

**GARFIELD HEIGHTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**  
**BUILDING REPRESENTATIVE**  
**TRAINING GUIDE**

A Comprehensive Guide to Representing Your Members

Prepared by the GHTA Executive Committee

2026

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**SECTION**  
**QUICK START**

## **Your First 30 Days as a Building Rep**

Welcome. You have taken on one of the most important roles in this union. Building representatives are the front line of member advocacy -- you are often the first person a member calls when something goes wrong, and the way you respond in those first moments shapes everything that follows.

This guide will give you everything you need. But before you read the whole thing, here is what to do first.

### **Week 1 -- Get Oriented**

- Read the negotiated agreement cover to cover. You do not need to memorize it -- but you need to know what is in it and where to find things. Pay particular attention to Article IV (Grievance Procedure), Article III (Teacher Rights), and Article VIII (OTES Evaluation).
- Introduce yourself to your building principal as a GHTA building representative if you have not already done so.
- Get the contact information for every member in your building and save it somewhere accessible.
- Connect with GHTA Executive Board to introduce yourself and get added to all relevant communications.
- Find out if there are any active grievances or open issues in your building that you are inheriting.

### **Week 2 -- Build Your Foundation**

- Walk your building. Know where every bargaining unit member works. Know who the newer teachers are -- they are often the most vulnerable and the least likely to know their rights.
- Identify the issues in your building. Are evaluations being done properly? Are there workload concerns? Discipline problems? Talk to members informally and listen.
- Set up a simple system for tracking member concerns -- a notebook, a spreadsheet, whatever works for you. Every concern that comes to you should be written down with a date.
- Familiarize yourself with the grievance timeline. The most important number is 90 days -- that is how long a member has from the date they knew or should have known about a violation to file a grievance. Missing that deadline kills the case.

### **Week 3-4 -- Get to Work**

- Hold an informal meet-and-greet with members in your building if possible. Let them know you are their rep, how to reach you, and that everything they tell you is confidential.
- Attend your first GHTA Executive Committee meeting and meet the other reps.
- If any member comes to you with a concern in your first month, take it seriously, document it, and loop in the GHTA Executive Board. Do not try to handle a potential grievance on your own yet.

#### **The Golden Rule of Building Rep Work:**

When in doubt, document it and contact the GHTA Executive Committee. You will never get in trouble for over-communicating with GHTA leadership. You can get in trouble for handling something alone that should have been escalated.

## SECTION 1

# Your Role and Responsibilities

## What a Building Rep Is

A building representative is the Association's primary point of contact at the building level. You are not a supervisor, a counselor, a lawyer, or an administrator. You are a fellow teacher who has agreed to advocate for the contractual rights of your colleagues.

Your job has three core functions: being accessible to members, identifying and documenting potential contractual violations, and connecting members with the resources and support they need -- whether that is a direct resolution, a conversation with administration, or a formal grievance.

## What a Building Rep Is Not

- You are not a complaint department. Your job is to identify contractual issues, not to solve every workplace problem a member brings to you.
- You are not obligated to give legal advice. If a member asks you whether something is a grievance, the honest answer is often 'I am not sure -- let me look into it and talk to the GHTA Executive Board.' That is always the right answer.
- You are not alone. GHTA leadership, OEA, and legal counsel are all available to support you. Use them.

## Your Core Responsibilities

### Accessibility

Members need to be able to reach you. Make sure every member in your building has your contact information. Be responsive -- a member who feels ignored by their rep stops trusting the union.

### Awareness

Stay aware of what is happening in your building. Walk the halls. Talk to members. Read the emails administration sends. Contractual violations often do not announce themselves -- you need to know what is happening to recognize when something is wrong.

### Documentation

Document everything. Every member conversation that touches on a contractual concern, every unusual administrative action, every incident that might become a grievance. A concern documented today is evidence tomorrow.

### Communication

Report concerns to GHTA Executive Board promptly. Do not sit on issues. The 90-day filing deadline is unforgiving -- a concern you meant to mention last month may now be time-barred.

## **Representation**

Accompany members to meetings with administration where discipline may result. Attend Level I grievance meetings. Be present when your members need you.

