



# CRA BULLETIN

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

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## RESOLVING EMPLOYEE CONFLICTS

Intervening in employee disputes is a risky action and, often as not, ends up with the manager alienating both parties. A better way to proceed is set up a policy that will enable management to listen to any employee with a grievance, yet still encourage those with disputes to do everything they can to resolve it among themselves.

This should be a formal policy, stated in writing and copied to everyone who is employed in the business. It should also become a part of employee orientation and be incorporated into the company's policies and procedures manual.

Be a mediator - not a judge.

While it's preferable to allow people to resolve their own disputes, if that doesn't happen or if the conflict is affecting their performance or the business itself, then you should play a part. In this situation make your role one of mediator rather than as judge and jury. Have a plan and work to it or you're likely to make things worse.

Guide them through a simple process that makes them think about why the problem arose and what they can do about it. Begin by seeing each of the parties separately. Here are some questions you can use to be sure and get their side of the story:

- Ask each of them what has been said and done
- Ask each of them why the other person feels that a dispute exists
- Ask each of them if any other co-workers are involved
- Ask each of them what they feel would end the dispute

Make careful notes and when the sessions are over compare records to identify the major points of difference or misunderstanding.

Bring the parties together in a mutual environment.

Now that you've familiarised yourself with the parties in the dispute and how they feel about the key issues, bring them together in a location outside the work area of any of those involved. Summarise their respective positions and try to get them to be objective about their position as well as that of the other person.

If it's a realistic idea, propose to both parties their own solutions.

Start from the answers they each gave about what would resolve the dispute for them, and try to work them both towards a middle ground that will probably be a compromise but hopefully will be acceptable to each of them. Point out where the parties have seen things the same way and try to build an agreement from those foundations.

Your role must be to remain objective and impartial. Even if you personally feel that one or other is 'right' your place is to help both parties see things clearly and work it out between themselves.