

Presentation Title: Navigating Union Grievances: Proactive Strategies for Resolution

Description:

Addressing union grievances effectively requires a balance of legal compliance, transparency, and strong labor relations. In this roundtable discussion, district leaders will share best practices for responding to grievances, from initial filing to resolution. Topics will include understanding grievance procedures, maintaining clear documentation, fostering open communication with union representatives, and mitigating disputes before they escalate. Join us for a candid conversation on how to navigate the grievance process while building trust and collaboration with union partners.

Slide 1: Welcome & Introduction (2 minutes)

- Welcome participants.
 - Purpose: Share real-world strategies for responding to grievances while maintaining productive labor relations.
 - Brief overview of topics:
 - Grievances tied to pay and documentation
 - Annualized pay misunderstandings
 - Mediation and unsettled bargaining
 - Financial analysis during contract discussions
 - Special funding considerations (e.g., transportation grant)
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Slide 2: The Nature of Grievances (3 minutes)

- Define what a grievance is: a formal complaint regarding contract violations, working conditions, or policy issues.
- Types you're seeing most:

- Pay discrepancies
 - Access to pay records and documentation
 - Concerns about working conditions or perceived inequities
 - Tip: Document all agreements and deviations to reduce ambiguity.
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Slide 3: Annualized Pay – A Common Misunderstanding (4 minutes)

- Define annualized pay (e.g., 10-month work spread over 12-month payments).
 - Issue: Staff confusion between work performed and check amount.
 - Strategy:
 - Provide clear explanations at onboarding and during contract review.
 - Offer visuals or pay schedule breakdowns.
 - District action: Consider proactive communication before first paycheck.
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Slide 4: Requests for Pay Documentation (3 minutes)

- Some staff are requesting:
 - Salary placement records
 - Step calculations
 - Timecard breakdowns and contract hour justification
 - Strategy:
 - Be responsive but consistent.
 - Develop standard documentation packets.
 - Maintain a log of document requests for tracking.
 - Legal tip: Transparency supports trust—but know where the line is on personal/confidential information.
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Slide 5: When Bargaining Stalls – Moving to Mediation (4 minutes)

- Why unions might not settle:
 - Unmet financial expectations
 - Lack of trust
 - Broader political or regional pressures
- What to prepare:
 - Clear and defensible offers
 - Communication strategy with your board and staff
 - Legal counsel to support next steps
- Real-world advice: Stay professional—even if mediation stretches late into the night.

Slide 6: The Lawyer's Advice – Do the Math (3 minutes)

- Legal counsel will often say: *"Do the math."*
 - Don't make decisions on feelings—make them on financial impact.
 - Include:
 - Step costs
 - COLA increases
 - Benefit expansion
 - Longevity or bonus structures
 - Encourage participants: Ask finance staff to run multi-year models to show impact.
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Slide 7: Case Example – Bus Drivers & Transportation Grant (3 minutes)

- Bus drivers often high on the list for financial advocacy.
 - Factor in:
 - Oregon's **Transportation Reimbursement Grant** (70-90% reimbursed)
 - Cost/benefit analysis looks different here.
 - Strategy:
 - Use data to support targeted increases (revenue-offset logic).
 - Be transparent about the financial mechanism with the union (build trust).
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Slide 8: Best Practices & Lessons Learned (2 minutes)

- Keep documentation up to date and accessible.
 - Always assume the grievance may move beyond the district (Level 3 or arbitration).
 - Build relationships with union leaders outside of conflict.
 - Anticipate issues: budget documents, step placement, extra duty, calendar/work year clarity.
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Slide 9: Roundtable Prompt / Open Discussion (4 minutes)

Prompt Questions:

- What kinds of grievances are becoming more frequent in your district?
 - How have you responded to grievances around pay misunderstandings?
 - Have you had success with mediation or lessons learned when it failed?
 - How do you evaluate whether to offer financial increases for certain roles?
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