

OPEIU Local 50/ Hawaii Nurses Association
Steward Duties and Responsibilities

General description

An OPEIU Local 50/HNA Steward is a representative of the union whose function shall be to communicate effectively between the union and the members, and to promote harmony and solidarity in the workplace. The steward is also responsible for upholding the terms of the collective bargaining contract and OPEIU Local 50/HNA Constitution and Bylaws.

Major duties and responsibilities

The main roles of an OPEIU LOCAL 50/HNA Steward are to be a leader, educator, communicator and organizer.

The Steward as a Leader:

- Leads by example to establish trust, reliability, and credibility with union members, co-workers, and the supervisor and administration.
- Establish working relationship with respective Labor Relations Specialist.
- Perform good listening skills to understand the issues, show concern and effectively provide problem solving techniques.
- Advocate for protection of member rights and benefits.
- Develop teamwork to promote unity and solidarity of members.
- Act promptly and decisively in handling members' concerns and problems.
- Motivate members to attend and participate in union and community activities.
- Attend steward training programs and other professional development on the union's collective bargaining agreement, work rules, organizational structure, goals and objectives, and positions on issues and how members are affected.
- Provide feedback to members on various training programs and professional development. Act promptly and decisively.
- Provide information on union programs and issues such as the grievance process, employee rights and responsibilities, legislative programs, and history of the labor movement.
- Educate members on the importance of the political process.

The Steward as an Educator

The Steward is responsible to educate members at the worksite about the union's collective bargaining agreement, work rules, organizational structure, goals, and objectives, and positions on issues and how members are affected.

The Steward as a Communicator:

Communication is a key function and the Steward is the primary link between the union and the members.

- Provide information on the different methods of communication: regular mail, e-mail, E-Bulletin, web site, unit meetings, telephone, fax, bulletin boards, etc.
- Use the different methods of communication with members.
- Practice active listening techniques to reflect concerns and appreciation of all members.
- Promote the union in the community and the work site.
- Report union concerns to the members; and report member concerns to the union.
- Inform members on union proposals.

The Steward as an Organizer:

A major task of the steward is to organize members at the worksite.

- Greet new employees and recruit new members through filing membership registrations and provide new member packets to new members.
- Establish friendly relations with members.
- Maintain contact with members.
- Utilize and maintain a bulletin board.
- Recruit membership participation in union activities.
- Encouraged to attend as practical, General Membership Meetings.

Advice for Effective Stewardship
Compassion, Competence, Confidence

When a member lodges a complaint:

- Your first responsibility is to “aid and comfort” your member in times of need. Be a good listener, not a critic.
- Do not be judgmental of your member. You are an advocate of his or her rights, not their judge or a mediator.
- Do not feel that you must “do something” beyond what you are trained to do. Your Labor Relations Specialist is your primary resource.
- Know the contractual deadline for filing a grievance. When a member complains to you, immediately determine when the alleged offense occurred.
- Never say, “No, you don’t have a grievance” to your member. Your union’s duty of fair representation applies to all members and service fee payers, whether or not you believe them to be right or a good union member. Pass him or her on to your Labor Relations Specialist.
- Try to investigate the facts of any complaint, but don’t go beyond your competence. If management underestimates you, thereby providing you with information they might not otherwise give to the union, you’ve provided a valuable service.
- Write down what you know. Ask for a written statement of the complaint from your member. Turn it over to your Labor Relations Specialist.

When acting as a conduit between the union and the member:

- Establish and/or maintain a proper union bulletin board.
- Be timely in posting the information that you receive from the Union.
- Know the various ways to keep in touch with your union: your LRS, the website, the E-Bulletin, the newsletter, etc.
- Know the union resources and benefits available to your members.
- Establish and maintain a telephone tree for quick communication with all the members you represent.
- Keep current with union activities; keep your members informed.
- Remember, you are the Union to your member; represent us well.

Your image is our image!

Chief Steward Duties and Responsibilities

A Chief Steward:

- Has taken or will be taking advanced steward training in one of the next two offerings after election to chief steward.
- On-going advanced steward training; attending training sessions annually as available.
- Ensures that all those represented by OPEIU Local 50/HNA have equal and complete access to all rights in the contract, law and tradition.
- Is a role model: You represent OPEIU Local 50/HNA; conduct yourself accordingly. Take pride in and do your job well. Do not give the employer, nor your union, any reason to limit your activities as an advocate.
- Provides leadership, organizes and positively motivates the membership: Keep members and stewards informed. Be visible at the work site. Be a strong and clear voice for the union. Encourage others to become more active.
- Is a loyal advocate for OPEIU Local 50/HNA and furthering the mission and goals of the union's leadership.
- Under the direction of the OPEIU local 50/HNA President, the Chief Steward may handle grievances, assist other stewards with grievance handling, and advance steward training in coordination with OPEIU Local 50 President: Know the contract and grievance procedure. Track grievances and keep records on their status. Be readily available for questions on grievance issues, grievance status and follow up quickly with answers. It is not the Chief Steward's responsibility to file or handle every grievance.

Maintain close contact with stewards. Make sure that LRSs and stewards know you must receive copies of all grievances filed and be kept informed of their status. In coordination with OPEIU Local 50/HNA President, hold meetings and provide training for facility stewards. Arrange for new stewards to accompany experienced stewards and LRSs to grievance hearings.

- Recruit new stewards.
- Monitors issues at respective facility: Keep your eyes and ears open for issues that affect the membership – responding quickly to issues builds member confidence in the union. Reports all new issues and concerns to LRS and the OPEIU Local 50/HNA President.