

**HOW TO BE  
AN EFFECTIVE  
MEMBER OF ANY  
COMMITTEE**

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## COMMITTEES, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Do you serve on a committee? Is your committee efficient? Is it effective? Does it accomplish its goals? Does everyone participate in discussions? Who really makes the decisions in your committee? Is it the committee chair, administrator(s), all the members, or those who make the loudest noise? The purpose of this training seminar is to explore each of these subjects, discuss your role as a committee member, and offer some tips on how to make committees work. In this publication, you'll find tips on:

- How to make meetings work
- The committee chair's role
- The committee member's role
- Assertive and effective behavior for committee members
- Listening tips and techniques
- Note taking, reporting tips and guidelines
- Constituent input
- Strategy for involvement on committees
- 911 signals: danger signs to look for
- Who to call (for help)

If you don't serve on a committee now, you may want to serve on one in the future. If so, this information will give you a "leg up" when you attend your first committee meeting. By following these tips, you can be sure you'll be better prepared than most committee members.

## HOW TO MAKE MEETINGS WORK

Productive meetings don't just happen, they require planning and commitment by the committee chair and committee members. Items that must be addressed include:

- Pre-meeting preparation and planning
- Conducting the meeting
- Post meeting action and follow-up

### Pre-Meeting Preparation

- Schedule meetings well in advance.
- Reserve meeting rooms as soon as the committee meeting schedule is known. Choose a location that is convenient for the majority of the participants, or rotate locations if necessary.
- Decide how refreshments will be handled.
- Prepare and distribute the agenda and background material at least several days before the meeting.
- Confirm the meeting room reservation and schedule equipment at least 3 days prior to each meeting.

### During the Meeting

- Start and end on time.
- Stay on the agenda and subject.
- Manage the use of time.
- Limit or avoid side conversations and distractions.
- Participate in the discussion. Be open-minded and receptive to ideas and opinions.
- Ask questions to assure understanding.
- Clarify action(s) to be taken.
- Take notes.

## **THE COMMITTEE CHAIR'S ROLE**

- ▶ Communicate the purpose of the committee and of each meeting to all committee members.
- ▶ Identify the committee's authority – advisory or decision making i.e., what the committee is empowered to do.
- ▶ Start and end meetings on time.
- ▶ Publish and distribute an agenda prior to the meeting.
- ▶ Distribute information to committee members. Example: the committee's budget, employer policy, state or federal requirements, financial information, the committee's mission or area of responsibility.
- ▶ Schedule meeting room and arrange for equipment and refreshments.
- ▶ Conduct "progress" and "process" checks with committee members between meetings.
- ▶ Act as liaison with other employer committees, administrators, the community, or employees.
- ▶ Secure resources.
- ▶ Elicit participation during meetings.
- ▶ Guide each meeting to its desired outcome.
- ▶ Keep discussion "on track."
- ▶ Summarize results at the end of each meeting.
- ▶ Provide for "official" and "unofficial" record keeping of the committee.
- ▶ Ensure full participation and open discussion at all meetings.
- ▶ Be prepared.

## THE COMMITTEE MEMBER'S ROLE

- Know or ask what is the purpose of the committee.
- Attend each meeting.
- Arrive on time or early. Leave after the meeting concludes, not before.
- Ask what your role is within the committee.
- Learn or ask about the about the committee's power or authority. Is it advisory only, or does the committee have a decision making role?
- Actively participate in discussions. When in doubt, ask questions!
- Disagree openly.
- When disagreeing, attack the issue, not the person!
- Communicate between meetings with the chairperson and other committee members.
- Honor all commitments made.
- Represent your constituency. It may be your department, your supervisor, your classification, or your CSEA chapter.
- Communicate with your constituency.
- Ask the person who appointed you what you are empowered to do on behalf of your constituency. Can you speak for your constituency and commit them to a decision made by the committee? Or must you return to your constituency and request a decision by that body?
- Listen with your eyes, and ears, at committee meetings and when receiving input or information from other sources.
- Share the floor with the rest of the committee members.
- Respond to questions.
- Stay on task.
- Don't engage in "sidebars" or take tangents.
- Make short, crisp statements.
- Use specific examples where possible.
- Don't share rumors or speculation.
- Keep other's input confidential.
- No vendettas - no hidden agenda.

