

Grievance, Complaint, or Gripe?

As a classified employee, you have certain rights but are you aware of what those rights are? Many employees mistakenly confuse a gripe of a complaint with a grievance. This brief article will attempt to explain the difference.

Grievance

A grievance is a violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between DEA and the District. The CBA is what is commonly referred to as “your contract.” A grievance is defined under the grievance article but generally is a denial of a specific section of the contract. For example, you would file a grievance if your supervisor told you to work through your lunch.

Complaint

A complaint is not a violation of the contract. Although an employee may believe that they are being treated unfairly, if there is no contractual violation, there is no grievance. A good example would be when two classified employees do not get along or have an argument. There is no contractual violation so a grievance cannot be filed. In these cases, the employee must forward the complaint to their supervisor. Board Policy encourages employees to forward complaints, however the policy is not specific. If you have a complaint, speak to your supervisor. If you do not receive a satisfactory response, put your complaint in writing and forward it up the chain of command.

Gripe

What is a gripe? Many employees call me regarding what they believe are legitimate grievances when in fact they just have a gripe. A gripe is not a contractual violation and may not be a complaint. A gripe may be something that you believe is unfair or unjust but is not unlawful. For example, if your supervisor or co-worker “treats you differently” but that treatment does not rise to the level of discrimination. The best way to describe this is when two employees just don’t get along. There is nothing legal or contractual that mandates that employees like each other or become friends.