

ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

EMPLOYEE PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

POLICY

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati is committed to providing professional working conditions for every employee. Part of this commitment is encouraging an open and frank atmosphere in which employees may express and resolve issues or concerns. The employee problem solving process assures a complete, impartial and prompt attempt to resolve work-related conflicts.

RESPONSIBILITY

Employee, Employee's Supervisor, Employee's Department Head, Director of Human Resources, the Review Panel and Administration.

PROCEDURE

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. All employees (other than special project and temporary) are eligible to use the employee problem solving process.
2. Special project and temporary employees are eligible to use the informal process only.

B. EMPLOYEE PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

This policy is designed to have two separate processes: the informal process and the formal process.

1. The informal process is a non-written process and serves as an opportunity to resolve differences at the department level. The informal process must be completed before advancing to the formal process.

In the informal process, the employee must discuss the issue or concern with his or her immediate supervisor within three (3) working days of the time the event in question occurred, or the complainant knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known of it. If the employee is not satisfied with the outcome, and wishes to continue, the employee must discuss the issue or concern with his or her Department Director. The employee has five (5) working days after discussing the issue or concern with his or her Department Director to initiate the formal process if the outcome of the discussion with his or her department head is not acceptable.

2. The formal process is a written process that is initiated when the outcome of the informal process is not acceptable to the employee.
 - a. Before the formal process can be used, the Director of Human Resources must verify that the employee has been through the informal process.

- b. A formal complaint must be filed in writing through the Director of Human Resources, setting forth the complaint and the suggested solution. The request shall be submitted within three (3) working days of the conclusion of the informal process. The Director of Human Resources will forward a copy of the written complaint to the employee's Supervisor.

C. FORMAL PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

1. The employee problem solving process ensures review of the employee's problem by his or her Supervisor, Department Director and arbitration panel. The Director of Human Resources will serve as a mediator between the parties.
 - a. After receiving a copy of the written complaint, the employee's Supervisor has five (5) working days to discuss the issue with the employee and prepare a written response setting forth the complaint and the suggested solution.
 - b. If the decision is acceptable to the employee, the problem solving process will stop. If the decision is unacceptable, the process will move forward.
 - c. The Director of Human Resources will forward the complaint to the Department Director. The Department Director has ten working days to discuss the issue with the employee, conduct an investigation and prepare a written response.
 - d. If the decision is acceptable to the employee, the problem solving process will stop. If the decision is unacceptable, the process will move forward.
 - e. The aggrieved party shall send a memorandum to the Director of the Office of Human Resources requesting the formation of a volunteer review panel. The panel is made up of three (3) Archdiocesan Central Office employees. One is chosen by the aggrieved party, one is chosen by the respondent, and the third is chosen by those two members of the panel. The choice of panel members is to be made within 15 working days of the date of the Department Director's decision. The memorandum must stipulate the issue(s) (including the written Human Resources policy involved if applicable) to be addressed by the review panel. The respondent has the right to submit his/her own written presentation of the issue or issues to the panel.
 - f. The panel will hear both sides of the dispute in closed sessions within four (4) weeks of the date of the memorandum. The review panel's consideration shall be limited solely to the issue(s) raised in the memorandum. No other issue shall be raised or contention made at the hearing. The review panel shall reach its conclusion solely on the basis of its interpretation of the Human Resources policies (if complaint is policy related). The review panel shall have no authority to add to, subtract from or modify any Human Resources policy. The panel has no power to award a monetary settlement. The panel will give its conclusion in writing within 30 days after the last hearing, and copies will be sent to all parties involved in the complaint, including all appropriate Office and Department Directors.

Binding Decision

- g. Complaints involving the application of written Human Resources policies are binding.

Non-Binding Decision

- h. Complaints involving the application of non-policy issues are not binding. The conclusion of the review panel shall be a recommendation and shall not be binding. Compliance with the recommendation shall be voluntary. If the recommendation is accepted, it shall be implemented within 30 days from the date on which the arbitration panel communicated its conclusion.
- i. One copy of the decision will be given to the employee and one copy will be given to the Director of Human Resources to be kept on file.

D. HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTANT ROLE

The Director of Human Resources will maintain a complete file of all problem solving cases.

1. During the employee problem solving process, the Director of Human Resources will explain the problem solving process and arrange an appointment with the appropriate person. If requested, the Human Resources Director will accompany the employee at each step during the presentation of the complaint. The Director of Human Resources will encourage conciliation at each level of the process.
2. During the review, the Director of Human Resources or his/her designee will coordinate selection and training of the panel, set up meetings, call in witnesses and be present at all panel hearings to update panel on policies, procedures and precedents.

E. SCOPE OF EMPLOYEE SOLVING PROCESS

1. Not every problem that employees encounter can be resolved through the employee problem solving process. If a benefit is provided by statute or a benefit program that contains an appeal procedure, that procedure must be used. For example, if an employee files a claim for workers' compensation benefits that are disallowed, the employee must utilize the appeals procedure established by the State of Ohio; if a medical bill is not paid by the Archdiocesan insurance plan, the appeal procedure provided by the plan must be followed. The Director of Human Resources will inform the employee of the appropriate procedure for each problem.
2. A number of policies have been established to assure that the Archdiocese of Cincinnati functions in an orderly, fair and efficient manner, as well as to comply with various federal and legal requirements. Therefore, all decisions made through the employee problem solving process must be in accordance with Archdiocesan policy. While a review panel may identify rules or policies it does not believe are fair, it does not have the authority to modify any rule or policy.

3. The employee problem solving process is intended to provide a means of resolving work-related conflicts. It is not intended to alter employment status.

F. **PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTERING PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS**

1. Every employee complaint or problem is of concern to the management of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
2. Every problem should be resolved as quickly and as closely to the source as possible. Time limits are imposed to assure prompt action.
3. The rights of the employee must always be respected and all information kept confidential.

MODIFICATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati reserves the right to modify unilaterally this policy and procedure at any time. Any exception must have the approval of the Department Directors and be coordinated with the Director of Human Resources.