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STEWARD UPDATE

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From the President: Teamwork Key to Stewards' Success

Unions typically use the term "united we stand, divided we fall," to illustrate the point that collectively, workers can achieve more than if they act independently. The same can be said for stewards at any given unit.



John Cakmakci
 President

When stewards stand united and work as a team, great things can be accomplished for the membership in a very efficient and effective manner.

With the exception of very small units, most UFCW 951 stewards don't have to go it alone. They share the responsibilities of the position with their fellow stewards. If the union asks stewards to get details of an upcoming meeting or new program to every member at the unit, stewards should talk to one another about the best way they can get this job done as a group. Working as a team, they can make sure no member is overlooked and a job that might take one steward three hours takes three stewards only one hour each.

When stewards work as a team, they also have the benefit of using one another's strengths to get the job done. The steward with a creative flair might be the one who updates the union bulletin board, while the ultra organized steward may take the lead in

"Tight Knit" Group at Meijer #43 Exemplify Teamwork

At the recent steward training in Saginaw, a new steward asked long-term steward Pam Jackson for some tips. Jackson didn't hesitate in her response, "stewards must come together as a team."

"The stewards at my store are a tight knit group. We are always talking to one another to let each other know what is going on with the members at the store and the union," Jackson said. "When something needs to get done, we talk about which one of us is strongest with that issue and send that steward forward to handle it."

If the issue requires a favor from management, the steward with the best relationship with that manager will talk to him or her. If the situation involves a difficult member, the steward who works best with that individual will work with the member.

"We also believe it's important that we don't talk behind each other's back and that we are all on the same page," Jackson said. "Members will go from steward to steward until they get the answer they want. We try to be united in our answer. Members are going to hear the same thing from me and the other stewards."



"Teammates" Gary Watson and Pam Jackson.

coordinating fundraisers. The steward with the greatest command of scheduling language might review all of the schedules, while another steward with the gift of gab is educating members about a new union program.

Right or wrong, justified or not, everyone is not going to like you. When stewards work as a team, this reality is minimized. Chances are the manager who would never do you a favor, would gladly agree to do it for another steward. And the member who won't

have anything to do with that steward would say yes when you ask him or her to participate in a union event.

Working as a team does not mean you should expect the most experienced steward to file all of the grievances, or leave ABC sign-up to the steward who does it best. It requires that all stewards pull their own weight, communicate with one another, and work together to make sure UFCW 951 members receive outstanding service from their union.

Help Spread the Word

Insurance Program Benefits Members

Stewards should promote UFCW 951's new Members Only Insurance Program. Members can have a trusted insurance professional shop their home and automobile insurance policies to make sure they're getting the best possible rates. There's no cost to request a quote, and members can choose to keep their current insurance. All members who request a quote will receive a \$10 Meijer gift card. Direct members to the local's website -- www.ufcw951.org/discounts --for more information on this and other discounts.

SAVE MONEY

FREE QUOTE	NO OBLIGATION
Information Needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Your Name, Employer and Unit Number •Current Insurance Declaration Pages •Driver's License Numbers of All Drivers •Your Home Address •Telephone Number 	
Members can submit their information via the local's website www.ufcw951.org/discounts , by fax to 517.482.6731 or email to contactus@usaunionservices.com .	

4 Categories of Grievances

The ability to determine if the solution to a member's problem can be pursued through the grievance procedure is an important skill for stewards to develop. While most grievances fall into a single category - contract violations - there are three other types of violations that may constitute a valid grievance.

The four categories of grievances are summarized below. If you are unsure whether a situation qualifies as a grievance, contact your union representative.

1. Contract Violations

While the meaning of a specific piece of contract language can be debated, if management violates the union's interpretation of the contract, a grievance could be filed.

2. Violations of the Law

Your employer cannot violate the law. Even if your contract is silent on a specific issue, workers have the right to file a grievance if the employer violates federal, state, or local law. This would include violations of wage, health and safety, and family/medical leave laws. Employers must follow the law's most recent terms, even if the contract references an earlier version of the law.

3. Violations of Company Rules

If the company violates its own rules or enforces their rules inconsistently, the worker disadvantaged by such action has the right to file a grievance. For example, a worker caught smoking in a non-smoking area cannot be disciplined for this action if any other workers have been allowed to smoke in the area.

Before filing this type of grievance, be sure documentation is available to support your case.

4. Violations of Basic Worker Rights

Workers have legitimate grounds for a grievance if one of their basic rights has been violated, even if the action isn't prevented by the contract. You don't need contract language stating a supervisor can't assault or otherwise abuse or discriminate against a worker in order to file a grievance.

