



Things to Remember

- There is support! The union office should be the teacher's first call. The teacher will receive guidance, suggestions on next steps and assurance that someone will be there every step of the way.
- At no time should the teacher discuss any details of the investigation with other teachers, administrators, students, parents or anyone outside of the union rep assigned to work with you.
- The teacher is entitled to and may choose to use sick days in consideration of his or her own wellness while the investigation is in process.
- Teachers may find it helpful to talk to a counsellor at the EFAP (Employee and Family Assistance Program). Their services are free to all CTA members: 1-800-667-0993.

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Investigation Information



In our Collective Agreement, the process for investigations is found in Article C. 22 – Dismissal and Discipline. It is a process that is designed to protect your rights as an employee of the School District.

Although an investigation is one of the most difficult things you will go through as a teacher, when they are done correctly, your rights as an employee are well protected.

How an Investigation Happens

An investigation is initiated by a principal or the district when they receive an allegation of a serious concern or complaint about a teacher's behaviour. The investigator will write a letter to the teacher and the union informing them that an allegation has been initiated and that they will be conducting an investigation. This letter is hand delivered to the teacher with the Staff Rep or CTA present. The teacher receives the letter but does not speak to the principal until later. The district will assign an investigator who may be your principal, an HR officer, or contracted external investigator.

Document, Document, Document!

Most often, there are very few details in the letter about the incident but we often ask the teacher to write down any details about anything that may have occurred over the previous few days that may have given rise to the complaint. It is very important that the teacher writes down and documents as much as they can remember. These notes can be very helpful to refer to when the teacher is answering questions, to refresh their memory. The investigator will interview the complainant and any possible witnesses as well as the teacher.

The Interview

When the teacher is interviewed they should always have a union representative with them. When the allegations of misconduct are revealed to the teacher, the teacher and the staff rep should take a break so they can talk about their recollections of the event in question. The teacher should not answer any questions without first having some time to think and talk with their union rep about what happened. When answering questions the teacher should always be truthful but brief in their answers. The union rep should make notes and monitor what the teacher and investigator are saying and sometimes remind them to be brief. Do not answer questions that you are not sure of the answer. Tell the investigator that you will have to think about that and will answer that question at a later time. If you don't remember, it is fine to say "I don't know".

When the Investigation is Over

Once the investigation is finished, the investigator will inform the teacher and the union what the findings are and what is going to happen next. Most investigations are unfounded and nothing further is done. In these cases, a letter is written saying that the investigation is concluded, the allegations are unfounded and everything will be removed from the teacher's personnel file. The personnel file is maintained at the School District Office as per Article E.24 of the Collective Agreement.

If there is a determination of some sort of misconduct, discipline may be handed out. Discipline can take many forms and is progressive in nature. If the matter is minor, a letter of expectation (which is not classed as discipline) may be issued. As the seriousness and/or the amount of misconduct increases the discipline also increases from a verbal warning all the way up to dismissal for very serious issues.

A Very Stressful Event For Everyone

An investigation is a very stressful event for all the parties involved. For principals, it is not something they do often and consequently, they are not often very familiar with the process. Generally, they want to support their teachers and make it as "painless" as possible but still do it correctly. This may make them seem distant and unsympathetic to the teacher's stress and anxiety.

As a Staff Rep this is also a very stressful event. The Staff Rep should also call the CTA Office for advice and support. If as a Staff Rep you are not feeling confident about attending the meeting, someone from the CTA Office will come to be the teacher's union representative. The first questions the Staff Rep wants to ask in the meeting with the teacher are: What are the allegations? Who has made the allegations? When did the allegations occur? Who are the witnesses to the allegations? Once the Staff Rep and the teacher have this information, they should ask for some time for the two of them to discuss the allegations. This will give the teacher some time to process the allegations, remember the day and possibly think of other witnesses that the Principal needs to talk to.

An investigation is a very stressful event in a teacher's career. Teachers need to consider their own "wellness" during the investigation. A teacher may want to contact EFAP (Employee & Family Assistance 1-800-667-0993) and talk to a counsellor. This is a free service offered to all employees of the District. The teacher may also want to take some sick days to help manage the effects of the stress. You should contact the CTA Office for advice and support.