



# Prohibited Personnel Practices

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## By law, Federal employees **may not**:

- Discriminate
  - Solicit or consider employment recommendations based on factors other than personal knowledge or records of job related abilities or characteristics
  - Coerce the political activity of any person
  - Deceive or willfully obstruct any person from competing for employment
  - Influence any person to withdraw from job competition
  - Give an unauthorized preference or advantage to improve or injure the prospects of any particular person for employment
  - Engage in nepotism
  - Take or threaten to take a personnel action because of whistleblowing
  - Take or threaten to take a personnel action because of the exercise of a lawful appeal, complaint, or grievance right
  - Discriminate based on personal conduct which does not adversely affect the performance of the employee or other employees
  - Knowingly take or fail to take personnel action in the violation of veteran's preference laws
  - Violate any law, rule or regulation implementing or directly concerning merit system principles
  - Implement or enforce a nondisclosure agreement or policy lacking notification of whistleblower rights
  - Access the medical record of an employee or applicant, as part of, or in furtherance of any of the above-listed prohibitions
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## More information may be obtained from:

U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL  
1730 M STREET, N.W., SUITE 218  
WASHINGTON, DC 20036-4505  
[www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov) | [info@osc.gov](mailto:info@osc.gov)

PHONE: (202) 804-7000\* | TOLL FREE: 1-800-872-9855\*

\*Hearing and Speech Disabled: Federal Relay Service 1-800-877-8339



# Whistleblowing

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**A "whistleblower" discloses information he or she reasonably believes evidences:**

- A violation of any law, rule or regulation
  - Gross mismanagement
  - A gross waste of funds
  - An abuse of authority
  - A substantial and specific danger to public health or safety
  - Censorship related to scientific research if censorship meets one of the above-listed categories
- 

**The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) provides a secure channel through which current and former federal employees and applicants for federal employment may make confidential disclosures. OSC evaluates the disclosures to determine whether there is a substantial likelihood that one of the categories listed above has been disclosed. If such a determination is made, OSC has the authority to require the head of the agency to investigate the matter.**

**To make a disclosure contact:**

**U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL  
1730 M STREET, N.W., SUITE 218  
WASHINGTON, DC 20036-4505**

**PHONE: (202) 804-7000 | TOLL FREE: 1-800-872-9855**

**TTY: 1-800-877-8339 | EMAIL: [info@osc.gov](mailto:info@osc.gov)**

**[WWW.OSC.GOV](http://WWW.OSC.GOV)**

# YOUR RIGHTS AS A FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ENFORCED BY THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

- I. The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent agency that investigates and prosecutes allegations of prohibited personnel practices.

## WHAT IS A PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICE (PPP)?

Under 5 U.S.C. §§ 2302(b)(1)-(b)(14) a federal employee authorized to take, direct others to take, recommend or approve any personnel action may not:

- **Discriminate (including discrimination based on marital status and political affiliation).** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Joe refuses to promote Employee Jane because Jane is a registered Republican; or his refusal is because she is a single mother. (OSC will generally defer Title VII discrimination allegations to the EEO process, rather than duplicating already existing procedures.)*
- **Solicit or consider employment recommendations based on factors other than personal knowledge or records of job-related abilities or characteristics.** *EXAMPLE: Selecting Official Joe hires Applicant Jack based on Senator Smith's recommendation that Jack be hired because Jack is a constituent; or fails to hire Applicant Jane because of Congressman Smith's recommendation based on the Congressman's friendship with Jane's parents.*
- **Coerce the political activity of any person, or take action against any employee as reprisal for refusing to engage in political activity.** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Jane takes away significant job duties of Employee Jack because Jack will not make a contribution to Jane's favorite candidate.*
- **Deceive or willfully obstruct any person from competing for employment.** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Joe, located in Headquarters, orders that no vacancy announcements be posted in the field office where Employee Jack works because he does not want Jack to get a new job; or falsely states that there will be extensive travel in the position when he knows that there is no travel.*
- **Engage in nepotism.** *EXAMPLE: Second-level Supervisor Jane asks First-level Supervisor Joe to hire her son; or to promote her daughter.*
- **Take a personnel action against an employee because of whistleblowing.** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Joe directs the geographic reassignment of Employee Jack because Jack reported safety violations to the agency's Inspector General; or because employee Jill reported a gross waste of funds to the Office of Internal Affairs.*
- **Take a personnel action against any employee because of the exercise of an appeal, complaint, or grievance right.** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Jane places Employee Jack on an undesirable detail because Employee Jack filed an administrative grievance about his performance rating.*
- **Discriminate against an employee on the basis of conduct, which does not adversely affect the performance of the employee, including discrimination based on sexual orientation.** *EXAMPLE: Jack's employment is terminated because he attended a "Gay Pride" march; or he attended a "Pro-Life" event; or he attended an animal rights rally; or he attended a gun-owners' rights meeting.*
- **Take or fail to take a personnel action, if such action would violate a veterans' preference requirement.** *Example: Supervisor Jane hired Employee Jack, without considering Veteran Jennifer, who was included on the list of eligible employees. (OSC's jurisdiction is for disciplinary actions only; the Dept. of Labor has jurisdiction to investigate for corrective actions.).*
- **Influence any person to withdraw from competition for a position to improve or injure the employment prospects of any other person.** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Jane, in an effort to hire Employee Joe, tells Employee Jack that he should not apply for a position because he is not qualified and will never be selected. Employee Jack is qualified.*

