

The Steward as Advocate

There will come a time when your role will be to represent workers in a grievance. Most contracts have similar definitions for what a grievance is. In general, the employer must have violated:

1. The contract;
2. Federal, state, or local law;
3. The employer's own rules or policies;
4. Past practice; and
5. Equal treatment.

If you decide the employer has committed a violation, then you must next determine which (of the following two) categories of violation is involved:

Discipline grievances

If the employer has disciplined a worker, the burden is on the employer to prove 'just cause.' Just cause for discipline is a requirement in most union contracts. Even if it isn't spelled out, most arbitrators require it.

All other grievances

If no discipline is involved, then it's up to the union to prove the violation has occurred.

These different types of violations call for different approaches. You're doing more than investigating now. You're building a case.