### **Remember:**

Your primary obligation is to the collective -- to ensuring the contract is followed for all members in your building. You are not just a resource for the members who come to you. You are responsible for noticing problems even when no one has complained yet.

## SECTION 2

# The Contract -- Your Most Important Tool

## Understanding the Negotiated Agreement

The negotiated agreement -- the contract -- is a legally binding document between the Board of Education and the Association. Every right your members have under the contract was bargained for and agreed to by both sides. Administration cannot unilaterally change it, ignore it, or override it with a building handbook or a principal's preference.

When a building procedure conflicts with the contract, the contract wins. When an administrator tells a member something that contradicts the contract, the contract governs. Your job as a rep is to know the contract well enough to recognize when that is happening.

## Key Articles Every Rep Must Know

### Article III -- Teacher Rights

Article III establishes the fundamental rights of teachers in this district. Key provisions include the Board's duty to support classroom discipline (3.141), protection from student misconduct (3.143), student discipline referral procedures (3.144), and the right to association membership without reprisal (3.117).

### Article IV -- Grievance Procedure

This is the mechanism for enforcing the contract. Know it cold. Know the timeline: 90 days to file, 10 days to escalate from Level I to Level II, 10 days to escalate from Level II to Level III. Know that days means actual teacher working days. Know that missing a deadline can waive the grievance entirely.

### Article VII -- Working Conditions

Covers preparation time, lesson plan requirements (7.61), equitable workloads (7.14), and other day-to-day working conditions that directly affect your members.

### Article VIII -- OTES Evaluation

Ohio's teacher evaluation system as it applies in this district. Know the walkthrough limits, the credentialed evaluator requirements, the Improvement Plan procedures, and the timelines for each step. Evaluation violations are some of the most common and consequential grievances.

### Article XI -- Leaves

Sick leave, personal leave, bereavement, FMLA, and other leave provisions. Members often come to reps with leave questions -- know the basics and refer anything complex to the GHTEA Executive Board.

## How to Read the Contract

When a member brings you a concern, your first job is to find the relevant contract language. Here is how to approach it:

- Identify the subject matter: is this about evaluation, discipline, workload, leave, or pay?
- Go to the table of contents and find the relevant article.
- Read the entire article, not just the provision that seems relevant. Context matters.
- Look for the word 'shall' -- that language is mandatory. 'May' is discretionary. 'Should' is aspirational. Grievances are won on 'shall.'
- Look for timelines. Many contractual violations involve the failure to meet a required timeline.
- If you cannot find the relevant language, contact the GHTA Executive Committee. Do not guess.

**Important:**

The contract says 'Day' means actual teacher working days (Article 4.22). This matters enormously for deadline calculations. Never count calendar days when calculating grievance timelines -- count the days teachers are actually in the building.

## SECTION 3

# Member Rights You Need to Know

## Weingarten Rights

Under the National Labor Relations Act and Ohio public sector labor law, any employee has the right to union representation at any meeting they reasonably believe could lead to discipline. This is called a Weingarten right.

In practice this means: if a member is called to the principal's office and they have any reason to believe the meeting could result in discipline, they have the right to ask for their union rep before the meeting begins. The administrator cannot deny that request. If they do, document it immediately and contact the GHTA Executive Board.

Members should say: 'I believe this meeting may lead to discipline. I would like my union representative present before we proceed.'

### Common Mistake:

Many members do not know they have Weingarten rights until after they have already sat through a disciplinary meeting alone. Make sure every member in your building knows this right before they need it.

## The Right to Grieve

Every bargaining unit member has the right to file a grievance -- and under Article 4.33, the fact that a member filed a grievance cannot be recorded in their personnel file, used in any employment decision, or used as a basis for reprisal. If a member is treated differently after filing a grievance, that retaliation is itself a grievable offense.

## The Right to Association Membership

Article 3.117 protects members from reprisal for membership in the Association. No administrator can take adverse action against a teacher because of their union involvement. If a member is being treated differently because of their union activity, report it to GHTA immediately.

