

Handbook for Laid-Off School Employees

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Introduction

So you've been laid off from your job at school. While no one *plans* on life events like losing one's job, you should know that events like these *do happen* and that the circumstances that lead to such events can be outside of your control. Each individual's situation is unique, and there are steps that every laid-off school employee should consider taking.

Contact your local union representative. It is likely that your position was eliminated due to the current economic climate or specific conditions in your district such as declining enrollment or the elimination of programs. The collective bargaining agreement (CBA), negotiated by your local association and the school board, articulates procedures that must be followed if bargaining unit positions are eliminated. It is important for you to read your collective bargaining agreement and then meet with your local union representative to ensure that the steps articulated in the bargaining agreement were followed properly. The agreement may also contain seniority and recall rights. Your union representative or union president can assist you to ensure you understand your contract and the provisions it contains that relate to your current situation. A word of caution — if you are unsure about whether or not to sign any district documents related to being laid off, share the documents with your representative and solicit his or her explanation and advice before signing them.

Assess and utilize your support system. Losing one's job affects different people in different ways. Some people may view losing a job with a sense of freedom and as an opportunity to explore different employment options, while others may experience losing their job with sadness and a sense that they have lost an important part of their identity. Be conscious of your own reactions and how the loss of the job is affecting you. Seek support if necessary. Connect with family members and close friends on whom you can rely for emotional support and guidance. An additional source of support may be through employee assistance program (EAP) offered to employees in your district. Until your contract expires, you may be able to participate in the EAP. If your district has a human resource person, contact that person to see what assistance is being offered. Don't forget that you are an important source of your own support. Remember to take care of your health and to eat well, exercise and work to keep a positive attitude.

Consider applying for unemployment compensation. If you need income to assist you with living expenses, apply for unemployment compensation. Your district's human resource person can assist you with the steps you need to take, or you can access information online at the State of New Hampshire Department of Employment Security Web site. [link to <https://claims.nhes.state.nh.us/weblogic/Home.jsp>]

Decide upon a future that is best for you and your situation, plan accordingly, and take the necessary action steps. Depending upon your situation, you may decide to begin looking for another job right away or you may decide to take some time to assess your options. When making this decision, seek help from either a professional or someone whose opinion you value and in whom you can confide. We and you all wish that you weren't in this situation, but while you are in this situation, please know that NEA-New Hampshire and your local association are here to support you.

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