Letters of Expectation and Reprimand

Shop Steward

Q. I received a **letter of expectation** from my supervisor. Is it disciplinary? Should I have been able to have a union rep present when it was given to me?

A. There is a difference between a true letter of expectation and one that is actually disguised discipline. The difference is whether or not the letter refers or is intended to correct inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour. Any employee can be given a letter of expectation, even if there are no performance problems. A true letter of expectation is really no different than the goals you might have on your Performance Evaluation.

The problem is, employers often use letters of expectation to correct behaviour that they consider unacceptable, denying that they are disciplinary and denying rights of representation guaranteed under many collective agreements. If you receive this kind of letter you should contact the union office to ensure you are not being denied your rights under your collective agreement.

What can we do for a member who has received a Letter of Expectation?

- Review the letter to see if it really is Expectation or is it Reprimand
- Get all the details of the situation
- If Letter of Expectation:
  - investigate circumstances
  - ask member if they understand the expectation
  - ensure the member understands that a Letter of Expectation is a Direction that must be followed
  - if it is a disguised Letter of Reprimand, follow steps below

What can we do for a member who has received a Letter of Reprimand?

- Get all the details of the situation
- In all but the most uncommon of cases a grievance should be filed.
  - the uncommon case is when a Letter of Reprimand was warranted –always consult with a Union Advisor if you are thinking that no grievance should be filed.
- Sample Wording:
  - If the reprimand was written to look like a Letter of Expectation: " grieve that the Letter of Expectation dated <month-day-year> is actually a disguised Letter of Discipline and is unfounded and unwarranted."
  - If the member did not have opportunity to have a Union Rep with them: " grieve that the employer has breached Article <quote article that entitles a member to Union Representation on disciplinary matters> of the collective agreement by denying me the right of representation."
- In ALL cases the member should be counseled to understand the potential consequences of continuing the unwanted behaviour. These include:
  - an escalation of the severity of the discipline
  - erosion of relationship with supervisor

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