## Evaluation Rights

Members have the right to be evaluated by a credentialed evaluator, to receive observation feedback within the timelines established in the contract, to review and respond to any evaluation document, and to receive written notice of any Improvement Plan with the full procedural protections the contract provides. Evaluation is one of the most common areas of contractual violation -- know these rights and watch for them.

## The Right to a Safe and Supported Classroom

Article 3.143 states that no teacher is ever required to tolerate gross misconduct, abusive language, acts of violence, deliberate insubordination, or repetitious misbehavior by a student.

Article 3.141 requires the Board to provide all reasonable support and assistance with discipline. These are enforceable rights, not aspirations.

### **FMLA and Leave Rights**

Members have rights under both the contract and federal law regarding medical and family leave. If a member is facing a serious health condition, a family member's illness, or the birth or adoption of a child, they may have FMLA protections. Refer any leave question to the GHTA Executive Board -- this area is complex and getting it wrong can harm the member.

## SECTION 4

# The Grievance Process

## What Is a Grievance?

Under Article 4.21, a grievance is a claim that there has been a violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of the negotiated agreement, the superintendent's manual, or a written board policy pertaining to salaries, hours, or employment conditions. Not every problem is a grievance. A member who does not like how their principal speaks to them may have a legitimate complaint -- but it is only a grievance if it involves a contractual right.

Your job is not to decide whether something is a grievance -- your job is to document it and bring it to the GHTA Executive Board or Grievance Committee, who will make that determination with you. Use Form 6 (Grievance Intake Form) available on the Rep Portal to capture the initial information from any member who wishes to pursue a grievance.

## The 90-Day Rule -- The Most Important Deadline

All grievances must be filed no later than 90 days after the grievant knew or reasonably should have known about the facts giving rise to the grievance. This deadline is a hard stop. If a member comes to you with a concern and 90 days have already passed, the grievance is almost certainly time-barred.

This means: when a member comes to you with a concern, the first question to ask is when did this happen? Calculate 90 working days from that date. That is your deadline. Do not sit on it.

## The Grievance Levels

### Level I -- Informal

The first step is an informal conversation between the grievant and their principal or immediate supervisor. The goal is to resolve the issue at the building level without formal proceedings. As the building rep, you will typically accompany the member to this meeting. Take notes. If the matter is resolved, get any commitments in writing before you leave the room. If not resolved, you have 10 working days to escalate to Level II.

### Level II -- Formal

A formal grievance is filed on the Grievance Form and submitted to the principal. The principal has 5 working days to render a written decision. Level II is a formal hearing -- prepare for it like one. Bring your documentation, your contract references, and your opening statement. Contact the GHTA Executive Board before any Level II hearing.

### Level III -- Superintendent

If not satisfied with Level II, the grievance is submitted to the superintendent or designee. Same structure: formal hearing, 5-day decision window, 10-day escalation window. At this point OEA counsel is typically involved.

## **Beyond Level III**

If not resolved at Level III, the Association may pursue arbitration. This is handled by OEA and GHTA leadership -- it is beyond the building rep's role but you should know it exists.

## **Filing a Grievance -- Step by Step**

1. Member identifies a potential violation and comes to you.
2. Complete Form 2 (Member Incident Documentation) with the member while the details are fresh. If there are witnesses, have them complete Form 3 (Witness Statement).
3. Complete Form 6 (Grievance Intake Form) to capture the full picture of the potential grievance.
4. Contact the GHTA Executive Board immediately -- do not wait.
5. The GHTA Executive Board determines whether a grievance exists and advises on strategy.
6. Level I meeting is scheduled with the principal.
7. You accompany the member to the Level I meeting and take detailed notes. You can use Form 1 if you wish, or your own notes. This meeting is informal.
8. If not resolved, GHTA files Level II within 10 working days.
9. You assist in gathering documentation and witnesses for the Level II hearing.
10. The GHTA Executive Board leads the Level II hearing. You are present as support.

### **Your Role in Grievances:**

As a building rep, your job is to identify, document, and report -- not to litigate. You are a critical part of the process, but formal grievance filings and hearing strategy are handled by GHTA leadership. Never promise a member you will file a grievance or tell them they have a winning case. That is the GHTA Executive Board's call.