- **Give an unauthorized preference to a person to improve or injure the employment prospects of any particular employee or applicant.** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Jane specifies that Spanish-speaking skills are necessary for a vacant position, for the purpose of selecting Employee Jack, who speaks fluent Spanish. The position, however, does not require Spanish-speaking skills.*
- **Take a personnel action against an employee which violates a law, rule, or regulation which implements a merit systems principle.** *EXAMPLE: Supervisor Joe terminates the probationary appointment of Employee Jack because of Jack's letter to the editor criticizing affirmative action - a valid exercise of First amendment rights, a law implementing a merit system principle.*
- **Implement or enforce a nondisclosure agreement or policy lacking notification of whistleblower rights.** *EXAMPLE: A manager requires all employees in his program to sign a non-disclosure agreement that prohibits the employees from discussing the program in any way and fails to notify employees of protected channels for making disclosures.*
- **Access the medical record of an employee or applicant, as part of, or in furtherance of any of the above-listed prohibitions.** *EXAMPLE: An employee expresses interest in an open position to the hiring official, who wants to hire another applicant. The hiring official accesses the employee's medical record and attempts to influence the employee to withdraw from competition by telling her that the stress of the new position will worsen a condition found in her medical record.*

## What can you do if you believe a PPP has been committed?

Current and former federal employees, including probationary employees, and applicants for federal employment can file a written complaint with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel. Complaint forms are available on the Web at [www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov). Employees do not need attorneys to file a complaint. OSC is an independent and prosecutorial agency. It will investigate allegations of prohibited personnel practices and seek the appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action.

## II. OSC also receives confidential disclosures and enforces the Hatch Act.

### **RECEIVING CONFIDENTIAL DISCLOSURES (5 U.S.C. § 1213):**

Current and former federal employees and applicants can confidentially report information evidencing a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. OSC has the authority to require the head of the agency concerned to investigate the matter if OSC determines that a disclosure has been made.

### **ENFORCING THE HATCH ACT (5 U.S.C. §§ 7321-26):**

OSC is authorized to issue advisory opinions that respond to federal employee questions about whether or not they may engage in specific political activities under the Act. OSC also prosecutes violations of the Hatch Act before the Merit Systems Protection Board. These violations include: using official authority to interfere with an election result; soliciting, accepting or receiving political contributions; soliciting or discouraging political activity of persons before the employing agency; and running for public office in a partisan political election.

## Need additional information?

- Information on filing a complaint or making a disclosure: 202-804-7000, 800-872-9855, or [info@osc.gov](mailto:info@osc.gov).
- Updated and detailed information on OSC and its procedures: [www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov).
- Information about training and certification: 202-804-7163 or [certification@osc.gov](mailto:certification@osc.gov).



# WHISTLEBLOWER RETALIATION

—5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8)—

## THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

### What is whistleblower retaliation?

A federal employee authorized to take, direct others to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action may not take, fail to take, or threaten to take any personnel action against an employee because of protected whistleblowing.

*EXAMPLE: A supervisor directs the geographic reassignment of an employee because the employee reported safety violations to senior agency officials.*

Protected whistleblowing is defined as disclosing information that the discloser reasonably believes evidences:

1. a violation of law, rule, or regulation;
2. gross mismanagement;
3. gross waste of funds;
4. an abuse of authority;
5. a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or
6. censorship related to scientific research if censorship meets one of the above-listed categories.

