SOP Template: Escalation and Dispute Resolution Workflow

This SOP describes the **escalation and dispute resolution workflow**, detailing the procedures for identifying, escalating, and resolving conflicts or issues within the organization. It covers initial dispute identification, communication protocols, escalation levels, roles and responsibilities, documentation requirements, mediation and negotiation techniques, resolution timelines, and follow-up actions. The purpose is to ensure timely, transparent, and effective handling of disputes to maintain a collaborative work environment and minimize operational disruptions.

1. Purpose

Establish clear, effective, and timely procedures for handling disputes and escalations within the organization to ensure a collaborative and disruption-free workplace.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, teams, and management involved in resolving workplace disputes or conflicts.

3. Definitions

- **Dispute:** Any disagreement or conflict arising between employees, teams, or departments.
- **Escalation:** The process of bringing an unresolved dispute to higher authority or management for resolution.
- **Mediation:** A structured process facilitated by a neutral third party to resolve disputes.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Employee	Identify and communicate disputes promptly, provide relevant documentation, and participate in resolution processes.
Manager / Team Lead	Facilitate discussions, guide initial resolution efforts, escalate when necessary, ensure documentation is complete.
HR / Dispute Resolution Team	Mediate complex disputes, provide training and support, document outcomes, track trends, and recommend improvements.
Executive Leadership	Intervene in escalated or critical cases, ensure SOP compliance, monitor dispute trends, and drive policy changes if needed.

5. Workflow Steps

1. **Dispute Identification**
   - Report disputes as soon as possible using the designated reporting channels (e.g., email, HR portal, ticketing system).
2. **Initial Assessment**
   - Manager/team lead reviews the dispute, gathers facts from involved parties, and determines its severity.
3. **Attempted Resolution**
   - Manager/team lead facilitates a meeting and encourages open communication aiming for resolution.
4. **Escalation**

- If unresolved, escalate to the next level (e.g., HR, department head) based on the escalation matrix below.

5. **Mediation and Negotiation**
   - Dispute Resolution Team or HR intervenes as a neutral party. Techniques may include structured dialogue, interest-based bargaining, or formal mediation.

6. **Resolution and Documentation**
   - Agree on solutions, document decisions and actions, ensure all parties sign off as needed.

7. **Follow-Up**
   - Monitor for recurrence, check in with involved parties, and implement preventive improvements.

6. Escalation Levels

Level	Responsibility	Typical Timeline	Example Triggers
Level 1: Immediate Supervisor	Direct Manager/Team Lead	1-2 business days	Minor disputes, misunderstandings
Level 2: Functional Manager/HR	Department Head or HR	2-3 business days	Repeated issues, unresolved conflicts
Level 3: Senior Leadership	Director, VP, or Executive	3-5 business days	Serious conflicts, policy violations, legal implications

7. Communication Protocols

- All communications should be professional, respectful, and confidential.
- Use approved organizational channels (e.g., company email, official meeting platforms).
- Document all key decision points and agreements in writing.

8. Documentation Requirements

- All disputes and resolution steps must be tracked in the dispute log with relevant dates, parties, and outcomes.
- Maintain confidentiality; restrict access to records as appropriate.

9. Mediation and Negotiation Techniques

- Active listening and acknowledgment of viewpoints.
- Focus on interests, not positions.
- Encourage collaborative problem solving.
- Utilize trained mediators when necessary.

10. Resolution Timelines

- Initial acknowledgement within 1 business day of report.
- Resolution or escalation within prescribed timelines per escalation matrix (see Section 6).
- Exceptions must be documented with reasons and revised timeframes agreed by all parties.

11. Follow-Up Actions

- Solicit feedback from involved parties on the process and effectiveness.

- Implement corrective or preventive actions where applicable.
- Monitor for potential recurrence and update policies or SOPs as needed.

12. Review and Revision

- Review this SOP annually or after major disputes to ensure continuous improvement.
- All revisions must be approved by HR and Executive Leadership.