**USW Local 1998 Steward Role**

**June 23, 2016**

**What to expect**

In addition to answering member inquiries and following up on issues in your workplace, the Grievance Officers or President might contact you to as you represent members in various types of meetings:

**Job shadowing** – When we can, we’ll give new stewards the opportunity to “shadow” more experienced stewards in various types of meetings. This will be an opportunity to watch and learn and to take notes of the proceeding, which will be helpful for the steward presenting at the meeting.

**Representing members in meetings** – these requests come up with little notice and we often don’t know the nature of the meeting ahead of time. In these cases, the union does not formally request release time. You must ask your supervisor for permission to leave, such permission not to be unreasonably withheld. You have a right to leave work to represent the member under the CBA (staff-appointed article 7:05 and letter on civility). If HR is requesting a union rep. then it is hard for a manager to refuse.

Here is a sample email to send:

*Dear Manager,*

*I have been requested to attend a meeting with HR as a union steward.*

*The meeting will take place on date, time. I anticipate this meeting will take me away from the office for 1-2 hours.*

*If you have any questions or concerns, please do let me know or feel to consult with HR.*

*Thank you in advance,*

*Name*

These are the most common types of meetings:

* **Fact-finding or Investigation meeting** – in this situation, HR has called the member in to investigate an issue which may lead to discipline. When you get to the meeting, ask HR to give you a few minutes alone with the member. Introduce yourself to the member, let them know that you are their union rep and that you’ll have a chance to talk after the meeting. Advise the member that they can request a caucus if they need a break or they are concerned about the line of questioning or unsure about how to respond. A caucus will allow the member to speak to the union steward in private and determine how to move forward. Tell the member to feel free to ask the manager or HR to repeat the question if they are unclear because their response will be recorded. Advise them that they should answer management’s questions forthrightly, but without getting too chatty. Don’t answer questions that management doesn’t ask. Take lots of notes of what HR is asking and what the member is answering. You will likely get an idea of what HR and the manager are looking for based on their questions. Be sure to record HR questions not just the members responses. Also pay attention to leading questions. After the meeting, tell HR that you want to stay in the room and talk to the member. This is a chance for you to get more info from the member on what’s going on and to discuss next steps.
* **Disciplinary meeting** - When you get to the meeting, ask HR to give you a few minutes alone with the member. Introduce yourself to the member, let them know that you are their union rep and that you’ll have a chance to talk after the meeting. Tell the member to accept the letter and inform HR that they have no questions at this time but are reserving the right to ask questions later. You can also inform the member that if they have a burning question, before asking it, request a caucus so you can discuss the question in advance of them asking HR or the manager. This is often to protect the employee because these situations are quite emotional. Take lots of notes of what HR is asking and what the member is answering. Who is delivering the message? HR or the manager? Sometimes this makes a difference when putting together a grievance presentation. Ensure you receive a copy of the disciplinary letter. They will usually read off of this letter and that will be the end of the meeting but sometimes they will add some information that is not included in the letter, be sure to write this information down so you can refer to it later. After the meeting, tell HR that you want to stay in the room and talk to the member. This is a chance for you to get more info from the member on what’s going on and to discuss next steps.
* **Termination** – we would not intentionally send a new steward into a termination meeting, but it could happen if HR has not given us adequate information. The steward should advise the member not to engage with management, except possibly to get answers to questions like “when can I pick up my personal belongings?” The employee being terminated should not argue with management about the merits of the termination. That can be made by the union in a grievance meeting. If a terminated employee does engage management in a combative manner, the steward should ask management to temporarily leave the room or, if there is no reason to continue the meeting, tell management that they might as well wrap up.
* **Supporting a member in a civility complaint** – One of the most important ways the union can support a member in the civility complaint process is by taking detailed notes in all meetings with the investigator(s). pay particular attention to leading questions or if investigators appear to be biased by noting this in their notes and providing examples, quotes if possible. You can ask the investigator to repeat the question if you think the member has misheard or misinterpreted it. A steward should advise a respondent in a civility complaint that it would be best if they answer the questions forthrightly, but without getting too chatty. Don’t answer questions that management doesn’t ask. Stewards CAN take notes in all cases. We have had pushback on this. If you are instructed that you can’t take notes, stop the meeting and contact one of the Grievance Officers, Staff Rep or President. We will intervene and get things back on track.

In all of the above, you can ask for a caucus if you wish to advise the member, calm them down, or get them back on track.

* **Reaching out to a member who’s been received notice of organizational change or lay off** – the union is copied on all lay-off and re-org letters and it is our aim to make sure that we reach out pro-actively to each member. Someone from the office will contact the steward to see if they have time to contact the member. This is basically just to let them know that the union is here if they have questions and need support. Often they just need a sympathetic ear.

Sample email:

*Dear XXX*

*The union was recently copied on your notice of organizational change/ lay-off letter. Please find attached a document with FAQs on organizational change and lay-off. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns or would like to discuss your situation with the union.*

*Regards*

*XX*

*USW Union Steward*