## **ASSERTIVE AND EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER BEHAVIOR**

- Understand your duties and responsibilities.
- Actively participate in discussions. Silence indicates assent or agreement.
- Prepare for committee meetings beforehand.
- Research the subject matter.
- Solicit input from your unit or constituents.
- Advocate for your constituents.
- Understand power/authority.
- Understand protocol/rules.
- Attack the issue, not the person.
- Speak for yourself, don't rely on others to state your ideas or concerns.
- Give information. Describe the situation as you see it.
- Seek information. Invite the other person to describe the situation as he/she sees it.
- Express your feelings. Relate how you feel about what is going on or the issue under discussion.
- Seek to know the feelings of others. Ask the others to describe how they feel about the situation or issue, and accept that person's feelings without necessarily agreeing
- Remember – you are an equal member of the committee.
- Question, question, question what you are told.
- If in doubt, ask!

## **LISTENING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES**

- ▶ Stop talking - listen!
- ▶ Maintain eye contact with the speaker.
- ▶ Apply the same attention to listening that you do to talking.
- ▶ Identify your own listening blocks.
- ▶ Listen for context.
- ▶ Listen for content: Is it factual, opinion, judgment, bias, emotion, a recommendation vs. decision, seeking input from others, or brainstorming?
- ▶ Eliminate or reduce external distractions and noise.

# NOTE TAKING, REPORTING TIPS AND GUIDELINES

## Purpose of Taking Notes

- For your personal use.
- To make reports to your constituents.
- A reminder of tasks to complete.
- A record of the progress made by the committee.
- A record of recommendations and/or decisions made.
- **A written record of any discussions involving mandatory subjects of bargaining.**

## What to Record

- The date, time, and place of the meeting.
- Who attended, who didn't attend.
- Action taken by the committee.
- Recommendations made.
- Task assignments and who is responsible for each.
- Any discussion involving mandatory subjects of bargaining (record who said what, when it was said and who else was present).

## Constituent Reports

- Determine if an oral or written report is needed.
- Include recommendations and decisions made by the committee.
- Identify how any recommendations or decisions will affect your constituents, i.e., your classification, department, classified employees or CSEA.
- Identify the monetary impact on the employer, parents, community, and classified employees.
- State any timelines.

## Keep For Your Records

- Meeting agendas and notices.
- Reference materials.
- Sub-committee reports and recommendations.
- Financial information.
- Your notes and the corresponding meeting minutes.
- Projects under the purview of the committee.
- Calendars and time lines.
- Committee member names, addresses and phone numbers.
- A list of any subcommittee members, tasks and time lines.

## **CONSTITUENT INPUT**

Without input from the person(s) or group you represent, you can't adequately advocate their interests with your committee. You can obtain information from your constituents by:

- ▶ Asking the person(s).
- ▶ Polling group members through an informal telephone survey or at a meeting.
- ▶ Conducting a survey.
- ▶ Presenting an oral or written report at a formal meeting and recording any comments made.

## **STRATEGY FOR CLASSIFIED UNIT INVOLVEMENT ON DISTRICT COMMITTEES**

### **Process**

- Identify existing district committees and participants (including number of representatives and who appoints them).
- Identify classified representatives on committees.
- Establish communication with classified representatives and request reports.
- Request and/or volunteer to provide unit representation and/or involvement on committee(s).
- Request committee reports from classified representative.
- Solicit input/suggestions from unit members for committee contribution.
- Present issues to classified representatives for committee agendas.
- Publish committee reports/actions for unit members.
- Continue to promote classified presence/participation on committee(s).

## 911 SIGNALS: DANGER SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

You need to “call 911” if there is any discussion involving matters that impact wages, hours and working conditions of the employees CSEA represents. These could include areas such as:

- Changes in duties and job titles of classified employee positions.
- Changes in work schedules.
- Shift changes.
- Reduction or increase in hours.
- Loss of overtime.
- Use of volunteers.
- Contracting out of services.
- Use of temporary employees.
- “Out-sourcing”
- Use of student employees.
- Transfer of bargaining unit work to other positions or bargaining units.
- Impact on other classifications. For example, changing the starting/ending time of the class day may affect bus drivers and their hours.
- Increase in duties.
- Changes in benefits.
- If a “higher authority” overrides a decision of the committee.

A good motto to remember here is: **“When in doubt, tell.”**

## **WHO TO CALL (FOR HELP)**

### **Negotiable Subjects**

- Your chapter negotiating team chairperson.
- Your chapter executive board.
- Your chapter president.
- Your labor relations representative.

### **Non-Negotiable Subjects Relating to the Bargaining Unit or CSEA**

- Chapter president
- Other appropriate CSEA officer

### **Regarding Your Authority**

- The appointing agent

### **Regarding Your Responsibilities**

- The appointing agent
- The committee chairperson