



HOW TO MANAGE A STAKEHOLDER GRIEVANCE

Between a VMC Team Member & Stakeholder

If a VMC team member has a grievance with a stakeholder, here are the steps to take to resolve it.

- The team member should communicate the grievance with the VMC Executive Director **within 10 days of the occurrence which gave rise to the grievance**. Provide as much documentation and background of the situation as possible. State facts and keep emotion and personal opinion out of it.
- Try to resolve the grievance directly with the stakeholder. Be professional and accountable in seeking resolution in a timely manner. Use discretion when resolving grievances via email; it is easy for the receiver to misinterpret context and tone. If email correspondence goes beyond (2) two sessions, phone or set up a face-to-face meeting with the stakeholder for better communications. If the matter is resolved successfully, inform the Executive Director.
- If the issue does not get resolved in the manner above, involve the VMC Executive Director. Both the Executive Director and team member will evaluate the situation and devise a plan on the next steps to take to address the matter.
- It is up to the Executive Director to use discretion deciding whether Board involvement is needed to resolve the grievance. Individual team members *should not* include MCTC Board Members on correspondence when grievances transpire; this is the role of the Executive Director.

When a Stakeholder Has Communicated a Conflict with a VMC Team Member about Another Member

If a VMC team member is in the middle of a grievance with a stakeholder and outreach has transpired, including you (as a separate team member) in on the situation, here are the steps to take.

- Communicate the grievance to both the team member in question and the Executive Director **within 10 days of the occurrence which gave rise to the grievance**. Provide any documentation, background information, and facts communicated to you or shared with you.
- Let the stakeholder know that (1) you have made the Executive Director aware of the grievance and your additional involvement, and (2) the ED will be following up. Avoid any additional input or commentary to the stakeholder. Try to end the communication in a supportive and positive way. If using email, make sure to CC the VMC Executive Director in any correspondence.
- Remove yourself fully from the overall situation after the above steps are complete. Do not attempt to follow up with the stakeholder concerning the situation. It is not your responsibility to resolve other team member conflicts.
- Be professional and keep the situation confidential.
- The VMC team member in question will then follow the ***Between a VMC Team Member & Stakeholder*** process



HOW TO MANAGE INTERNAL GRIEVANCES

Between VMC Team Members

If a VMC team member has a grievance with another team member, here are the steps to take to resolve it.

- Communicate the grievance with the VMC Executive Director **within 10 days of the occurrence which gave rise to the grievance**. Provide as much documentation and background of the situation as possible. State facts and keep emotion and personal opinion out of it.
- Try to resolve the grievance directly with the other team member. Be professional and accountable in seeking resolution in a timely manner. Use discretion when using email to resolve conflict; it is easy for the receiver to misinterpret context and tone. If email correspondence goes beyond (2) two sessions, phone or set up a face-to-face meeting with the team member for better communications.
- If the issue does not get resolved in the manner above, involve the Executive Director. Provide the Executive Director information and allow time to hear both sides. The Executive Director should meet with the team member(s) involved over the phone or in-person to resolve the issue.
- It is up to the Executive Director to use discretion on corrective action steps.

Between a VMC Team Member and VMC Executive Director

If a VMC team member has a grievance with the Executive Director, here are the steps to take.

- If you feel you can resolve the grievance with the Executive Director directly, discuss it with the Executive Director **within 10 days of the occurrence which gave rise to the grievance**.
- If you feel you cannot resolve the grievance with the Executive Director directly, take your grievance to the Chair of the Personnel Committee.
- In either case: provide facts, accurate information, and professional communication, in writing. State your grievance clearly and, if desired, propose a course of action to resolve it.
- The Executive Director should address your grievance within within 3 business days after hearing or receiving it. Depending on the severity, the Executive Director should set up a face-to-face meeting or a call to resolve the matter.
- When dealing directly with the Executive Director, if you feel like the grievance has not been resolved through your initial efforts, provide additional written communication to the Executive Director detailing out the grievance, the basis for your continued dissatisfaction, and your proposed course of action to resolve it. Allow for (5) five business days for the Executive Director to respond. This correspondence must be provided to the Executive Director within (5) five business days after the call or face-to-face meeting.
- If you feel like your grievance still has not been resolved through the course of action above, you may send written correspondence to the Chair of the Personnel Committee, appealing for intervention. Notify the Executive Director upon taking this additional step.
- It will be up to the Personnel Committee Chair to decide whether Board action needs to take place.



- Allow up to (10) ten business days for the Personnel Committee Chair to investigate and gather the information needed to determine the next steps and how to properly respond to your grievance.

HELPFUL TIPS

DEFINITION

A grievance is defined as an unresolved issue concerning the application of VMC policy, practice, or procedure. This includes disciplinary action, involuntary termination, allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

Complaints regarding performance appraisals, flexible work options decisions, reduction in the size of the workforce, restructuring, change in reporting line and/or the designation of individuals for redeployment or separation from a unit are not matters subject to a grievance under this policy. Complaints regarding compensation and classification are only grievable if a violation of Federal, State or local equal opportunity or labor laws is alleged. Other complaints of this nature are handled administratively. Question regarding the administrative review process should be directed to the Executive Director.

PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

Staff may not be discriminated against for exercising rights under this grievance protocol. When a staff member alleges he or she has been discriminated against for exercising rights under this protocol, or for participating in a grievance as a witness or grievant representative, a complaint may be initiated directly to the Executive Director or the Chair of the Board. VMC considers any act of discrimination by a supervisor against any staff member as a result of her or her involvement in this protocol as unacceptable supervisory conduct and a violation of VMC policy.

BE RESPECTFUL

We are all professionals and should be respectful to others in any type of grievance or conflict situation.

SUPPORT

It is easy to get caught up in the drama of a grievance that doesn't involve you. It is important for you as a VMC team member to act professionally, follow the proper protocol, provide support for the stakeholder, but also provide support for your team.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The worst way to be knowledgeable about a grievance is to discuss this with outside stakeholders and team members not involved. Gossip fuels conflict and doesn't resolve issues.

AVOID TRIANGULATION

Triangulation occurs when an outside person intervenes or is drawn into a conflicted or stressful relationship in an attempt to ease tension and facilitate communication. The only person who should facilitate communication in situations like this is the VMC Executive Director.



GO TO THE SOURCE

In situations where there is conflict, it is more effective to go directly to the source. This may mean to set up a time to discuss the conflict face-to-face or over the phone with the person or people directly involved. Most conflicts are not easily resolved via email.

EMAIL IS NOT ALWAYS THE SOLUTION

Be professional and use discretion in resolving conflicts via email. It is easy for the receiver to misinterpret context and tone. If email correspondence involving conflict goes beyond (2) two sessions, it can escalate from a bad situation into a worse situation. Reach out via phone or set up a face-to-face meeting for better communications. You can always ask the VMC Executive Director to be in attendance.

TAKE TIME BEFORE SENDING

If you are upset and are crafting an email correspondence, keep it in draft form before sending it out. Take 30-45 minutes to allow it to stay in draft form and then go back and reread it. You may also want a team member to read it and give their input before sending.

Make any adjustments as needed and make sure the communication is professional in nature, providing facts and without emotion. Make sure to CC the VMC Executive Director in on the correspondence.