This section also prohibits retaliation against government scientists who challenge censorship or make disclosures concerning the integrity of the scientific process if the censorship will cause one of the five types of misconduct described above.

### What can you do if you believe whistleblower retaliation has occurred?

If you believe that you have been subject to retaliation for protected whistleblowing you can file a complaint with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC). OSC is an independent agency that investigates and prosecutes allegations of prohibited personnel practices (PPP) by federal employees. OSC has the authority to investigate PPPs, including allegations of whistleblower retaliation, and may seek corrective or disciplinary action when warranted.

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[www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov)



## **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS WHEN REPORTING WRONGS**

Whistleblower disclosures can save lives as well as billions of taxpayer dollars. They play a critical role in keeping our government honest, efficient and accountable. Recognizing that whistleblowers root out waste, fraud and abuse, and protect public health and safety, federal laws strongly encourage employees to disclose wrongdoing. Federal laws also protect federal employees from retaliation.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) plays an important role in helping whistleblowers. OSC is an independent agency that protects federal employees from prohibited personnel practices (PPPs), including whistleblower retaliation and unlawful hiring practices, such as nepotism. OSC also provides an independent, secure channel for disclosing and resolving wrongdoing in federal agencies. This guide provides a summary of whistleblower protections and avenues available to employees to disclose wrongdoing. For more information, please visit OSC's website at [www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov).

### **Disclosures of Wrongdoing**

#### **Where can I report wrongdoing?**

Current and former federal employees and applicants (henceforth "federal employees") can report on any of the following types of wrongdoing:

- a violation of any law, rule, or regulation,
- gross mismanagement,
- a gross waste of funds,
- an abuse of authority,
- a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, or
- censorship related to scientific research if censorship meets one of the above-listed categories.

Federal employees have many options on where to disclose wrongdoing, including but not limited to, making disclosures to supervisors or someone higher up in management; the agency's Inspector General (IG); OSC; or, Congress. For whistleblower disclosures involving classified national security information or other information protected from public release by law (e.g. patient privacy information), whistleblowers must use confidential channels such as an IG, OSC, or Congress in order to be protected from adverse personnel actions related to their disclosures.

## **Can probationary employees file disclosures or PPP complaints with OSC?**

Yes. Probationary employees have the same right to file disclosures or PPP complaints with OSC as do most current federal employees, former federal employees, or applicants for federal employment. Note – except for appeals alleging retaliation for whistleblowing or engaging in protected activity, probationary employees generally do not have the right to appeal personnel actions to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB).

## **Can I keep my identity confidential?**

Yes. Most Inspectors General have hotlines that allow employees to make confidential disclosures. Inspectors General are prohibited from disclosing an employee's identity unless the IG determines that disclosure is unavoidable or is compelled by a court order. If you file a disclosure with OSC, your identity will not be shared outside of OSC without your consent. However, OSC may disclose your identity only if OSC determines that it is necessary because of an imminent danger to public health or safety or an imminent violation of any criminal law.

## **What will OSC do once I make a disclosure?**

When a federal employee discloses wrongdoing to OSC, OSC evaluates the information and interviews the federal employee. OSC determines whether it is substantially likely that the employee's allegation – or any portion of it – can be proven and whether it discloses a violation of a law, rule, or regulation; gross mismanagement; a gross waste of funds; an abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. If it meets that standard, OSC will require the agency to investigate and submit a report of the agency's findings to OSC. The whistleblower then has an opportunity to comment on the agency report. Those comments, together with any comments or recommendations by the Special Counsel, are sent with the agency report to the President and congressional oversight committees. The agency report is usually made available to the public.

## **Prohibited Personnel Practices**

### **Are whistleblowers protected from retaliation?**

Yes. The Civil Service Reform Act and whistleblower protection laws prohibits retaliation. Retaliation for whistleblowing is one of fourteen [PPPs](#). Protection from whistleblower retaliation means it is unlawful for agencies to take, threaten to take, or fail to take a personnel action because the employee disclosed one or more of the six categories of government wrongdoing (listed on page 1). Personnel actions can include actions such as poor performance reviews, demotions, suspensions, or terminations. As noted above, probationary employees have the right to file PPP complaints with OSC.

