

## What You Need to Know (or consider) When You're About to be Let Go

Facing termination in your employment is a very stressful time, but there are steps you can take to improve your separation package, minimize the disruption in your life, and land a new job more quickly. Consider these suggestions, and make use of other resources including ACS and the resources listed below.

1. Just like employment offers, termination packages may be negotiable. If the company offers X, but you care more about Y, ask if you can trade. X and Y might include money for education or training, a better "reason for leaving", a delayed termination date, improvements in the severance package, permission to present some work at a conference, etc.
2. Talk to others who have gone through a similar experiences, especially from the same company, as they may have useful information. Remember, they may not be able to share all of the details of their situation, because of an agreement that they signed before leaving the company, but they may be able to provide tips.
3. Realize that this is an emotional time, and do not make rash decisions. If you need a fellow chemist to discuss your situation with, try the ACS Career Consultants Program (free to members), and ask for someone who has experience with such situations.
4. You always have the right to consult a lawyer and have them review documents before you sign anything.
5. If necessary, look into health insurance through ACS ([chemistry.org/insurance](http://chemistry.org/insurance)) until you find a new position.

### Case Studies:

Many people have successfully negotiated to get larger severance packages or longer working time, often without the use of a lawyer. Some people have protested their firing (forced retirement) using a lawyer and received nice settlements. Suing is often not the best thing for younger employees, but has fewer risks for older ones.

Human Resources Personnel will present severance offers as if they were written in stone, but severance is highly negotiable, if not in cash, in other benefits. The book "Fired, Downsized, or Laid Off" lists "110 things to negotiate" including education and training monies, and relocation benefits. It includes a chapter on "Is Legal Representation for you? Perhaps not", sample letters and agreements, departure statements and how to negotiate them. The section on preparation pointers for severance negotiating is especially valuable. There are pointers on how to successfully handle your emotions, and why employer-provided outplacement assistance may have pitfalls.

The bottom line is that you are not helpless if you inform yourself and appeal to your employer's motivations. The right decisions at critical times can place you in a better position.

### Examples of Additional Resources:

"Fired, Downsized, or Laid Off: What Your Employer Doesn't Want You to Know About How to Fight Back", by Alan L. Sklover, Esq., Henry Holt & Co., NY.

"When you lose your job", by Cliff Hakim, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA. This covers 110 things to negotiate, and includes sample letters, departure statements, and agreements.

Internet searches: Search the Employment Law section of, for example, [findlaw.com](http://findlaw.com), [mypersonnelfile.com](http://mypersonnelfile.com), etc. There are numerous other websites, and these can be found with a simple search using terms such as "employee termination rights".