

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Individuals are encouraged to report suspected incidents of unlawful activities by District employees in the performance of their duties. Reports will be investigated promptly and appropriate remedies applied. Employees who, in good faith, report such activities and/or assist the District in the investigation will be protected from retaliation.

This regulation sets out the processes for responding to and investigating reports of unlawful activities, as defined in Board Policy 7700 *Whistleblower Protection*, and addressing complaints of retaliation for making such reports.

I. FILING A REPORT OF SUSPECTED UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES

Any person may report allegations of suspected unlawful activities. Knowledge or suspicion of such unlawful activities may originate from faculty, classified professionals, or management team members carrying out their assigned duties, internal or external auditors, law enforcement, regulatory agencies, customers, vendors, students, or other third parties.

Anonymous reports will be investigated to the extent possible. However, employees are strongly encouraged not to report anonymously because doing so impedes the District's ability to thoroughly investigate the claim and take appropriate remedial measures. As set forth fully below, retaliation against individuals who report suspected unlawful activities will not be tolerated.

Normally, a report by a District employee alleging suspected unlawful activity should be made to the reporting employee's immediate supervisor or other appropriate administrator or supervisor within the operating unit. However, if the report involves or implicates the direct supervisor or others in the operating unit, the report may be made to any other District official whom the reporting employee believes to have either responsibility over the affected area or the authority to review the alleged unlawful activity on behalf of the District. When the alleged unlawful activities involve a college president, the report should be made directly to the Chancellor. When the alleged unlawful activity involves the Chancellor, the report should be made to the President of the Board. When the alleged unlawful activity involves the Board or one of its members, the report should be made to the Chancellor who will confer with the President of the Board and/or legal counsel on how to proceed.

Allegations of suspected unlawful activities can be written or verbal; however, allegations should be made in writing so as to ensure a clear understanding of the issues raised. Additionally, a fraud hotline and reporting form have been established to report allegations of suspected unlawful activities. Such reports should be factual and contain as much specific information as possible. The receiving supervisor or administrator should elicit as much information as possible. If the

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report is made orally, the receiving supervisor or administrator shall reduce it to writing and make every attempt to get the reporter to confirm by their signature, that it is accurate and complete.

Once the receiving supervisor or administrator has received and/or prepared a written report of the alleged unlawful activity, they must immediately forward to the president of the college where the alleged activity has occurred or to the Chancellor if the activity involves the District office or is District-wide. However, if this process would require submitting the report to an employee implicated in the report, the receiving supervisor or administrator should follow the reporting options outlined above. The high-level administrator or trustee who receives the written report, pursuant to this paragraph, is responsible for ensuring that a prompt and complete investigation is made by an individual with the competence and objectivity to conduct the investigation, and that the assistance of counsel and/or an outside investigator is secured, if deemed necessary.

In the course of investigating allegations of unlawful conduct, all individuals who are contacted and/or interviewed shall be advised of the District's no-retaliation policy. Each individual shall be: (a) warned that retaliation against the reporter(s) and/or others participating in the investigation will subject the employee to discipline up to and including termination; and (b) advised that if they experience retaliation for cooperating in the investigation, it must be reported immediately.

In the event that an investigation into alleged unlawful activity determines that the allegations are accurate, prompt, and appropriate, corrective action shall be taken by the District.

II. PROTECTION FROM RETALIATION

When a person makes a good-faith report of suspected unlawful activities to an appropriate authority, the report is known as a *protected disclosure*. District employees and applicants for employment who make a protected disclosure are protected from retaliation. A District employee or applicant whose family member makes a protected disclosure is also protected from retaliation.

Any employee who believes they have been subjected to or affected by retaliatory conduct (1) for reporting suspected unlawful activity, or (2) for refusing to engage in activity that would result in a violation of law, should report such conduct to the appropriate supervisory personnel (if such supervisory personnel is not the source of or otherwise involved in the retaliatory conduct). Any supervisory employee who receives such a report, or who otherwise is aware of retaliatory conduct, is required to advise their college president, the Chancellor, or the Chancellor's designee. If the allegations of retaliation or the underlying allegations of unlawful conduct involve the president or Chancellor, the supervisor shall report the allegation to the highest-level administrator and/or trustee who is not implicated in the report of unlawful activity and/or retaliation.

All allegations of retaliation shall be investigated promptly and all information obtained will be handled on a "need to know" basis. At the conclusion of an investigation, if the allegations are verified and/or otherwise substantiated, remedial and/or disciplinary action will be taken.

III. WHISTLEBLOWER CONTACT INFORMATION

Employees who have information regarding possible violations of state or federal statutes, rules, or regulations, or violations of fiduciary responsibility by a corporation or limited liability company to its shareholders, investors, or employees should contact one of the following:

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- A. the South Orange County Community College District (SOCCCD) Office of the Chancellor,
- B. the State Personnel Board (with complaints of retaliation resulting from whistleblower activities) by calling (916) 653-0799,
- C. the California Community College Chancellor's Office,
- D. the SOCCCD fraud hotline at (949) 582-4899, or
- E. our web site http://www.socccd.edu/businessservices/bs_fraud_reporting.asp.

IV. OTHER REMEDIES AND APPROPRIATE AGENCIES

In addition to the internal complaint process set forth above, any employee who has information concerning allegedly unlawful conduct may contact the appropriate government agency.

References:

- Education Code Sections 87160-87164;*
- Labor Code Section 1102.5*
- Government Code Section 53296*
- Private Attorney General Act of 2004 (Labor Code Section (2698)*
- Affordable Care Act (29 U.S.C. 218C)*

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