However, disclosures of information specifically prohibited by law or required by Executive Order to be kept secret are protected only when made to an OIG, OSC, or certain individuals within Congress. Additionally, federal law establishes that a federal employee has the right to communicate with and provide information to Congress.

OSC also has jurisdiction to protect federal employees at most agencies from retaliation for filing an appeal, complaint, or grievance; helping someone else file or testifying on their behalf; cooperating with or disclosing information to the Special Counsel, an Inspector General, or a component responsible for internal investigations/reviews; or, refusing to obey an order that violates a law, rule or regulation.

### **What can you do if you believe retaliation occurred?**

If you believe that an agency has retaliated against you because of your whistleblowing or because you engaged in protected activity such as disclosing information to an Inspector General, you can:

- file a complaint with OSC, which may seek corrective or disciplinary action when warranted;
- file a union grievance; or
- if you have been subject to a significant personnel action, you can file an appeal with the MSPB ([www.mspb.gov](http://www.mspb.gov)) and assert retaliation (or any other PPP) as a defense.

Note that a federal employee may choose only one of these three options when appealing a significant personnel action.

### **What relief is available to an employee who has suffered retaliation?**

Many forms of relief are available. They include job restoration, reversal of suspensions and other adverse actions, back pay, reasonable and foreseeable consequential damages, such as medical costs, attorney fees, and compensatory damages. In addition, damages may be awarded for attorney fees and expenses incurred due to retaliation.

### **Can OSC delay a personnel action while the matter is investigated?**

Yes. An individual may ask OSC to delay, or “stay,” an adverse personnel action pending an investigation. OSC will consider requesting a delay of a personnel action if OSC has reasonable grounds to believe that a prohibited personnel action was taken and, absent a stay, the employee will be subjected to immediate and substantial harm, such as removal, suspension for more than 14 days, or geographic reassignment.

### **How can OSC remedy a prohibited personnel practice?**

Federal employees may report suspected PPPs to OSC. Their complaint will be investigated. If there is sufficient evidence to prove a violation, OSC can seek corrective action, disciplinary action, or both. Alternatively, parties in selected cases may agree to mediate their dispute in order to reach a mutually agreeable resolution of the complaint. OSC may attempt to resolve a case with an agency at any stage. If an agency refuses to provide corrective action, then OSC can take the case to the MSPB. The MSPB can order the agency to take corrective action. Such litigation begins with the filing of a petition by OSC that alleges there are reasonable grounds to believe a PPP occurred, is occurring, or is imminent.

## **Can a manager be held accountable for retaliating against a federal employee?**

Yes. OSC may seek disciplinary action against any employee who commits a PPP. If an agency fails to take disciplinary action, then OSC can bring a disciplinary action case to the MSPB against the employee who committed the PPP. If the MSPB finds that an individual has committed a PPP, it can order disciplinary action, including removal, reduction in grade, debarment from federal employment for up to five years, suspension, reprimand, or a fine of up to \$1,000. Additionally, new statutory provisions impose a mandatory proposed penalty for supervisors that commit violations of 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8), (b)(9), or (b)(14).

## **Can appeals of PPP complaints be filed with the MSPB?**

### Retaliation Claims – Individual Right of Action (IRA) Appeals

Under some circumstances, employees may file appeals of PPP complaints with the MSPB. Employees may file what is called an IRA appeal with the MSPB for any personnel action taken, not taken, or threatened because of retaliation for whistleblowing or for engaging in protected

activity, such as filing an Office of Inspector General complaint. More information on the right to file an IRA may be found at [5 U.S.C. § 1221\(a\)](#). However, before filing an IRA appeal with the MSPB, employees must file a retaliation PPP complaint with OSC, requesting an investigation.

## **Can other types of appeals involving PPPs be filed with the MSPB?**

### Appeals of Significant Adverse Actions – Affirmative Defense

Yes. Employees may raise one or more of the 14 PPPs as a defense to a significant adverse action with the MSPB. However, the employee must elect whether to file a PPP complaint with OSC, file an appeal of the significant adverse action with the MSPB, or file a grievance with the union. The list of significant adverse actions may be found at [5 C.F.R. § 1201.3](#). If the employee elects to raise a PPP as a defense to a significant adverse action with the MSPB, such an appeal is called an “affirmative defense” to the agency’s personnel action and the MSPB will determine if the action that was taken was based on any of the 14 PPPs described in section 2302(b) of Title 5 of the U.S. Code.

