

GUIDELINES FOR STEWARDS

When members come to you with workplace problems, you will need some guidelines to follow. Please review the following:

LISTEN TO THE MEMBER

Find a quiet place and a convenient time and listen carefully. If you don't have the time, tell the member and schedule another time when you can listen without distraction. Encourage the member to talk freely. Ask relevant "open" questions. Review all the known facts – more than once, if necessary. Facts may change as more information is provided, or as more time is allowed.

INFORM THE MEMBER

Explain to the member how you will proceed in resolving the problem. Determine if the problem is grievable; if so, explain how the grievance process works. Go over the investigative steps required; explain the contract's time frames, and the possibility of delay. Be upfront and honest; yet don't make promises.

INVESTIGATE THE PROBLEM

Investigate every aspect of the problem. Use the *Six Ws*. Interview relevant, reliable and helpful witnesses. Seek precedents. Consult with the local, the business agent and other stewards. Ask questions and keep written records of everything.

READ THE CONTRACT

Review the contract for any applicable provisions or language. If the contract is unclear, consult your business agent. Also check memorandum, letters of understanding, work rules, laws and past practices for possible violations.

PROCEED OR WITHDRAW

If you feel that this is a problem that may proceed to the formal stage, then arrange a meeting between yourself, the member and their immediate supervisor. Prior to this meeting, you and the member should review all the facts. On the other hand, if you have determined not to proceed, then you need to explain why (i.e.; no violation exists or can be proven), to the member. Once again, be upfront and honest. Remember, you didn't make promises.

MEETING THE SUPERVISOR (INFORMALLY)

Before putting the complaint on paper, you need to meet with the immediate supervisor and try to resolve it informally. Settling a workplace problem at the lowest step should be your preferred goal as a steward. If not settled at the informal meeting, then you file a formal grievance – **in writing**.

WRITING THE GRIEVANCE

Before formalizing the grievance in writing, check with the business agent. File it according to the policy and wishes of your local union. Make sure that all the necessary information is provided on the form. Include any other records or evidence you found in while investigating. Write the grievance in clear, concise phrases without giving away any evidence (save that for later.) Be objective – leave out all personal comments, opinions or feelings. And make copies. Remember that during your investigation you asked the *Six Ws*; when writing the grievance, you have to answer them.

CONDUCT

A steward's conduct must be professional at all times. Through preparation, performance and honesty, you will gain the respect of your members and management. Set a good example at the workplace. Do your job well and perform your steward duties with integrity. Throughout the grievance procedure, keep your members informed. Good communications builds trust.



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