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## **Grievance Procedures in Industry**

A grievance is basically a complaint. In a workplace a grievance generally occurs as a result of treatment which is perceived to be unfair or harsh at the hands of a work colleague. Typical situations which might result in a grievance include:

- Being passed over for promotion
- Being given unpopular tasks more often than other workers (picked on)
- Sexual harassment
- Favouritism in the sharing of overtime work hours

Employers need to implement measures to allow any such problems to be resolved effectively and fairly. One such measure is to implement 'grievance procedures', the purpose of which is to make it easier for employees to come forward if they feel they are a victim of unfair treatment.

If employees have difficulty dealing with significant workplace issues then the likely result is a reduction in workplace morale, increased staff turnover or even the risk of the employee taking legal action.

### **Three Types of Grievances**

#### **Individual grievance**

One person grieves that a management action has violated their rights under the collective agreement. Examples include discipline, demotion, harassment, improper classification or denial of earned overtime. Investigate and help the member with the grievance. If the person refuses to grieve, many contracts let the union grieve on behalf of the local. This defends the contract and protects the rights of other employees (see policy grievance). Remember that monetary compensation is not usually awarded in a policy grievance.

#### **Group grievance**

A group grievance complains that management action has hurt a group of individuals in the same way. For example, an employer refuses to pay a contractual shift premium. A group grievance shows solidarity and builds power in a work group. If it involves money, make sure to include all members affected and that they are listed on the grievance. You may even wish to

include language in the remedy section of the grievance to “make all members affected, whole in every way”.

### **Policy or Union grievance**

With a policy or union grievance, the union complains that a management action violates the agreement. It usually deals with contract interpretation, not an individual complaint.

### **Grievance procedures will commonly contain**

- 1 A recommendation that the first action the aggrieved party take is to attempt to resolve the problem by talking directly with the person causing perceived to be perpetrating unfair or harsh treatment.
- 2 If any such attempt to find a resolution is unsuccessful, the method by which to bring the matter to the attention of appropriate authorities.
- 3 The amount of time which the complainant has to commence the grievance.
- 4 The process by which the grievance will be investigated, including the length of time within which matter must be actioned.
- 5 The confidentiality that must be observed
- 6 Guidance on mediation strategies
- 7 The process for appointing persons to arbitrate on the matter