

“Dos and Don’ts” as a Unit Supervisor / Organizational Superior

Sometimes it’s easier to understand boundaries and role relationships in terms of “dos and don’ts”. I’ll start with some don’ts:

- Don’t compromise your personal and professional ethics and principles. Good character is essential to inspire your staff in your leadership.
- Don’t act one way in front of management and another way in front of your employees.
- Don’t give a pass on agency rules and policies to your staff based on close friends or family members.
- Don’t comment on confidential information.
- Don’t assume what you have heard about others is necessarily the truth or accurate.
- Don’t diagnose or give recommendations to an employee regarding their personal problems.
- Don’t say things like “administration has no idea what they’re doing.”
- Don’t gossip.
- Don’t allow genuine concern for an employee to interfere with the management of their performance.
- Don’t get defensive if you overhear criticism toward you that was not meant to be heard by you.
- Don’t take credit for someone else’s work or allow others to take credit for someone else’s work.
- Don’t think and act as if you know everything. Even the newest supervisee can have valuable insights and bring excellent life experience to their work.
- Don’t moralize or make value judgements of others.
- Don’t promote individualism over team development, or your own successes ahead of team triumphs.
- Don’t speak to your team or team members in an angry tone.
- Don’t criticize a team member in front of others.
- Don’t abuse your authority or position.

On the other hand, here’s a list of things you should do:

- Do motivate, inspire and express appreciation to each member of the team.
- Do think about the team success and recognize and praise good teamwork.
- Do try to reassure your supervisees that you care about their well-being.
- Do try to resolve supervisees’ issues and disputes and represent their concerns with agency administration.
- Do treat your employees as you want to be treated.
- Do allow for some fun time and personal interaction time at work.
- Do treat all employees equally and fairly.
- Do base decisions on work performance not on the quality of your personal relationship with the supervisee. (Don’t approve unsatisfactory performance.)
- Do be a good listener.
- Do write down follow up items and get back to your supervisees, even if it’s just an update that you are still working on something.
- Do treat supervisees with kindness and respect. It’s a very difficult job and being emotionally supportive is essential to the role.
- Do regular reviews of performance not to grade but to engage.
- Do ask for help.
- Do lead by example.