For more information on MSPB appeal rights, go to [www.mspb.gov](http://www.mspb.gov).

*For more information on PPPs, including retaliation, go to [www.osc.gov/ppp](http://www.osc.gov/ppp).  
To learn more about filing a whistleblower disclosure with OSC, go to [www.osc.gov/disclose](http://www.osc.gov/disclose).  
To file a PPP complaint or whistleblower disclosure with OSC, go to [www.osc.gov/efile](http://www.osc.gov/efile).*

### **U.S. Office of Special Counsel**

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[www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov)

Rev. 03/19

Memorandum to All Employees

From: [Insert Head of Agency/Unit]

RE: Whistleblower Protection/Prohibited Personnel Practices

The purpose of this memorandum is to ensure that all agency employees are aware of and understand the prohibited personnel practices and whistleblower protections available to federal employees.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent agency that protects federal employees from prohibited personnel practices, including whistleblower retaliation and unlawful hiring practices. OSC also provides an independent, secure channel for disclosing and resolving wrongdoing in federal agencies.

The Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 and the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 provide the right for all covered federal employees to make whistleblower disclosures and to ensure that employees are protected from whistleblower retaliation. The Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 and OSC's Reauthorization Act of 2017 further enhanced and reinforced these rights and protections.

Whistleblowing is defined as the disclosure of information that an employee reasonably believes evidences: a violation of any law, rule or regulation; gross mismanagement; gross waste of funds; an abuse authority; a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or censorship related to scientific research or analysis. Employees may make lawful disclosures to anyone, including, for example, management officials, the Inspector General of an agency, and/or OSC.

Please review the fact sheet, [Your Rights as a Federal Employee](#), which provides detailed information on the fourteen prohibited personnel practices and employees' rights to file complaints with OSC. Additionally, I encourage you to review [Know Your Rights When Reporting Wrongs](#), which describe different avenues for making whistleblower disclosures as federal employees. More information can also be found on the [OSC website](#).

Federal employees have the right to be free from prohibited personnel practices, including retaliation for whistleblowing. This agency is committed to making sure that all employees are aware of their rights as well as the safeguards that are in place to protect them.

Sign below to acknowledge receipt:

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Employee Name

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Date

# *Annual Training for Supervisors*



## *Responding to Employees Alleging Violations of Whistleblower Protections*

★ *New Requirements* ★

*PUB. L. Nos. 115-73 (Oct. 26, 2017), 115-91 (December 12, 2017)*

U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL  
DIVERSITY, OUTREACH, AND TRAINING  
CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

# Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017

P.L. 115-73 (10/26/2017)



The head of each agency shall provide training, in consultation with the Office of Special Counsel and the Office of the Inspector General, to supervisors on how to respond to complaints alleging a violation of whistleblower protections.<sup>1</sup> This training shall be provided—

- to employees appointed to *supervisory positions* in the agency who have not previously served as a supervisor; and
- on an annual basis, to all employees of the agency serving in a *supervisory position*.

<sup>1</sup> Whistleblower protections are defined as retaliation for whistleblowing and retaliation for engaging in protected activity under 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8) and (b)(9).

# How to Respond



## Overview of Statutory Obligations (See whistleblower protection criteria)

- Respond constructively when employees disclose government wrongdoing or allege retaliation; (See slides 8-9)
- Provide information on the rights and remedies available to employees alleging retaliation; (See slide 10) and
- Foster an environment where employees feel comfortable disclosing wrongdoing or alleging retaliation. (See slides 11-12)

# Alleging Retaliation



Supervisors may not take, fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take a personnel action for:

- Protected whistleblowing (i.e., disclosing wrongdoing) – statutory categories listed on slide 5
- Protected activity – statutory activities listed on slide 6

# Whistleblowing Categories



In general, employees must have a “reasonable belief” that they are disclosing information in one or more of the following categories:

- Violation of any law, rule, or regulation
- Gross mismanagement: substantial risk of significant impact on mission
- Gross waste of funds: more than debatable expenditure
- Abuse of authority
- Substantial & specific danger to public health or safety
- Censorship related to scientific research or analysis (scientific integrity)

Note: Supervisory training on the prohibited personnel practices (required every three years) provides detailed information on retaliation and explains that “whistleblowing” (i.e., making protected disclosures) is only one of the four required elements in a whistleblower retaliation claim.

