

Steward Roles in Weingarten Meetings

Stewards have three key responsibilities during an investigatory interview:

- Provide assistance and counsel to the member.
- Request information from management about the incident in question.
- Serve as a witness and take detailed notes.

STEP 1: Talk with Management

When you arrive at an investigatory meeting, request to meet with management first. At a minimum, management has a legal obligation to give you information about the purpose of their investigation, but use this opportunity to get as much information as you can. Try to get answers to the following:

- **WHAT** is management investigating?
- **WHY** is management having an investigatory meeting?
- **WHO** is management investigating?
- **WHEN** did the incident take place?
- **WHERE** did the incident take place?

STEP 2: Talk with the Worker Alone

Take a few minutes to talk privately with the worker. Find out what you can and encourage them to share everything they know with you; emphasize that you need to know the truth to best assist them. Give them the following advice to prepare for being questioned by management:

- Keep answers short. Answer the question and only the question. Do not offer additional information about questions that were not directly asked in the meeting. What you say can be used against you.
- Keep calm during the meeting.
- It's okay to take your time before answering management's questions.

- Remember that you're not alone. The union is standing with you.

STEP 3: Be Part of the Investigatory Meeting

During management's investigatory meeting, you cannot answer questions for the worker or tell them not to answer. However, you are not required to stay silent. Your primary responsibilities during the meeting are to:

- Ask clarifying questions. If management asks a complicated or "trick" question, ask for clarification (i.e., "Can you restate the question?")
- Prevent repeat questions. If management repeats the same question in a different way, point out that it has already been asked. As a steward you can say, "Asked and answered."
- Take good notes. Write down who says what in the interview to make sure that management does not give a false account of the interview when issuing discipline or responding to a grievance.
- Prevent abuse or harassment of the worker. You can put a stop to browbeating or object to demeaning statements.
- Call a recess if needed to allow time to calm down or if you need another minute to talk privately with the worker when new information comes up.

STEP 4: Witness Any Discipline

In some cases, an investigatory interview will end with discipline. If so, make sure to ask management the following questions:

- What else do you plan to investigate?
- Why is discipline needed?
- How long will discipline last?