



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if a co-worker and I are having a workplace conflict?

A: Have a direct discussion with the co-worker in a private setting at a time when you are each not angry or emotional. Doing this may give each of you an opportunity to better understand each other's views on the issue and may allow you to explore positive ways of working together.

Q: What if the conflict is with my Supervisor?

A: Be sure that you are communicating effectively with your Supervisor by keeping her/him informed about your work and any challenges you face. Make sure you understand the work expectations of your Supervisor and if they are not clear, ask for clarification or review them with her/him. If necessary, you may need to go to your Supervisor's boss to discuss the workplace conflict you are encountering.

Q: I am a faculty member at WVU. How do I resolve workplace conflict?

A: All of the resources outlined in this brochure, including mediation, the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, and the West Virginia Public Employees Grievance Procedure, are available to faculty employees too. The first steps for informally trying to resolve a conflict in the workplace should be at the level of the departmental chair, Dean, or Provost's office.

Q: What if I have followed the recommendations and advice in this brochure, but the workplace conflict continues, has escalated, or is out of control?

A: It is important to seek assistance from your Supervisor, another appropriate administrator, or any of the other resources outlined in this brochure. If there is a threat or if an act of violence occurs, contact the University Police at 304-293-2677 (293-COPS). They are trained to assist in these situations and their staff is available 24 hours/day.

Q: What if the conflict I am experiencing involves sexual harassment or discrimination?

A: The Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) handles investigations into complaints about sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination. The employee should contact their office as soon as possible to discuss the situation with their staff. They can be reached at 304-293-5600 or by email at diversity@mail.wvu.edu.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Conflict in the Workplace

At WVU, every employee plays a critical role in helping the institution achieve its goals. This requires developing and maintaining effective working relationships and open lines of communication. This brochure has been developed to assist WVU employees in dealing with conflict in the workplace in positive and constructive ways. If left unresolved, conflict may have a serious effect on the entire environment in the workplace.



Communication is Essential

One of the best ways to prevent an issue from becoming a conflict is to communicate with the person(s) involved. Communicating in an open, honest, and respectful manner provides clarification and understanding. When talking about a conflict with your supervisor or co-worker(s), consider the following:

- Determine what the issue is from your perspective, as well as putting yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Address the issues without making accusations about the actions of others.
- Refrain from discussing the issue when you are angry or emotional.
- Limit discussions about the conflict with other uninformed parties.

Resources are Available

Some workplace issues may be difficult for you to resolve on your own. WVU has resources available for employees needing assistance.

- Your **Supervisor, Dean, Director, or other appropriate administrator** has responsibility to address problems in the workplace. You may contact the appropriate person and arrange for a private meeting to discuss the matter and ask for assistance.
- The **Human Resources Employee Relations** staff works to support good employer-employee relationships at WVU and tries to prevent and resolve issues that arise out of or affect work situations. The staff can provide helpful information about understanding conflict and other workplace issues and recommend possible solutions.
Phone: 304-293-5700, ext. 5 or visit www.hr.wvu.edu
- The **Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)** provides free, confidential services for all faculty, staff, and their dependents. Each employee may schedule up to three visits with an FSAP counselor per year. It is a safe place to sort through problems involving conflict in the workplace, but their staff also provide counseling assistance for personal issues such as conflict at home, parenting issues, or other life problems. The staff may also refer you to other resources in the community. Their motto is "If you need to talk, we're here to listen."

Phone: 304-293-5590

Address: 1085 Van Voorhis Road

Suncrest Center 218-220, Morgantown, WV 26505

- The **Mediation Program** is a confidential structured process that offers trained mediators who arrange a meeting with the affected parties to help clarify issues involving conflict, identify possible options for resolution of the conflict, and create a course of action agreed upon by the parties. There is no cost for these services.

Phone: 304-293-6338

Director: Professor Tom Patrick

tom.patrick@mail.wvu.edu

Grievance Procedure and Process

The West Virginia Public Employees Grievance Procedure is found in West Virginia Code 6C-2-1 et seq. Grievance forms and an explanation of the process may be found at www.pegb.wv.gov.

All full-time and part-time WVU employees hired for permanent employment may file a grievance to seek a resolution to a workplace dispute. Specific allegations for the grievance and the relief requested by the employee must be stated on the form. However, the grievance procedure cannot address any issues over which WVU as the employer lacks statutory authority to act, including retirement programs and pensions or public employees insurance.

A grievance must be filed with the WVU President's Office within 15 working days following the occurrence of the event upon which the grievance is based or within 15 days of the date when the employee learned of the event or within 15 days of the most recent occurrence of a continuing practice giving rise to a grievance. "Working days" excludes Saturday, Sunday, official holidays and any day in which the workplace is legally closed under the authority of the WVU President or his designee due to weather or other cause.

Three levels of the Grievance Process:

- **Level One**—Employee files the grievance at this level generally and requests either an informal conference or a formal hearing be conducted by WVU's Chief Grievance Administrator, who acts on behalf of WVU's President. Unless the parties agree otherwise, if an employee requests a hearing, it must be scheduled within 15 days of receipt of the grievance. As appropriate, a decision will be given at this level.
- **Level Two**—If an employee is unsatisfied with the Level One decision, he/she may file an appeal within 10 days to the WV Public Employees Grievance Board. At this level, a mediation may be requested and will be scheduled within 20 days of the request. The mediation is conducted by an administrative law judge at no cost to the parties. A report of the mediation shall be issued within 15 days of the mediation.
- **Level Three**—If the mediation at Level Two was unsuccessful, the employee may file a written appeal with the employer and the WV Public Employees Grievance Board within 10 days of the receipt of the mediation report and request a Level Three hearing on the grievance. This hearing will be held before an administrative law judge.