

# MEMBER SERVICES PROGRAM AREA

## Who are we? What do we do?

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**Coordinator:** Brian J Andrais

**Associate Coordinator, Southern Alberta Regional Office (SARO):** Kurt E Moench

**Associate Coordinator, Administrator Assistance, Barnett House:** Konni A DeGoeij

**Barnett House staff officers:** Marvin E Hackman, Ihor Z Kruk, Lisa M Everitt,

Robert T Mazzotta, Cory W Schoffer and Joyce T Sherwin

**SARO staff officers:** Cynthia G Malner-Charest and Keith Hadden (2011 08 01)

Member Services staff officers are experienced classroom teachers with

- experience in administration,
- experience in local leadership and
- a commitment to teachers.

### Assistance to Individual Members

#### **Call before you dig**

- It's always best to be proactive. No question is a stupid question.
- Problems tend to remain much smaller when people seek advice long before the situation gets out of hand!
- When you call, the secretary will ask you for your name, school, school board and a brief description of your issue. Your information will be passed along to the duty officer that day. If you are already working with a staff officer on a specific issue, please ask to speak to that person.

To speak to a staff officer in Member Services call one of the two following locations:

- Barnett House in Edmonton at 1 800 232-7208 (local calls, 780 447-9400); or
- Southern Area Regional Office in Calgary at 1 800 332-1280 (local calls, 403 265-2672).

#### **Confidentiality**

- All calls to Member Services are confidential. Initially, you will be asked your name, school, employing board and a brief description of your issue. Asking these questions helps ensure confidentiality and the proper handling of your case. For example, if you did not identify your school you might be assigned the same staff officer as another teacher or administrator at your school who perceives *you* to be the problem.
- MS provides services to all active ATA members. When you access services, the ATA will verify your identity and create records related to your case. If we don't know who you are, we

cannot ensure that you are a member. It is unfair to members if we advise non-members, who do not pay for services.

- Once you are assigned a staff officer, your case will stay with that staff officer. No one, including the staff officer assigned, will initiate any action on your behalf without your authorization.
- The ATA is subject to the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA). When you access Member Services, you are granting implied consent for staff to collect your personal information for the purpose of managing your case. The ATA's privacy policy is available at [www.teachers.ab.ca/Privacy+Policy](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Privacy+Policy).

## **Common types of calls**

### **Criminal/Assault**

- If you are alleged to have assaulted a student it is critical that you seek the assistance of an MS staff officer.
- If your principal does not insist that you call the ATA, be sure that you insist on calling the ATA before any discussion of the incident happens.
- Your school representative or a trusted colleague is NOT authorized to represent you or to take notes for you at a meeting.

### **Interpersonal Relations**

- Professional relationships between colleagues can be among the most difficult issues to resolve. Assistance can also be provided in appropriate processes when dealing with support staff and school volunteers.
- MS staff officers are trained to help de-escalate potential problems by providing proactive solutions before problems arise.
- MS staff officers will advise you of your responsibilities within the Code of Professional Conduct.
- Dealing with parents is becoming a key issue for teachers and school administrators. MS staff officers provide effective strategies for dealing with emergent situations, particularly with regard to school and parental rights under the *School Act*.

### **Employment Information**

- Before accepting employment or resigning, it is wise to note the statutory timelines and to ask a MS staff officer to review the contract.
- Work related issues such as rights or duties of teachers can be reviewed with MS staff before further action is taken.

### **Employer Action**

- Members should consult with MS staff prior to responding to written reprimands or other employer discipline.
- The *School Act* provides teachers with statutory rights to appeal a transfer. These rights are bound by timelines.
- It is important to get advice regarding the status of your transfer before you accept it.
- Teachers facing suspension or termination by employers—through contract expiration or a personal decision-making process—should get advice before proceeding.

### **Professional Competence**

- If you are being evaluated, it is important to call Member Services to gain information about the appropriate processes involved and the possible outcomes.
- MS staff officers offer consultations to school principals to ensure that the evaluation process is correct and fair.
- MS staff officers assist members facing investigations and/or hearings arising from the Association's Practice review bylaws.

### **Medical**

- MS staff officers advise members on issues surrounding medical leave and return to work after medical leave.

### **Liability Matters**

- Teachers have a duty of care towards students. It is important to get advice regarding potential liability in such matters as school field trips, transportation of students and general school safety.
- Teachers' rights, responsibilities and legal liabilities include many issues that do not fall under the categories above. If you have a concern, it is wise to contact the ATA's Member Services program area.

### **Legal Issues**

- Members can consult with MS staff on a variety of issues from human rights to privacy legislation and how they impact a teacher's work.
- MS staff can be consulted on board policies, obligation to report, teacher obligations in custody matters or when called to testify.

### **Professional Conduct**

- The professional discipline process is unfamiliar to most teachers; MS staff officers help to clarify the process and advise on those matters that should be referred for investigation and those which are best resolved between the parties concerned.

### **Presentations to Teachers and Administrators**

- Member Services offers a range of relevant and current presentations to teachers and administrators. For a complete listing, go to the ATA website at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca), scroll down to Professional Development and click on Workshops, Courses and Presentations. To book a presentation, contact Marilyn Terlaan at Barnett House in Edmonton at 1 800 232-7208 (local calls, 780 447-9400); or Doreen Link at the Southern Area Regional Office in Calgary at 1 800 232-1280 (local calls, 403 265-2672).
- Member Services provides a number of print information for members, including various monographs and teacher guides dealing with legal responsibilities and liabilities of teachers.
- In addition, Member Services staff directs the Education Leadership Academy held during the summer and offers Legal Issues for School Administrators, a seminar for school based administrators

## **Assistance to Locals**

- Member Services staff offer the Local Program course and the Local Presidents' seminar at Summer Conference. The certificate in local leadership requires the completion of a core number of sessions offered as part of the two-year program. Local presidents who have completed the Local Program course are eligible to attend the Local Presidents' seminar.
- Member Services staff offer consultation to local officials regarding their specific duties and on matters arising from constitutions, regulations and procedures. A seminar for local treasurers and local secretaries is offered during the school year.
- Member Services staff take an active role in providing the training program for school representatives through key contacts. This cascade model provides training for key individuals in the local who assume the responsibility of training school representatives in their role.

## **Other activities**

### **Professional Conduct and Practice Review**

- Member Services staff are charged with the investigation of allegations of unprofessional conduct and presentation of evidence at the hearing if a member is charged under the *Teaching Profession Act* and Association Discipline Bylaws.
- Member Services staff not in conflict due to prior involvement with affected parties may be designated to act on behalf of the Association in presenting the case at a Practice Review Committee hearing.
- An annual orientation is provided to members of the Professional Conduct and the Practice Review Committees charged with hearing charges of unprofessional conduct or failing to meet the Teaching Quality Standard.

### **Conflicts in Schools**

- Member Services offers the Healthy Interactions program, training facilitators to provide information and skill building for individuals or on a school by school basis in participating districts. A steering committee is in place in each district to monitor and coordinate the program.
- When concerns are raised of a school in conflict, members of the Staff Relations Services may be assigned to assist staff members in conflict resolution. An annual orientation is provided to committee members who serve on this joint ATA/College of Alberta School Superintendents initiative.