



Resolving a conflict with the help of a third party

The informal assistance of a neutral colleague, whom both parties trust and respect, can often lead to workable solutions without resorting to a formal complaint. Third-party involvement does not mean that person conducts investigations or determines fault or blame. In fact, third parties during the investigation may be called as witnesses.

Choosing a third party. If your personal efforts to resolve the problem have not worked, or if you are uncomfortable dealing with the situation yourself, it may help to talk to someone else. Colleagues can provide "reality checks" that can help you decide whether the action or pattern of behaviour really was inappropriate. They can also suggest ways to deal with the conflict or can discuss the problem with the other person involved. If you want to talk through the problem but find it makes you too emotional, an Employee Assistance Program counsellor may be helpful to you. Likewise, a talk with a manager or a union representative could prove useful. The person you choose to provide you with advice should be selected with care and, ideally, should be someone with a reputation for *honesty, integrity and impartiality*. He or she should also be someone who can appreciate the sensitivity of the situation for everyone involved.

You do not have to be the victim of harassment to take this step. It can also help you if you are the person whose behaviour is at issue or the co-worker or supervisor who has witnessed or heard about the conflict.

Being a third party. If a colleague approaches you for advice, provide suggestions or a listening ear. But be careful not to compound the problem. Keep in mind the reasons you were selected and the responsibility you have to both parties—strive to be honest, impartial, sensitive and discreet.

Bear in mind also that not all situations lend themselves to the involvement of a third party. Think carefully when deciding which course of action will be the most helpful and constructive in finding a solution.

RESOLVING A COMPLAINT FORMALLY: THE HARASSMENT COMPLAINT PROCESS

Anyone who has been harassed and feels other options are not appropriate or have not worked may lodge a formal complaint with the Director General, Client Services Bureau. Once a formal complaint has been made, it will be passed on to the Advisor on Harassment who will assign an investigator to investigate the complaint.

Complaints investigators gather evidence, conduct interviews and generally examine whether there is any substance to the claim that harassment has occurred.

A harassment investigation follows a prescribed set of rules designed to be fair to both the person who filed the complaint (the complainant) and the person against whom the complaint is laid (the respondent). A person who makes a formal complaint may withdraw it at any time; however, management may continue its investigation into the complaint until satisfied that the issues involved have been appropriately addressed. During the investigation, both parties are obliged not to speak about the case (except to the investigator) because it could interfere with the investigative process.

The investigation

A harassment investigation can be broken down into five parts.

1. Once a formal complaint is filed, the Advisor on Harassment will give written notification of