## SECTION 5

# Documentation -- The Foundation of Everything

## Why Documentation Matters

In labor relations, if it is not written down, it did not happen. A verbal commitment from a principal is worth nothing if they deny it later. An incident that a member remembers clearly is worthless at a hearing if there is no record. Documentation is not optional -- it is the foundation of every successful grievance.

## What to Document

- Every member concern you receive: date received, member name, nature of concern, what was said.
- Every meeting with administration: date, time, who was present, what was discussed, what was decided.
- Every commitment made by administration -- in writing whenever possible.
- Every piece of correspondence related to a potential grievance: save emails, take photos of written documents.
- Every incident of student misconduct, administrative action, or evaluation activity that a member reports to you.
- Dates and timelines -- especially when contractual deadlines are implicated.

## How to Document

The best documentation is contemporaneous -- written at or immediately after the time of the incident. A note written the same day an incident occurred is far more credible than one written two weeks later.

Your documentation does not need to be formal. A dated note in a notebook is fine. An email to yourself is fine. A photo of a document is fine. What matters is that it exists, it is dated, and it is accurate.

## What to Do With Documentation

Keep a file -- physical or digital -- for every open matter in your building. When you forward a concern to the GHTA leadership, forward your documentation with it. When a grievance is filed, make sure all documentation is in GHTA's hands. Do not be the only person who has critical evidence.

## Advising Members on Documentation

When a member comes to you with a concern, one of the first things you should tell them is to write down everything they remember while it is fresh: what happened, when, who was present, what was said. Have them email it to themselves to create a timestamped record. Then have them get it to you.

**Remember:**

The most common reason grievances fail is not that the violation did not occur -- it is that the union could not prove it occurred. Documentation is how you prove it.

## SECTION 5A

# Using the GHTA Rep Forms

GHTA has developed six forms to help building reps carry out their duties consistently and effectively. These forms are available for download on the Rep Portal at [ghteachers.org](http://ghteachers.org). Here is when and how to use each one.

## Form 1 -- Fact-Finding Meeting Record

Use this form during any investigatory or pre-discipline meeting -- any meeting that a member believes could lead to disciplinary action. Complete it in real time during the meeting, not after.

### When to use it:

- A member has been called to the principal's office for a meeting that may result in discipline.
- Administration is conducting an investigation that involves a bargaining unit member.
- Any meeting where a member has invoked or should invoke their Weingarten rights.

### How to use it:

- Fill in the meeting information section at the start of the meeting: date, time, location, who is present.
- Check the appropriate box under 'Was Union Representation Requested?' If representation was denied, document it here and contact GHTA leadership immediately after the meeting.
- Record every question administration asks and the member's response as accurately as possible.
- List any documents shown to or discussed with the member.
- Record any statements made by administration regarding possible discipline or outcomes.
- Check the outcome box and add any additional notes at the conclusion of the meeting.
- Sign and date the form. Forward a copy to the GHTA Vice President promptly.

## Form 2 -- Member Incident Documentation

This form is for the member to document a potential contractual violation -- a written record of the incident from their perspective. Complete it with the member as soon as possible after the incident occurs.

### When to use it:

- A member reports a potential contractual violation to you.
- An incident occurs that may give rise to a grievance.
- Anytime a member's rights under the contract may have been violated.

### How to use it:

- Sit down with the member and complete the form together while the details are fresh.

- Fill in the member's name, building, position, and the date of the report.
- Document the date, time, location, and administrator(s) involved in the incident.
- Check the appropriate box(es) under 'Nature of Concern' -- check all that apply.
- Have the member describe what happened in as much detail as possible in their own words.
- Identify any relevant contract articles if known, witnesses, and available evidence.
- Have the member sign and date the form. You sign as the building rep.
- Forward to the GHTA Vice President with your own notes attached.

### **Form 3 -- Witness Statement**

Use this form to capture a written statement from any witness to an incident that may become a grievance. Each witness completes a separate form. This document is confidential and protected by the Association.

#### **When to use it:**

- A member identifies witnesses to a potential contractual violation.
- You are gathering evidence in support of a grievance.
- Any situation where a third party has direct knowledge of relevant facts.

