

Handling Grievances

There is no magic to handling grievances. Your membership expects you to give them a fair shake. That is one of the many functions of the union.

Your ability and credibility are the strongest attributes you possess to doing your job in a fair and professional manner.

To help you keep your eyes on the process and gain justice for your member, Here are 21 key points in grievance handling. Read them carefully and then read them again.

1. Know your membership.
2. Encourage your members to submit all grievances to their representative.
3. Discourage members from shopping around for a representative to file their grievance.
4. If the member has a complaint, not a grievance, take the time to explain why it cannot be processed as a grievance.
5. Do not make promises you cannot keep.
6. Know your collective bargaining agreement. Read and reread it.
7. Get all the relevant facts about a grievance and record them.
8. Make sure the grievant knows what the issues are.
9. Be honest with the grievant.
10. Separate personal vendettas from real grievances.
11. Plan your case and prepare at every stage.
12. Keep the grievant informed at every stage.
13. Try to settle the grievance early on.
14. Discourage the member from discussing a grievance with management.
15. Try to retain your member's confidence at all times.
16. Discourage your members from processing their own grievances or settling privately with management.
17. Listen to the grievant--know when he/she is telling the truth.
18. If a worker has an obvious grievance and won't file it, find out why.
19. Do not take bad grievances.
20. Keep written records of all conversations. You will need them.
21. Set up a filing system that works for you.