1) listens actively; (2) reflects feelings; (3) summarizes feelings.

**Problem Solving Model**

A developmental method where the supervisor in only the role of helper. The supervisor cannot specify areas for improvement. The objective is for the staff member to discover his/her own strengths and deficiencies and take the initiative in developing plans for improvement. Supervisor will help staff member explore different areas but cannot introduce them.

**Mixed Model**

In this model, the process is first an open-ended discussion to problem solve directed by questions from the supervisor and ends with *tell and sell* or *tell and listen*. If the staff member does not raise issues that the supervisor wants to address, the supervisor will initiate this at the end of the session. The goal is to improve the staff member’s performance, as well as supervisor-staff member relationship while the staff member leaves with a clear understanding of what is expected and where s/he stands.
If you have the time to conduct two different sessions, the problem solving method and the tell and listen method would work most effectively. Most of us, because of time and what our staff expects, will most often use the mixed model.

**Steps to Conduct the Evaluation**

1. Schedule meeting well in advance and when there will be no interruptions/disturbances.
2. Agree on content, that this meeting will cover the evaluation, including self evaluation and feedback for the supervisor.
3. Agree on process, how the evaluation meeting will flow in terms of information.
4. Attempt to have a neutral site or meet in the staff member’s room.
5. When starting the meeting, review the purpose and process.
6. Start with discussion with open-ended questions to engage staff members in process (i.e. how do you see your performance to date?)
7. When exchanging feedback, the supervisor should model non-defensive behavior and give specific examples of behavior that are strengths and weaknesses.
8. The supervisor summarizes major needs for improvement based on previous discussions.
9. Develop a plan for improvement that allows the staff member to lead with what she/he thinks is a good plan for progress. The supervisor(s) can then react to and expand on the plan if necessary.
10. Bring the performance evaluation meeting to a close by discussing the staff member’s future and how specific steps may help in short term and long term aspirations.