#### **How to use it:**

- Complete the witness information section: name, building/position, date of statement, and the grievance or matter the statement relates to.
- Ask the witness to describe in their own words what they personally observed, heard, or experienced -- not what they were told by others.
- Encourage specificity: dates, times, locations, names, exact words spoken if remembered.
- If the witness is providing a verbal statement that you are transcribing, note that in the form and sign as the rep who took the statement.
- Have the witness sign and date the form, certifying its accuracy.
- Forward to GHTA Vice President with the related incident documentation.

Note: Remind witnesses that this statement is confidential and for internal Association use only.

### **Form 4 -- Public Records Request**

This form is a template for requesting public records from the school district under Ohio Revised Code Section 149.43. Use it when the union needs district records to investigate or support a grievance.

#### **When to use it:**

- You or GHTA leadership need official district records to support a grievance.
- A member believes certain records exist that would document a contractual violation.
- GHTA leadership has authorized a public records request in connection with a specific matter.

**How to use it:**

- Do not use this form without first consulting the GHTA Vice President or President. Public records requests are a legal tool and should be used strategically.
- Fill in the date, your name under 'From,' and describe the specific records being requested.
- Be as precise as possible in describing the records: date ranges, document types, subject matter.
- Fill in your contact information so the district knows where to send the response.
- Sign and date the form. Submit through the GHTA Vice President.

Note: The district has a reasonable time to respond. If they withhold records, they must identify what is withheld and the legal basis for the exemption.

**Form 5 -- Union Information Request**

This form is for formal information requests made by the Association to the district under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4117 and SERB precedent. It is broader than a public records request and covers information the union needs to fulfill its representational duties.

**When to use it:**

- GHTA needs salary data, assignment information, evaluation records, or other district information relevant to a grievance or representational matter.
- The district has information the union needs to investigate a potential violation that may not be available through a public records request.
- GHTA leadership has determined that a formal information request is the appropriate tool.

**How to use it:**

- Do not use this form without authorization from the GHTA Vice President or President.
- Identify the grievance or matter the request relates to in the first section.
- List each category of information or records being requested specifically. Vague requests are easier to resist.
- The form is pre-addressed to Phil Oko (Treasurer, GHCSO) and copies Dr. Reynolds (Superintendent), Tasha Pettigrew (HR), and the building principal where applicable.
- Submit through the GHTA Vice President. The district has 14 calendar days to respond, but they can push it further if they are being stubborn.

**Form 6 -- Grievance Intake Form**

This is your primary intake tool when a member comes to you with a potential grievance. Complete it at the start of any situation that may involve a contractual violation. It is the first document in the grievance file.

**When to use it:**

- A member reports any concern that may involve a violation of the contract.
- You observe or become aware of a potential violation even if no member has formally complained.

- Any situation where the 90-day clock may be running.

**How to use it:**

- Complete as much of the form as possible when the member first comes to you -- while the facts are fresh.
- Capture the essential information: who, what, when, where, and which contract articles may be involved.
- Note the date the member knew or should have known about the violation -- this starts the 90-day clock.
- Attach any supporting documents, emails, or notes the member has.
- Forward the completed form to the GHTA Vice President immediately -- do not wait until you have all the information. An incomplete form submitted now is better than a complete form submitted after the deadline.

**General Form Guidance:**

All GHTA forms are confidential and for internal Association use only. Do not share completed forms with administration, other members, or anyone outside GHTA leadership without explicit authorization from the GHTA President or Vice President. Forms should be forwarded to the GHTA Vice President promptly after completion.

## SECTION 6

# Communication -- With Members and Administration

## Communicating With Members

Your members need to trust you. The foundation of that trust is confidentiality, responsiveness, and honesty.

### Confidentiality

Everything a member tells you in your capacity as a building rep is confidential. Do not discuss member concerns with other members, with administrators, or with anyone outside GHTA leadership. If you need to share information with the GHTA leadership team, do so -- but do not share beyond that without the member's knowledge.

### Responsiveness

When a member contacts you with a concern, respond promptly. Even if you do not have an answer yet, acknowledge that you received the message and are looking into it. A member who feels ignored stops trusting the union -- and stops bringing concerns to you.

