

PEER OBSERVER PROGRAM TAKES FLIGHT



You are not alone.

The Transport Workers Union has established a new program to assist IFCs who are in jeopardy of being punished or fired by management during this pre-contract transition period: The Peer Observer Program.

Through the program, approximately 80 TWU-trained IFCs - dubbed Peer Observers - are now available to help flight attendants prepare for an investigatory meeting with management that could lead to disciplinary action or termination of employment.

Significantly, a Peer Observer can accompany an IFC to such a meeting to observe and take notes, which can be invaluable during the appeal process.

The program went operational on Oct. 1.

"This is a huge project we're taking on but we're doing it because it could exponentially improve the working life of our Inflight Crewmembers," TWU International Vice President Thom McDaniel, who conducted the Peer Observer training sessions, said. "We want to help and support them through a potentially tough time in their careers and lives."

The TWU contract Negotiating Team hammered out the parameters of the program with management. It's a "big step" forward - but not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is a full-fledged grievance process in which union representatives and lawyers can actively advocate on a



TWU International Vice President Thom McDaniel conducted the Peer Observer Training.

member's behalf during meetings and disciplinary hearings.

A grievance process - which will be in the final contract that is being negotiated - also will include the ability to take a disciplinary case to a third-party neutral arbitrator to render a decision both management and labor would have to follow.

Peer Observers are instructed to maintain the highest level of confidentiality. They are taught not to discuss cases with anyone else, not even other Peer Observers, with the possible exception of an elected union officer whose input and experience could be beneficial.

It's important that you request a Peer Observer as soon as you can after being informed by management that you are to appear at an investigatory meeting. Under the agreement between TWU and JetBlue, management must give IFCs at least 24 hours notice.

You can request a Peer Observer by going to the official union website for JetBlue IFCs - <http://b6.twu.org>

Under the "Peer Observer Request" heading, the website has a very informative Question and Answer section about the program.

TIPS for IFCs under scrutiny

During a recent Peer Observer training session, McDaniel shared advice he has given over the years to IFCs who were summoned to an investigatory meeting with management. They include:

- ★ Keep your cool and act professional
- ★ Tell the truth. If you say something that isn't true, it can further complicate an accusation with questions about dishonesty.
- ★ Just answer the question that is asked. Don't keep talking and offering additional information that can complicate a situation. "Sometimes people think that more information sounds more credible but that's not really the case," McDaniel said.
- ★ There's nothing wrong with saying, "I don't know," if you don't know the answer to a question.
- ★ Be wary of open-ended questions. Ask management to more specific. You can say, "What exactly are you asking about?"
- ★ You can request a break. If you get rattled or upset, ask if you can take a break.
- ★ Ask management if they have received a customer complaint. If there is a complaint, ask to see it and ask for a copy.