



# Open Door Policy Guide

Standard Operating Procedure | Reporting & Protection | SOP-02.01.A

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## Purpose

This SOP provides managers with guidance on addressing employee concerns, feedback, and clarification requests while aligning with the City’s commitment to open communication, employee well-being, and fostering a positive workplace culture through the LiveWell program. Managers are responsible for ensuring that workplace concerns are handled professionally, efficiently, and at the lowest level possible while maintaining a respectful and supportive environment.

Recognizing that every work group has unique dynamics, this SOP also empowers managers with the flexibility and discretion to adapt its provisions as necessary. Managers should use their professional judgment—and consult with HR and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) if needed—to ensure that the process remains both effective and responsive while upholding the City’s core values

## Scope

This procedure applies to all managers and supervisors within the City of Springfield. It provides guidance on handling workplace concerns related to:

- Team dynamics
- Job-related issues
- Workplace culture
- Employee well-being

For employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement, managers must refer to the applicable contract provisions, as they take precedence over this SOP.

## Procedure

### 1. Scheduling an Employee Meeting

- a. Supervisors and managers must follow up promptly when an employee raises an issue and schedule a meeting to allow for uninterrupted discussion.
  - (1) If an employee expresses a preference for a remote meeting or an alternative communication method (e.g., phone or virtual meeting), managers should accommodate the request whenever possible.

- (2) Managers may adjust the process—such as allowing an employee to initially speak with HR rather than directly with their supervisor—if it better suits the situation and the employee’s comfort level.
- b. If an employee requests or arrives at the meeting with a union representative or another coworker, the manager should:
  - (1) Acknowledge the request and refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement or City policy to determine the employee’s rights regarding representation.
  - (2) Pause the discussion if necessary to clarify whether the matter requires representation under labor agreements or City policy.
  - (3) Contact HR if there are any uncertainties regarding the employee’s right to representation or how to proceed.

## **2. Receiving and Addressing Employee Concerns**

- a. Actively listen to employee concerns without interruption and acknowledge their willingness to bring the issue forward.
- b. Create a safe environment where employees feel comfortable discussing work-related concerns.
- c. Schedule a timely follow-up discussion if immediate resolution is not possible.
- d. Clarify details, ask questions, and focus on finding a fair and constructive solution.
- e. Communicate next steps, including expected timelines for resolution.
- f. If a complaint involves discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, department leadership must escalate it directly to HR, as these concerns require formal investigation under City policies.

## **3. Handling Escalations**

- a. If an employee is not satisfied with the resolution or if the issue requires higher-level review, refer them to the appropriate escalation path:
  - (1) *For represented employees:*
    - (i) If the concern relates to an alleged contract violation, leadership should guide the employee to follow the grievance procedure outlined in the applicable collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Most CBAs require an informal step before filing a formal grievance, and the open-door policy can be used to meet that expectation.
    - (ii) If the issue does not involve a contract violation but remains a workplace concern (e.g., interpersonal conflict, procedural disagreement, or operational issue), leadership should:

- (I) Encourage the employee to engage in collaborative problem-solving with their supervisor or department leadership,
- (II) Direct them to HR for workplace issue resolution options, such as mediation, coaching, or policy clarification, or
- (III) If necessary, explore alternative resolutions, such as department process improvements or team discussions.

(2) For non-represented employees:

- (i) If the concern falls under the City's formal grievance process, leadership should direct the employee to the HR Department to ensure they understand their options.
- (ii) If the issue does not involve a formal grievance but is still a workplace concern, leadership should:
  - (IV) Use the open-door approach to facilitate an informal resolution.
  - (V) Refer the employee to HR for guidance on addressing workplace issues.
  - (VI) Determine if the concern can be addressed through departmental policy changes or leadership intervention.

- b. Managers are encouraged to modify escalation procedures as needed to best address the situation, with the option to consult HR and CAO to determine the most appropriate course of action.

#### **4. Follow-Up Responsibilities**

- a. Managers should determine the appropriate frequency and method of follow-up based on the nature and urgency of the concern.
  - (1) Provide employees with updates on actions taken to address their concerns.
  - (2) Monitor the situation to ensure continued progress and resolution.
  - (3) Encourage feedback to assess whether the employee feels their concern was addressed appropriately.

#### **5. Management Documentation of the Meeting**

- a. Record Key Details: Document the date, time, attendees, and main topics discussed during the meeting.
- b. Summarize the Concern: Provide a brief, factual summary of the concern raised, including any supporting details provided by the employee.
- c. Capture Key Discussion Points: Note any key questions, clarifications, or relevant statements made during the discussion.
- d. Outline Action Steps: Record any agreed-upon solutions, follow-up actions, and expected timelines for resolution.

- e. Maintain Confidentiality: Keep documentation professional, factual, and free from personal opinions. Store records securely and share them only with HR or necessary parties as appropriate.
- f. Escalation Documentation: If the issue is escalated, ensure all relevant documentation is shared with HR or the appropriate level of management.

## 6. Confidentiality

- a. Handle all discussions with discretion, sharing only necessary information with those involved in the resolution process.

## Related Resources

### Forms:

- [Open Door Meeting Form](#)
- [Complaint of Harassment Form](#)

### Labor Contracts & Handbook:

- [AFSCME](#)
- [IAFF Battalion Chiefs](#)
- [IAFF Firefighters](#)
- [SEIU/OPEU](#)
- [SPA](#)
- [Employee Handbook](#)