### Honesty

Do not tell members what they want to hear. If a concern is probably not a grievance, say so kindly. If you do not know the answer, say so and tell them you will find out. Never make promises you cannot keep. Members trust reps who are straight with them.

### Tone

With members, be warm, supportive, and reassuring. Members often come to you when they are scared or upset. Acknowledge their feelings before you get into the facts. Let them know you are on their side.

## Communicating With Administration

Your relationship with building administration should be professional, firm, and respectful. You do not need to be adversarial -- but you do need to be clear. Here are the principles:

### Be Direct

When you have a concern, state it plainly. Do not hint at it or dance around it. Administrators respond to clarity. 'Article 3.144 requires that referrals be returned within two work days and that has not happened' is more effective than 'some of our teachers feel like their referrals are not being followed up on.'

### Put Things in Writing

After any significant conversation with administration, follow up with a brief email summarizing what was discussed and any commitments made. This creates a paper trail and prevents 'I never said that' disputes later. Keep the email factual and professional.

### **Do Not Negotiate on the Spot**

If an administrator offers a resolution to a concern at an informal meeting, do not accept it on the spot without consulting the GHTA leadership team. A resolution that seems reasonable in the moment may waive rights or set a bad precedent. Tell them you will take it back to GHTA leadership and get back to them.

### **Never Raise Your Voice**

No matter how frustrating the situation, keep your composure. Losing your temper gives administration ammunition and shifts the focus from the contractual issue to your conduct. Stay calm. Let the facts do the work.

### **Communicating With GHTA Leadership**

Communicate early and often with the GHTA Vice President and President. Do not sit on concerns because you are not sure if they rise to the level of a grievance. Let the GHTA leadership team make that determination. A brief email with the facts is all that is needed. When in doubt, reach out.

## SECTION 7

# Labor Law Basics

## Ohio Public Employees Collective Bargaining Act -- ORC Chapter 4117

Ohio's public sector collective bargaining law governs the relationship between the Board of Education and the Association. Key provisions include the employer's duty to bargain in good faith (Section 4117.08), the prohibition on unfair labor practices by either party (Section 4117.11), and the enforcement mechanism through the State Employment Relations Board (SERB).

As a building rep you do not need to be a labor lawyer. But you should know that the contract you enforce is backed by state law -- and that the employer's failure to bargain in good faith or retaliate against union activity is not just a contractual problem. It is a statutory violation that can be brought to SERB.

## Unfair Labor Practices

An unfair labor practice (ULP) is a violation of ORC Chapter 4117 by either the employer or the union. Common employer ULPs include refusing to bargain in good faith, failing to furnish information requested by the union, and retaliating against employees for union activity. If you suspect an unfair labor practice is occurring, report it to the GHTA executive team immediately.

## The Duty to Furnish Information

Under ORC Section 4117.08 and SERB precedent, the employer is obligated to furnish information to the union that is relevant and necessary to the union's performance of its representational duties. This is the basis for union information requests (Form 5). The employer cannot refuse a legitimate information request without a valid legal basis -- and FERPA and other privacy laws do not automatically shield all records from union inspection.

## FERPA and Student Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student education records. As building reps and teachers you already have access to student information in your professional capacity. However, when acting in your union capacity, the rules are less clear -- FERPA may limit what student records the union can obtain through an information request. Always consult the GHTA leadership team before requesting or sharing student records in connection with a grievance.

## The Contract vs. Building Policy

A fundamental principle of labor law is that a collectively bargained agreement supersedes unilaterally imposed employer policies. A building handbook, an administrative directive, or a principal's preference cannot override a right established in the negotiated agreement. When a building policy conflicts with the contract, the contract controls. Period.

## Ohio Revised Code -- Key Statutes for Teachers

- ORC Section 3319.11: Limited contract non-renewal procedures
- ORC Section 3319.111: Supplemental evaluation procedures

- ORC Section 3319.16: Tenured teacher dismissal procedures
- ORC Section 4113.15: Wage payment requirements
- ORC Section 149.43: Public records access
- ORC Section 3313.66: Student removal from classroom

## SECTION 8

# Difficult Situations

### **A Member Is Called to the Principal's Office**

This is one of the most common situations you will face. When a member is called to the principal's office and they are not sure why, advise them to ask before going in: "Is this meeting disciplinary in nature?" If the administrator says yes or is evasive, the member should invoke their Weingarten rights: "I believe this meeting may lead to discipline. I would like my union representative present before we proceed."

