

# Member-to-Member Conflict: *What can a Steward do?*

**A**s stewards, you probably mainly hear about employee issues with management and the workplace.

And you might be familiar with the numerous tools you can utilize in helping members resolve these issues. But what do you do when a member raises an issue involving another member instead of management?

While people choose the jobs they have, they can rarely choose the people they work with. High workload demands, constricting timelines, staffing issues and personality conflicts are just some of the areas that can fuel conflicts between members.

These conflicts can be so disruptive to the workplace that management may become involved when job performance is affected.

Once this ball starts rolling, discipline is usually not too far behind. So what can you, as a steward, do to resolve member-to-member conflict? What can be done to help members work together more peacefully and professionally and avoid job performance issues and possible discipline?

### **Grievancy Process not Available**

The grievance process is not available as a resource as it is a tool to resolve violations of the contract or a past practice. However, there is an outside resource available for member-to-member conflicts. Many unions and employees promote and offer Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) programs as a safe environment to resolve these issues. Mediation, one form of ADR, is not about winning or losing—it's about finding a solution that can address the issues of all participants.

### **Mediation**

Mediation is an informal, voluntary and confidential process that helps people resolve potential or actual conflict. It is a proven method of improving and mending relationships, personal or professional through early intervention. In mediation, two or more people meet with a trained mediator. The mediator helps you:

- Identify your interests
- Explain your perspective to one another
- Open lines of communication
- Work collaboratively to generate mutually agreeable solutions



The mediation process should result in the parties communicating more effectively and reaching a settlement that is reflective of their values.

The settlement must be one that is balanced, realistic and durable. To find out if ADR is offered with your employer, contact your Human Resources office or your Union Representative.

— *By Behnaz Nelson, Local 17 Union Representative*