Discrimination occurs when two people are treated differently under the same circumstances in a way that harms or treats one of them unequally. While the most common types of discrimination tend to be based on race or sex, there are other types of discrimination including age, physical appearance, personality and union activity. Keep in mind that discrimination can be hard to prove. Encourage members to keep a log documenting the discrimination and noting any witnesses to the discrimination.

You Must Inform the Union After Filing a Grievance

After filing a grievance, stewards must complete the following two steps.

1. Immediately notify the union representative of the grievance filing.
2. Forward the grievance to the UFCW 951 office within seven days of filing by one of the following means:

- Fax to 616.447.1000 ● Email to grievance@ufcwlocal951.com
- Call the Grievance Hotline at 1.800.999.0951 ext. 7 and provide:
(1) your name and unit number (2) the grievant's full name and last four digits of his/her social security number (3) nature of the grievance (4) date of the infraction (5) description of facts (6) date Step 1 filed (5) the unit manager's name.

The ABCs of Proper Grievance Form Completion

The ability to file a grievance when their rights are violated is one of the greatest advantages of a union membership for workers.

Stewards, however, can jeopardize members' ability to achieve the justice they deserve by improperly completing the grievance form. Improper grievance form completion can also result in "failure to represent" charges filed against the union, and unnecessary financial obligations for the union.

"The union and members rely on stewards to make sure they are filling out grievance forms correctly. What is written on those forms can make or break a member's case," John Cakmakci, UFCW 951's president, said. "Grievance forms are official documents. As with any official document, it is crucial they are correctly completed."

Instructions on how to properly complete a Step 1 Grievance Form follow below. The sections referenced correspond to the replica of the UFCW 951 grievance form at right.

Section A: Grievant's Information

This section calls for the most current information pertaining to the grievant. ALL of the requested information must be completely and accurately provided in order for the grievance to be processed (except for the Grievance Number which is for internal purposes only).

When listing the member's name, be sure to include his or her middle initial and any commonly used nicknames. Listing the member's correct seniority date and rate of pay is critical as it will likely have a determinative role in the grievance case and/or settlement. If a member is uncertain of this information, have it verified before filing the grievance.

Section B: Employer's Information

All of the lines in this section should be completed. The "Employer" line should contain the company name (e.g. Kroger, Rite Aid, Knouse Foods, etc.), and the

"Unit Number" is the number the company uses to refer to your store, building, or plant, not its address.

Section C: Description of the Issue

This is an extremely important, and often improperly completed, section of the grievance form. In the past, stewards, either on their own or at the insistence of the grievant, provide too much information on the form and actually hurt their case.

The information requested in this section should be written as concisely as possible.

Additional information, if worded incorrectly, could cause a valid grievance to be lost. Extra details may also be used by management against the grievant. The grievance form is not the place to argue the grievance. Stewards should save the presentation of their argument for grievance meetings.

UFCW 951 wants stewards to use the following guidelines when completing Section C of the grievance form to ensure it's properly completed and contains no unnecessary or problematic information.

Nature of the Grievance: Only the number of the contract article(s) violated should appear on this line. Pre-printed on the form is the statement "And all other applicable language," which covers any article that may be omitted from the form.

Description of Facts: This is not the place to tell a story or make an argument, but to briefly note how the article(s) listed in "Nature of the Grievance" were violated. For example, "unjust discipline," "customer complaint" or "improper overtime payment."

Settlement Desired: Pre-printed on the form is the statement "Make whole for all losses." Nothing else should be added to this section of the form.

Section D: Grievance Filing Dates

The "Date Step 1 Filed" line must be completed in order for the grievance to be processed by the Local 951 office. It should include the day, month and year the grievance form was handed to the manager. The other lines are left blank until the Step 1 meeting is held and management provides an answer to the Step 1.

Section E: Grievance Status

This section remains blank until the Step 1 meeting is held. After the meeting, the day, month and year of the resolution should be noted on the appropriate line, or the "Unresolved" box should be checked.

Section F: Grievance Resolution and Acknowledgement

The status of the grievance will determine how this section is completed.

If the grievance is resolved, list the resolution (i.e. "discipline removed", to be paid four hours overtime pay, etc.) and have the grievant sign and date the form.

For withdrawn grievances, write "Grievance Withdrawn" and have members sign and date the form if they agree to the withdrawal.

If the grievance is unresolved, leave this area blank. In this case, the member does not sign or date the form.

In addition to properly completing grievance forms, stewards must be aware of grievance filing deadlines which vary by contract and within contracts as well. It is not unusual for wage, discipline and scheduling grievances to have different filing deadlines.

If you have a question about completing a grievance form, contact your union representative before filing the grievance.