

Gateway to University Interactive Decision-Making for Employees (GUIDE)  
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**Abstract:**

*The GUIDE (Gateway to University Interactive Decision-making for Employees) is an interactive, online tool containing information, direction and suggested actions for responding to incidents involving possible employee misconduct. The GUIDE helps supervisors stay more informed so they make defensible decisions when dealing with potential employee misconduct. When using the GUIDE, the supervisor begins his or her consultation by selecting the appropriate offense(s) and answering a few questions, which results in a suggested action. Helpful samples are included, such as formats for reprimands, and pay and leave reports, as well as helpful links such as policies and procedures, contact information, collective bargaining agreements, definitions, the investigation process, and referrals to appropriate authorities. The GUIDE ensures that care, objectivity and the rights and interests of both the employee and the University are fully considered, and that discipline is administered in a consistent manner that assures equitable treatment for all employees. Ultimately, the GUIDE saves time and money, and it helps to keep FSU out of possible litigation due to inconsistent or inappropriate treatment.*

**An Introduction to FSU:**

Florida State University is a public coeducational institution. It is a senior member of the ten state universities that compose the State University System of Florida. The main campus of the University is located in Tallahassee, the state's capital. Florida State University also offers degree programs in Panama City, Florida; Sarasota, Florida; and the Republic of Panama. In addition to the branch campuses, FSU offers a variety of overseas study opportunities for students during the regular academic year, as well as in special summer programs.

The total enrollment of the University for Fall 2002 was 36,683, composed of 78 percent undergraduate, 18 percent graduate students, and 4 percent unclassified. FSU has seventeen major academic divisions, offering courses of study in 25 major disciplines. Through the Center for Professional Development & Public Service, the University also conducts off-campus credit courses and degree programs as well as non-credit programs, workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Florida State University has built a reputation as a strong research institution in both the sciences and the humanities. The University is also a nationally recognized center of excellence in

graduate training in the visual and performing arts. FSU provides a wide variety of music, theatre, and dance performances. In the area of Athletics, Florida State University is a member of the Atlantic Coast Conference, and sponsors eight men's teams and nine women's teams in intercollegiate athletics.

The mission of the Human Resources Department at FSU is to provide quality human resource services and solutions to customers. The University employs over 5,200 individuals in areas ranging from Faculty, Administrative and Professional, and University Support Personnel Services (USPS) positions in skilled crafts and service/maintenance. The HR Department serves the employees at the University in all aspects of HR, including employment services, classification and compensation, professional development through a vast resource of training courses, HRIS and benefits administration, and in the area of employee relations by assisting employees with understanding their rights and responsibilities.

**Statement (restatement) of the Initiative:**

The GUIDE was developed so that supervisors would have an online resource to consult when dealing with employee misconduct. The GUIDE is not meant to replace the expertise of the Employee/Labor Relations professionals, and supervisors are therefore encouraged to be in contact with Employee/Labor Relations prior to taking disciplinary action to ensure appropriate and consistent action is administered. However, the GUIDE is an effective starting point for supervisors, and is an excellent resource to utilize to ensure fairness and consistency when dealing with employee misconduct. The disciplining of an employee is considered to be a very serious action that is undertaken with care, objectivity, and full consideration for the rights and interests of both the employee and management. As such, discipline should be administered in a

judicious manner that assures equitable treatment for all employees, and should be administered to employees only when there is "just cause." The GUIDE presents all the relevant information supervisors need, and assists supervisors in determining when disciplinary action may be appropriate.

**Design:**

The development of this project involved mapping out each guideline for disciplinary action contained in the University's rules by first outlining the definition of the disciplinary guideline and then determining the appropriate questions for a supervisor to consider and answer. Each "yes" or "no" answer is followed by another question and, ultimately, a suggested action. In some instances the GUIDE may determine that the supervisor should do a more thorough investigation of the facts before taking action. Once the supervisor determines all the relevant facts, the GUIDE assists them with determining whether there is just cause to take disciplinary action, and the GUIDE then suggests an action that is consistent with University rules for that guideline. In other instances, it may be determined that disciplinary action is not warranted, or that the situation should be brought to the attention of another department, such as the FSU Police Department or the Inspector General's Office, before any administrative action should be taken. Once each guideline was mapped out on paper by the Employee/Labor Relations staff, it was developed into a series of web pages. Our Employee/Labor Relations staff worked closely with the HR web page staff to determine the style and functionality of the GUIDE.

**Implementation:**

Employee/Labor Relations staff began meeting once a week to develop the GUIDE in August of 2001. It was introduced as a pilot program in April of 2002 and introduced in final format in

May of 2002. The GUIDE has continued to undergo refinements as a result of constant review and feedback from the University community.

**Benefits:**

Because utilizing the GUIDE helps supervisors stay more informed and make defensible decisions with regard to employee misconduct, recurring cost avoidances include avoidance of possible litigation and appealed disciplinary actions in the form of grievances or complaints. Cost savings also include less time on the part of the Employee/Labor Relations staff in counseling management regarding employee misconduct because the information is readily available through accessing the Internet. The GUIDE may also be used as a training tool for new supervisors and employees in the area of employee relations. Staff members in the Employee/Labor Relations section use it to ensure consistency in their advice to supervisors. The built-in templates and samples prove to be beneficial to supervisors as well, because they can see how to complete forms correctly (such as a time sheet when an employee fails to get approval for leave), and how to properly compose a reprimand. The built-in links are helpful when the supervisor wishes to consult other relevant resources, such as collective bargaining agreements or workplace violence guidelines. The GUIDE was designed in a logical format so the information is right at the user's fingertips.

The GUIDE was presented to the Inter-Institutional Council of Auxiliary Services Administrators (ICASA) of Florida in June 2002, and was well received by the ICASA group. Comments after the presentation relayed sincere interest in the GUIDE on the part of business leaders. The ICASA members believed that other institutions would benefit from a similar online tool.