

STEWARDS ORIENTATION

Getting Started



Stewards: Getting Started

This orientation should take no more than 15 minutes

You can download the full Stewards Power Tool series at <https://opseu.org/member-education/>



Stewards: Getting Started

Congratulations on accepting the role of a Steward in your workplace.

As a Steward, you are an official of the union.

You are the face and leader of the union where it really matters: in the workplace.



Stewards: Getting Started

When you take on the role of a Steward, you are not alone. You have other stewards in your Local, your Local officers, and union staff to call on.

Every person who takes on the mantle of Steward brings their own set of skills and experiences to the role.

As a Steward, you have rights under your Collective Agreement and under Labour Law.



Stewards: Getting Started

As a Steward, you will represent people you know, and work with everyday.

For these co-workers, you are their link to the union.

Your job is to make sure their particular needs and interests are expressed to the leadership of your Unit or Local; and to make sure that decisions and discussions at the Unit and Local level are communicated back to them.



Stewards: Getting Started

OPSEU expects that you will be a union representative for about 10 to 20 people. (Numbers vary from Local to Local, but about a dozen is a good number.)

These are the people you know, and work with.



Stewards: Getting Started

Your members – the dozen or so you represent – have elected you because they have confidence in your ability to represent them.

This includes representing their views at meetings; representing their interests in the workplace; and representing them through grievances if necessary.



Stewards: Getting Started

As a Steward, you have the oldest title in the labour movement.

The first unions were small informal groups of workers with little clout and few resources.

They had no hired guns to win their battles. They relied on each other and their rank and file leaders, called Stewards.



Stewards: Getting Started

The steward's job was vast: sign up new members, police the collective agreement, bargain and face off against supervisors (often without any grievance rights).

Stewards even had to go to each member on payday to collect union dues.

This is equally true today.



Stewards: Getting Started

Unions with keen, energetic Stewards are leaders in the labour movement and set the standards for contract improvements.

Unions lose the respect of both members and employers when they forget the importance of elected leaders with clout in the workplace.



Stewards: Getting Started

Union staff cannot do the steward's job.

Members need someone they can turn to daily as the representative of the union.

That's you!



Stewards: Getting Started

Your position gives you a vital opportunity to improve conditions on the job.

Your forebearers risked life, limb and livelihood to get their co-workers and families a fair price for their labour.



Stewards: Getting Started

Your Collective Agreement, and much of our social and workplace legislation, is a testament to thousands of Stewards who sacrificed for us.

It's a solid foundation we can all build on.



Stewards: Getting Started

An ordinary employee taking on the boss must be careful **not** to cross the line into insubordination.

A union Steward, as an elected union official, has more leeway. When you are wearing your “union hat,” you are not talking to your supervisor as an employee, but as a representative of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. You are equal to the boss when wearing your union hat.



Stewards: Getting Started

The Steward's Job in OPSEU:

- Organizer and communicator
- Grievance handler
- A link to collective bargaining
- A link to the local executive
- A link to the central union
- A resource for members



Stewards: Getting Started

Questions:

1. What Motivates People?
2. Why do people give time and energy to the union or any other cause?



Stewards: Getting Started

Answers:

- They feel personally affected by the issue
- They were invited by a friend or someone they respect
- They feel compassion for other people affected
- They need to feel part of a group
- They are attracted by the leaders
- They dislike the opposition
- They are looking for status and recognition
- They feel guilty about being apathetic (Note: This is the least important reason, so forget guilt as a tactic.)



Stewards: Getting Started

Keep these reasons in mind when asking members to get involved in your unit or local.

If one doesn't work, try another.



Stewards: Getting Started

For more information:

Visit the OPSEU Member Education web page at <https://opseu.org/member-education/> and download the other Stewards orientation sessions.



Feedback?

Please take a moment to share your feedback.

1. Did you find this orientation useful?
2. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Thank you for your time. Please share your insight by sending a quick email to education@opseu.org





MEMBER EDUCATION 
FORMATION DES MEMBRES

opseu.org/education sefpo.org/formation

