

WHAT TO DO IN THESE SITUATIONS

You Are in Trouble

You may find yourself one day in a situation where your professional reputation or position is threatened. What do you do when you've been called to a meeting with administrators and the session turns accusatory? Or when disciplinary action is in the works?

Practical Advice

- If confronted suddenly by charges, remain calm and courteous.
- Ask that a co-worker or witness be present during the discussion.
- Listen carefully to accusations, and then ask for time to think before you respond.
- Get help. Call your Association representative.
 - Don't admit guilt or accept any blame.
 - Don't resign or sign any papers or agreements.
 - Don't agree to anything verbally.
 - Don't agree to pay any expenses.
- Avoid public statements.
- Don't discuss the matter with anyone except your Association representative or your attorney.
- Remember to keep copies of all correspondence and papers relating to the situation.
- Make written records of all conferences with administrators. Take down every detail, including the names of witnesses and others involved.

You Are Called Into the Office

1. Ask the reason for the meeting prior to the conference to determine whether or not the meeting will be adverse.
2. Ask who will be present at the meeting. If others, especially administrators, are to be present, ask for the reason for their participation and attempt to exclude them.
3. If you feel the meeting will be one in which you will be criticized, reprimanded or put in a difficult position, bring a representative (colleague, faculty representative, UniServ director) with you. Attempt to delay or postpone the meeting until you can have a representative with you.
4. If you have another appointment, activity or commitment at the time of the scheduled meeting and/or can't have a representative present, indicate that you will be able to meet with him/her (administrator) for 5 or 10 minutes, but that you'll be happy to meet with him/her the next day at a scheduled time (other than your lunch period).
5. If you must meet without a representative or even if you do have a representative present, be aware of the physical dynamics of the room and the adverse psychological effects they may have on you. Administrators either sit behind desks or in large chairs at a distance from you. Their chair or desk may be on a level higher than yours.
6. Move your chair or position close to the administrator; right next to him/her if possible. If you can manage, stand next to the administrator. Be on the same level with whomever you are talking.
7. Avoid being taped. However, it is good for you to take notes on the conversation and directives you receive. Make note of the praiseworthy comments as well as criticisms.
8. If you feel that threats (implied or direct) are being made, ask that the administrator repeat himself or herself because you want to make sure you're getting his or her words down correctly and that you don't want to misunderstand anything. Grieve if you feel the conference violates your rights.
9. If you feel you're being threatened, ask, "This sounds like a threat. Is it?"
10. If more than one person speaks to you at once, only look and respond to one person at a time.
11. Keep the meeting on the topic that was indicated. If you feel you're being harassed, indicate so and attempt to leave after a reasonable time.
12. Don't sign anything! Get a copy and review it with your representative, local leader or UniServ director.
13. Rebut any charge that is false, misleading or skewed.
14. After the meeting, avoid signing recapitulations of the meeting. Get a copy of the document and review it with your UniServ director.
15. After the meeting, write a detailed recapitulation of the meeting for your records.
16. Keep a record of post-meeting visits by administrators.



You Receive a Layoff Letter

Should you ever find yourself in trouble, follow this practical advice.

1. Missouri Revised Statute 168.124 allows the school district to lay off teachers due to: 1) a decrease in pupil enrollment, 2) school district reorganization, or 3) the financial condition of the school district.
2. The order of layoffs is probationary teachers first and then tenured teachers; those tenured teachers with the least merit and seniority within the field of specialization are subject to layoff first.
3. A tenured teacher has constitutional rights to a notice of the reasons that he or she was selected for layoff and a due process hearing.
4. The teacher is entitled to a specific notice of the reason he or she was chosen for layoff and an opportunity to prove that a layoff was not necessary or that he or she was not the least meritorious in regard to performancebased evaluation and senior of the teachers within his or her field of specialization.
5. The teacher's right to a hearing is not triggered unless requested. The teacher must send a "Request for Hearing" letter.
6. Contact your local association president or UniServ director to receive a sample copy of a "Request for Hearing" letter. The purpose of the "Request for Hearing" letter is to ensure that the teacher make a timely request for a due process hearing before the board of education.
7. The letter is to be sent to the board of education by the teacher shortly after he or she is notified of the action.
8. You should sign, date and send the letter requesting the hearing. The UniServ representative's name or the name of the president of your local association may be shown on the letter as receiving a copy. Copies of the letter should also be kept for your file.
9. If, after sending the request, the administration or board claims that there are other appropriate channels that you should first exhaust, i.e., the grievance procedure, then do so. But first send the board a letter verifying the board's position concerning these alternative channels and stating that, if these channels do not result in a satisfactory solution within 30 days, the teacher will renew his or her request for a hearing before the board. These other channels are not to be used as a substitute for a board hearing, but they are merely an attempt to exhaust all administrative remedies in an effort to resolve the conflict short of a full hearing.

You Are Asked to Sign

1. Don't sign anything immediately. If a signature proves to be necessary or beneficial, it can be delayed.
2. Don't sign documents that are recapitulations of conferences that you don't feel reflect the facts of the conference or the information discussed.
3. Get a copy of the document and discuss it with your faculty, grievance or Association representative for advice.
4. Don't sign letters of resignation. Find out the purpose of the letter and ask for a representative to sit with you in conferences and get a copy of the document for your representative's review.
5. Write a rebuttal on any evaluation you feel is not accurate or true. Make sure that your signature only indicates you've seen it. Write on the evaluation that you disagree with it and will attach the rebuttal in a few days.
6. Your signature is your own. No one can make you sign anything.
7. If the issue is the signature on your contract, follow your Association representative's advice.
8. If you encounter problems or doubts, let your Association leader know about them.