

# The Role of a Support Person

At Michener, non-unionized staff have the right to request the presence of a support person from People & Culture during any investigation meetings in which they are involved as a complainant, respondent, or witness. Having a support person can enhance staff safety and well-being.

## Who is a support person?

A support person is someone who can accompany staff and provide emotional support, reassurance, and an opportunity to debrief afterwards. They may take notes, act as a witness to the meeting, or offer advice in moments of distress. The support person understands the need to maintain confidentiality of the process, to protect all individuals involved in the process.

### A support person may:

- ❖ Offer suggestions
- ❖ Provide emotional and moral support
- ❖ Take notes during the meeting
- ❖ Help the staff prepare for meetings
- ❖ Assist the staff in understanding investigation processes and policy
- ❖ Help the staff understand their rights, including ensuring due process unfolds
- ❖ Seek or provide clarification if the staff is uncertain
- ❖ Request a break during the meeting if helpful to the staff

### A support person cannot:

- ❖ Have a direct or indirect connection to the matter under consideration
- ❖ Speak on behalf of staff, such as answering questions on their behalf
- ❖ Represent staff at a meeting when staff themselves is not present
- ❖ Take control over the meeting
- ❖ Discuss information shared during the meeting with anyone other than staff
- ❖ Have their own agenda or an emotional stake in the meeting other than supporting the staff
- ❖ Have a conflict of interest relevant to the matters being discussed

### Ideally, a support person is someone who:

- Will prioritize staff wellbeing, priorities, and wishes
- Can be trusted with private information that may arise in the meeting
- Is familiar with the circumstances and the nature of the investigation
- Will help identify questions that staff may have
- Can assist in understanding policies and procedures
- Will remain calm

## Providing advance notice about bringing a support person:

To ensure fairness, all participants in the meeting should be made aware ahead of time that a support person will be accompanying the staff to a meeting.

All meeting participants should clearly understand the support person's role.

The support person's name and job title will ideally also be shared in advance of the meeting. This will help to:

- Avoid any potential misunderstandings
- Identify any potential conflicts of interest
- Ensure that the support person is accommodated in the meeting as needed, including receiving information about the time and location of the meeting and any applicable materials.

## Requesting a support person:

To request a support person, please contact the People & Culture department.

