

The Process

An interest-based approach strives to meet the interests of all. It is neither a hard (the more I get, the less you get) nor a soft (seeking a compromise to placate) approach. Participants gain an understanding of each other's interests or needs. This creates a maximum number of opportunities to develop a solution that satisfies all parties. Participation in the process is completely voluntary. Participants are treated equally and can be sure that the SRS Program is confidential.

Mutual gain is the central focus of a Staff Relations Service for members. An SRS provides a secure internal forum to discuss issues that are dividing individuals on a staff.

The process focuses on the following elements:

1. Issue: depersonalize the problem
2. Interests: move from positions to interests
3. Options: generate alternative solutions before deciding what to do
4. Action Plan: insist that the results take into account the interests of all parties

Facilitators are neutral throughout the process and are certified mediators.

Advantages of the Staff Relations Service

- interest-based
- potential for lasting agreements
- the people affected are the ones making the decisions
- cost effective
- respects everyone's integrity
- enhances workable future relationship

For more information
contact Teacher Employment Services

Edmonton 780-447-9400
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1-800-332-1280

SRS provides safe tools; you provide the will and the way.



Staff Relations Service

General Information

The Staff Relations Service (SRS) is one way of maintaining healthy staff relationships.

The SRS is an interest-based alternative dispute resolution process facilitated by neutral third parties who assist the parties to reach an acceptable outcome.

***Be hard on issues—
Soft on people***

Objectives

The Staff Relations Service makes available positive, efficient and effective skills for dispute resolution at the school level through education, facilitation and mediation. Disputes may range from interpersonal difficulties between coworkers to problems with supervisors. The SRS helps parties reach possible resolution to conflicts.

Assistance can take one of three forms depending on the situation, the needs of participants and the willingness of participants. SRS facilitators could work with

1. all members of a school staff to develop interest-based conflict resolution skills,
2. a small group with the aim of focusing their efforts on positive resolution-oriented actions and dispute resolutions.
3. two parties involved in an interpersonal or work-related conflict.

The Staff Relations Service for members is flexible, allows the parties to retain control of the process and provides a timely resolution.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is mediation?

Mediation offered in the SRS program is interest-based assistance with a problem-solving approach. The mediators help parties develop a solution to which they can agree.

When does the SRS work best?

SRS works best when the parties want resolution that will strengthen their ongoing relationship once the issue is resolved.

Who are the facilitators?

The facilitators are certified mediators, selected by the ATA, who work in confidence and independently of the employer and the ATA.

Does the facilitator impose a decision?

No. Facilitator/mediators are not arbitrators. It is up to the parties to craft a solution that meets their needs. Facilitators guide the process to keep the parties talking.

How do I find a facilitator?

Contact the Teacher Employment Services program area of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Who pays?

The SRS service is provided at no cost to active members of the ATA.

What if the matter is before the courts or an arbitration panel?

When other formal channels are active, the coordinator of Teacher Employment Services will make a decision about terminating, suspending or continuing the process.

Does participation mean I give up my right to pursue other solutions?

No. Participating in the SRS does not remove any of your legal rights. The SRS provides a proactive, informal way to help members resolve their own problems—it does not replace existing mechanisms. If the SRS is not implemented or does not succeed, formal channels such as discipline, transfer, termination, arbitration or litigation are still available.

Can I be sure that my privacy will be maintained?

Yes. All sessions are strictly confidential. Only your agreement to participate and a mediator's statement of success or nonsuccess are kept. All notes, documents and records are destroyed at the end of the process.

STAFF RELATIONS SERVICE	compare approaches	ARBITRATION/ COURTS/ EMPLOYMENT
Inexpensive		Costly
Timely		Time consuming
Scheduled quickly		Dependent on panel/court times
Direct communication between parties	← →	Parties speak through counsel to a panel/judge
Encourages dialogue		Discourages dialogue
Builds relationships		Discourages relationships
Parties develop solution		Court/panel/board imposes solution