

## Dispute resolution intervention training

e recently completed dispute resolution intervention training, which included the USPS area managers, NBAs, RAAs and designees. The training was conducted in July in Denver, Philadelphia and St. Louis by Jim Williams and Jamie Lumm of the NALC and Jim Caputa from the USPS, who all did an excellent job.

These events covered the history of the intervention process, including the evolution of several memos that the parties have signed over the years. Training also involved dealing with difficult people, role playing, group dynamics, how groups function, gathering and assessing information and the environment, developing an intervention action plan, writing agreements, what a successful intervention looks like, and developing an action plan.

These trainings are an important part of developing long-term solutions to problem sites as well as improving the work environment for our members and relationships with management. Our joint goal is to achieve timely, well-written decisions at the lowest possible level of the process. This is a win-win situation for all.

The dispute resolution process (DRP) falls under Article 15 of the National Agreement. The following, from the April 25, 2002, memo on the DRP, establishes how the parties wanted the process to work:

The NALC National Business Agents (NBA) and District and Area Management are responsible for ensuring that the dispute resolution process is effective in all ways, including the timeliness of decision-making. All parties are expected to monitor the functioning of the process and, generally, to assume a proactive role regarding the labor/management relationship.

Keeping that in mind, the relationship and involvement with the NBA, district and area managers are pivotal to the success of the process. As overseers, they need to meet regularly and take a personal interest in the operation of each team that falls under their jurisdiction.

One of the key elements of the process involves the "seven indicators" memo, which gives the parties a basis for why there may be problems. Below is the memo, which includes the list of the seven indicators:

## **USPS—NALC Intervention Process**

**Purpose:** To provide a timely, proactive and instructive joint response to local issues which prevent the local parties from identifying, documenting, discussing, and resolving non-

interpretive disputes within contractual time limits.

**Responsibility:** The National Business Agent (NBA) and the Area Manager, Labor Relations (AMLR), or designees, are responsible for monitoring the Step B team site(s) within their jurisdiction. When data reflects one or more of the following indicators are present, the parties will determine the cause.

## **Indicators:**

- 1. A steady increase in grievance activity
- · Formal Step A
- Step B
- 2. Grievance processing delays
- · Formal Step A
- · Step B
- 3. Reoccurring grievances
- Formal Step A
- Step B
- 4. Step A files not properly prepared
- 5. Step B resolution rate below 80%
- 6. Step B Decisions not educational
- 7. Arbitration cases not scheduled within 120 days of impasse The NBA and AMLR, or designees, must jointly determine the underlying issue(s) of the indicators in a site. In order to make the determination the parties may:
- · Collect additional data
- Consult local parties

The NBA and AMLR, or designees, will agree on an appropriate response.

**Initiation:** If intervention activity is warranted, the National Business Agent (NBA) and Area Manager Labor Relations (AMLR), or designees, will jointly contact the local parties to define and discuss issues to be addressed and any additional data collection that may be needed.

**Intervention:** Intervention methodology is to respond to the issue prompting the intervention. Essential elements of intervention are:

- An assessment of underlying causes
- · A timeline for completion
- Specific goals and expectations
- Record agreements between the local parties
- Encourage the local parties to develop practices that support desired conduct

**After the Intervention:** The NBA and AMLR, or designees, are responsible for post-intervention evaluation, including:

- Monitoring progress
- Providing feedback
- Closure

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