

## **UNION STEWARD DUTIES – GUIDE TO REQUEST FOR PAID RELEASE TIME FROM WORK FOR FS MANAGEMENT**

University of Washington labor contracts recognize the right of employees to be represented in certain circumstances. Representation is generally provided by a union staff member or a union shop steward. Both the UW-WFSE and the UW-SEIU 925 Collective Bargaining Agreements have specific stipulations as to when union steward paid release time should be authorized for designated steward duties. **ALL** union steward paid release time must be requested and approved in advance by the employee's supervisor and/or chain of command.

Common requests for representation include grievances, investigations that are likely to lead to discipline, and formal discipline including dismissal. In each case, an employee should be provided with sufficient notice to allow for attendance of the representative. The representative's availability should not unduly delay the process; if the chosen representative is not available within a reasonable time an alternate representative should be chosen. The question of reasonableness can vary case-by-case, and guidance is available from the department Director and/or FS Human Resources.

Designated union stewards are entitled to release time for representation purposes. Such release time is arranged with the steward's supervisor. If workload prevents release at the designated time, the earliest alternative time should be allowed. Release time encompasses travel and meeting time; it does not include preparation time by the steward and grievant. In addition to the circumstances noted above, each collective bargaining agreement specifies other instances when release time may be granted. Questions may be directed to FS Human Resources.

### What to do when a union steward requests paid release time during work hours:

- A supervisor should ask the following:
  - "What is the purpose of the release time? "
  - "In what area, zone or shop does the represented employee work?"
  - "Will management also be present?"
- Based on the responses received, release time may be approved **IF** reasonable work related considerations allow for the time off. If they do not, release time may be denied.
- "No" is a legitimate response if release time cannot be granted due to business necessity.

### Some of the primary reason(s) for granting union steward paid release time during work hours may include:

- Representation duties at a fact finding meeting where management is also present
- Representation duties at a grievance meeting where management is also present
- Representation duties at a corrective action meeting where management is also present
- Representation duties at a pre-determination meeting where management is also present
- Attend Union steward annual training (reference UW-WFSE Article 9.2(g), Article 9.4 and UW-SEIU 925 Article 6)
- Attend a Joint Labor Management meeting (reference UW-WFSE Article 9.4 and UW-SEIU 925 Article 28.1)
- Attend a Collective Bargaining meeting (reference UW-WFSE Article 9.4 and UW-SEIU 925 Article 7)

### **UW-WFSE APPLICABLE CONTRACT LANGUAGE**

**Union Stewards Article 9.2(a)** *The Employer recognizes the right of the Union to designate union stewards who shall be permitted without unnecessary delay to devote reasonable periods of time (for example, time to travel to the meeting site, 10-15 minutes to confer with the employee prior to the meeting) during normal working hours to present any grievance to the supervisor or designated representative....*

**Union Stewards Article 9.2(b)** *Time off for processing grievances shall be granted to a union steward by supervisor following a request but in consideration of any job responsibilities. If permission for time off cannot be immediately granted, the supervisor will arrange for time off at the earliest possible time thereafter.*

**Union Stewards Article 9.2(d)** *Union stewards shall primarily conduct representational duties only within their designated area of jurisdiction. Stewards may represent members in another jurisdiction if the steward designated for that other jurisdiction is unavailable (e.g. away on approved leave). In the event that a steward is unavailable, the steward of the next geographically closest designated jurisdiction will be contacted to represent the employee. The number of stewards in a particular area and the jurisdiction they serve shall be an appropriate subject of discussion between the Union and the Employer.*

**Employee Rights 10.4** *An employee will obtain prior approval from his or her supervisor before attending any meeting or hearing. All requests must include the approximate amount of time the employee expects the activity to take. Employees will suffer no loss of pay for attending management scheduled meetings and hearings that are scheduled during the employee's work time. Attendance at meetings or hearings during the employee's non-work hours will not be considered as time worked. An employee cannot use a state vehicle to travel to and from a worksite in order to attend a meeting or hearing unless authorized by the Employer.*

**UW-SEIU 925 APPLICABLE CONTRACT LANGUAGE**

**Stewards Article 5.2** *A steward who is processing a grievance in accordance with the grievance procedure of any SEIU Local 925 Agreement between the Employer and the Union shall be permitted reasonable time to assist in the resolution of legitimate employee grievances on the Employer's property without loss of pay or recorded work time. Time off for processing grievances shall be granted to a steward by supervision following a request, but in consideration of job responsibilities. If permission for time off cannot be immediately granted, the supervisor shall arrange for time off at the earliest possible time thereafter.*

**Stewards Article 5.3** *Stewards shall process grievances only within their jurisdiction unless otherwise mutually agreed.*