# Protected Activity



Protected activity includes:

- Exercise of appeal, complaint, or grievance rights
- Testimony or other assistance to person exercising such rights
- Cooperation with or disclosures to Special Counsel, Inspector General, or component responsible for internal investigation or review
- Refusal to obey an order that would require violation of law, rule, or regulation



# SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

# Respond to Employees Alleging Retaliation or Disclosing Wrongdoing



- Stay open and receptive to employee's disclosures of wrongdoing even if the disclosures do not appear to meet the legal definition of whistleblowing
- Find out what the employee is trying to accomplish with the disclosure of wrongdoing (e.g., requesting an investigation of the disclosure or filing a complaint of retaliation)
- Determine whether the employee wants to remain anonymous and familiarize yourself with agency policies covering anonymity (i.e., do not promise an employee that you will keep their identity secret if it is not possible under your agency's policies)

## Respond to Employees Alleging Retaliation or Disclosing Wrongdoing (cont.)



- Even if you disagree with the content of the disclosure of wrongdoing or the facts of the alleged retaliation, ensure that you do not allow your disagreement to affect your personnel decisions
- Do not take action against an employee for disclosing wrongdoing “outside the chain of command” or for disclosing the information in violation of a rule, regulation or policy
- If the employee is attempting to reveal *classified information* or information *prohibited from release by law*, inform the employee that their right to disclose such information is limited to the following entities: the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and/or other appropriate authorities within the agency or Congress

## Provide Information to Employees Alleging Retaliation or Disclosing Wrongdoing



- Most importantly, inform the employee of their right to disclose government wrongdoing or allege retaliation
- If the employee alleges retaliation, inform the employee of their right to file such claims with the Office of Special Counsel, the Office of Inspector General (OIG), the OIG Whistleblower Protection Coordinator, and/or any other office within the agency that may review such allegations
- If the employee is requesting an investigation of the alleged wrongdoing, there may be concerns with the supervisor conducting such investigations
- Supervisors should, however, alert the appropriate agency investigative authority if, for instance, the employee discloses a danger to public health or safety or any other imminent harm

## Foster an Environment Where Employees Feel Comfortable Alleging Retaliation or Disclosing Wrongdoing



For example:

- Remind employees of their right to engage in whistleblowing, e.g., through periodic emails or at staff meetings, and stress your goal of creating/maintaining a workplace free from retaliation
- Remember protected disclosures of government wrongdoing (those not prohibited by law or classified) may be made to *anyone*, including outside of the agency, and employees are not required to follow a chain of command
- Provide in-person training to staff, e.g., OSC expert training ([OSC speaker request form](#))

## Foster an Environment Where Employees Feel Comfortable Alleging Retaliation or Disclosing Wrongdoing (cont.)



For example:

- Provide employees with an anonymous suggestion box
- Highlight that whistleblowing may lead to innovation or modification of practices
- Publicize an example in which a whistleblower's disclosure of wrongdoing led to better practices
- Be receptive to differing points of view and encourage employees to share their dissenting opinions

Tip: Print this slide for reference!

## Guide for Supervisors

*Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 &  
Special Counsel Reauthorization Act of 2017*

P.L. 115-91 (12/12/2017)



The following points will assist supervisors with meeting the new supervisory whistleblower criteria as well as the new supervisory obligation to respond to allegations of retaliation:

- Inform the employee of their right to disclose government wrongdoing or allege retaliation to several entities (depending upon the agency), including but not limited to, OSC and/or the appropriate OIG.
- Advise the employee of the various avenues to report the government wrongdoing or file a complaint of retaliation.
- Provide information on your agency's confidentiality policies.
- Alert the appropriate agency investigative authority if, for instance, an employee discloses a danger to public health or safety.

# OSC phone / email contacts

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Case Review Division:

(202) 804-7000  
(800) 872-9855  
info@osc.gov

Disclosure Unit:

(202) 804-7000  
(800) 872-9855  
info@osc.gov

Hatch Act Unit:

(202) 804-7002  
(800) 85-hatch  
hatchact@osc.gov

Website:

osc.gov [complaint  
forms/e-file]

Speaker Requests &  
Certification Program:

(202) 804-7163  
certification@osc.gov