If you are not available and the meeting is urgent, advise the member to ask for the meeting to be postponed until you can be present. If administration refuses to wait, the member should state clearly for the record: "I have requested union representation and it has been denied. I am not able to answer questions without my representative present." The member should then remain silent, stay calm, and not answer any questions -- even factual ones. Answering questions after representation has been denied may waive important protections. The member should report everything to you immediately afterward. Complete Form 1 (Fact-Finding Meeting Record) as soon as possible after the meeting and contact GHTA leadership immediately.

Note: If a meeting begins as routine but turns disciplinary mid-conversation, the member can and should invoke their Weingarten rights at that point. Administration cannot discipline a member solely for invoking their right to representation -- that itself is an unfair labor practice.

### **A Member Receives an Improvement Plan**

An Improvement Plan is a serious contractual event with significant procedural requirements. The moment a member tells you they have received or been threatened with an Improvement Plan, contact the GHTA leadership team immediately. Do not advise the member on the substance of the plan without the GHTA leadership's guidance. Your job in this situation is to make sure the member knows their rights, to document everything, and to get GHTA leadership involved right away.

### **A Member Is Being Retaliated Against**

If a member believes they are being treated differently because of union activity -- increased scrutiny, unfavorable assignments, exclusion from communications, hostile interactions -- document everything with dates and specifics and report it to the GHTA Executive Board immediately. Retaliation for union activity is prohibited by both the contract (Articles 3.117 and 4.33) and state law (ORC Chapter 4117). It is one of the most serious violations an employer can commit.

### **A Member Wants to File a Grievance You Think Is Weak**

This is a difficult situation. A member has the right to file a grievance, but the Association has an obligation not to file grievances that have no merit -- both for strategic reasons and because filing weak grievances undermines credibility. If a member wants to file and you are not sure the case is strong, tell them you need to consult with the GHTA leadership team before making any commitments. The GHTA Executive Board will make the final determination.

If the Association decides not to pursue a grievance, Article 4.37 says the grievance will be considered resolved based on the prior disposition. The Association has the authority to make that call. Deliver the news to the member with empathy and explain the reasoning.

### **A Member Is in Crisis**

Sometimes members come to you not just with contractual concerns but in genuine personal distress -- they are overwhelmed, they feel targeted, they are afraid for their job. Your role is not to be their therapist, but it is to be a caring human being. Acknowledge their feelings. Let them know you are on their side. And then connect them with the right resources: the GHTA Leadership Team, OEA, the EAP program, or a trusted colleague.

### **Administration Asks You to Keep Something Quiet**

If an administrator asks you to keep information confidential, decline politely but firmly. As a building rep, your obligation is to your members, not to administration. You cannot agree to conceal information that may be relevant to your members' contractual rights. Tell the administrator that you will handle all information in a professional manner, but you cannot commit to keeping matters from GHTA leadership.

### **You Are New and Dealing With a Veteran Administrator**

Some administrators will test new reps -- dismissing your concerns, questioning your knowledge of the contract, or attempting to intimidate you into backing down. Stay calm. You do not need to know everything on the spot. It is always appropriate to say 'I want to review the contract language and get back to you' or 'I need to consult with GHTA leadership before we proceed.' That is not weakness -- that is professionalism.

## SECTION 9

# Working With GHTA Leadership

## The GHTA Executive Committee

GHTA is governed by an executive committee that includes the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and Members at Large. Building reps are the field team -- you are the eyes and ears of the Association at the building level. Executive Committee members are your support structure.

## Your Primary Contact -- the GHTA President or Vice President

The GHTA President or Vice President serves as the primary grievance representative for the bargaining unit. They are your first call for any potential contractual violation, any disciplinary matter, any evaluation concern, and any situation where you are not sure what to do. Do not hesitate to reach out -- that is what they are there for.

## When to Loop In OEA

Your OEA Labor Relations Consultant provides legal review and support before major escalations. You do not contact OEA directly -- that goes through the GHTA Vice President or President. Situations that typically require OEA involvement include: any matter that may involve arbitration, any statutory claim (SERB unfair labor practice, FMLA violation), any disciplinary matter that could result in termination, and any situation where the legal framework is unclear.

## GHTA Executive Committee Meetings

Building reps are expected to attend GHTA Executive/Rep Committee meetings. These meetings are where concerns from across the district are shared, strategy is discussed, and the Association's work is coordinated. Bring your building's concerns to these meetings -- and bring information back to your members. Meetings are scheduled on the third Wednesday of every month at 3:05 for Executive members and 3:45 for Reps.

## What Leadership Needs From You

- Early notice of concerns: do not wait until a situation has escalated to report it.
- Accurate documentation: facts, dates, names, and timelines.
- Honest assessment: tell the GHTA leadership team what you actually know, not what you think they want to hear.
- Follow-through: when the GHTA leadership team asks you to gather information or talk to a member, do it promptly.
- Discretion: grievance strategy and internal union communications stay within GHTA.

**SECTION 10****Quick Reference****Critical Timelines**

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>File initial grievance</b>	90 working days from when member knew or should have known
<b>Escalate Level I to Level II</b>	10 working days after Level I decision
<b>Escalate Level II to Level III</b>	10 working days after Level II decision
<b>Principal decision at Level II</b>	5 working days after receipt of formal grievance
<b>Superintendent decision at Level III</b>	5 working days after receipt
<b>Note: 'Days'</b>	Means actual teacher working days -- not calendar days

**Key Contacts**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Contact</b>
<b>GHTA President</b>	Scott Mingus -- smingus@ghbulldogs.org
<b>GHTA Vice President / Grievances</b>	Jeffrey Cunningham -- jcunningham@ghbulldogs.org
<b>GHTA Treasurer</b>	Andrew Burke -- aburke@ghbulldogs.org
<b>OEA Labor Relations Consultant</b>	Nick Barborak (contact through GHTA VP or President)
<b>HR Director</b>	Tasha Pettigrew -- tpettigrew@ghbulldogs.org
<b>Superintendent</b>	Dr. Richard Reynolds -- rreynolds@ghbulldogs.org

**GHTA Forms -- When to Use Each One**

<b>Form</b>	<b>Use When</b>
<b>Form 1: Fact-Finding Meeting Record</b>	During any investigatory or pre-discipline meeting
<b>Form 2: Member Incident Documentation</b>	Member reports a potential contractual violation
<b>Form 3: Witness Statement</b>	Capturing testimony from a witness to an incident
<b>Form 4: Public Records Request</b>	Requesting official district records (with VP authorization)

<b>Form 5: Union Information Request</b>	Formal union information request under ORC 4117 (with VP authorization)
<b>Form 6: Grievance Intake Form</b>	First document completed when any potential grievance is identified

## **When to Call GHTA Leadership Immediately**

- Any potential discipline against a member
- Any Improvement Plan or threat of an Improvement Plan
- Any member who believes they are being retaliated against for union activity
- Any situation where a member's Weingarten rights were denied
- Any concern that may be time-sensitive (approaching the 90-day deadline)
- Any situation where administration has made a verbal commitment you want documented
- Any situation you are unsure how to handle

## **The Rep's Golden Rules**

- Document everything -- if it is not written down, it did not happen.
- Never miss a deadline -- the 90-day rule is unforgiving.
- Never promise a member something you cannot deliver.
- Never negotiate with administration without the GHTA President's knowledge.
- Never keep a concern to yourself -- early notice is always better than late notice.
- Always get commitments in writing before accepting them.
- Always stay calm in front of administration -- let the facts do the work.
- When in doubt, contact the GHTA Executive Committee.

This guide is a living document and will be updated as the contract, law, and Association practices evolve. The most current version will always be available on the Rep Portal at [ghteachers.org](http://ghteachers.org). Questions about anything in this guide should be directed to the GHTA Vice President.