

FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE REFERRAL SYSTEM

COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What is EthicsPoint?

EthicsPoint is a comprehensive and confidential reporting tool to assist management, employees, citizens, and customers to work together to address fraud, waste, and abuse in the workplace, all while cultivating a positive work environment.

Q: Doesn't the County already have an Ethics Commission to address such situations? Is EthicsPoint the same as the Ethics Commission?

The County does have an Ethics Commission which is responsible for investigating complaints regarding the County's Ethics Code. The Ethics Code prohibits conflicts of interest and appearances of impropriety in the conduct of New Castle County public officials and employees. EthicsPoint is a system, administered by EthicsPoint Inc., to report instances of fraud, waste, and/or abuse in the County government; this system is not to be used to report items which fall under the purview of the Ethics Code. If you have questions on whether to report an item to the Ethics Commission or via EthicsPoint, please refer to the following: (1) the link to the Ethics Commission website on the County's internet page (www.nccde.org) and (2) the link to the "Fraud, Waste, & Abuse" policy on both the County's internet and intranet page.

Q. May I report using either the Internet or the telephone?

Yes. By giving you choices, EthicsPoint helps ensure that individuals can file a report anonymously and in the manner most comfortable or convenient to them.

Q. Why do we need a system like EthicsPoint?

- The County Auditor and the County Audit Committee believe that our employees, citizens, and customers are our most important assets. Creating open channels of communication promotes a positive work environment and maximizes productivity.
- Publicly traded companies are required by law to have an anonymous reporting vehicle to address accounting and auditing fraud directly to the Audit Committee. Although governmental entities are not subject to this law, the County Auditor and the County Audit Committee still believe it makes sense to have an anonymous reporting vehicle.
- An effective reporting system can be a very effective tool in reducing losses due to fraud, waste, and abuse.

Q. Does management really want me to report?

Yes. In fact, the County Audit Committee and County Auditor *need* you to report. You know what is going on in your working environment -- both good and bad. You may have initial knowledge of an activity that may be cause for concern. Your reporting can minimize the potential negative impact on the County's employees and citizens.

Q. Why should I report what I know? What's in it for me?

Everyone has the right to work in a positive environment. With that right comes the responsibility of acting in an honest manner and letting the appropriate people know if someone is not acting appropriately. Fraud, waste, and/or abuse can threaten the livelihood of employees and citizens alike.

Q. What type of situations should I report?

EthicsPoint is a communications tool providing an avenue for sharing information relating to situations of fraud, waste, and/or abuse. See the "Fraud, Waste, and Abuse" policy for more details.

Q. It is my understanding that any report I send from a County computer generates a server log that shows every web-site that my PC connects with, and won't this log identify me as a report originator?

EthicsPoint does not generate or maintain any internal connection logs with IP addresses, so no information linking your PC to EthicsPoint is available.

With fewer than 12% of reports generated during business hours, most people prefer to report from the comfort of their home after hours and on the weekend.

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Q. Can I file a report from home and still remain anonymous?

A report from home, a neighbor's computer, or any Internet portal will remain secure and anonymous. An Internet portal never identifies a visitor by screen name and the EthicsPoint system strips away Internet addresses so that anonymity is totally maintained. Plus, EthicsPoint is contractually committed not to pursue a reporter's identity.

Q. I am concerned that the information I provide EthicsPoint will ultimately reveal my identity. How can you assure me that will not happen?

The EthicsPoint system is designed to protect your anonymity. However, you as a reporting party need to ensure that the body of the report does not reveal your identity by accident; for example, "From my cube next to Jan Smith..." or "In my 33 years..."

Q: Isn't this system just an example of someone watching over me?

The EthicsPoint system concentrates on being a positive aspect of the County Auditor's overall philosophy of assuring a workplace that minimizes fraud, waste, and/or abuse. You are encouraged to communicate concerns. Effective communication is critical in today's workplace and this is a great tool to enhance that communication.

Q. I am aware of some individuals involved with improper conduct, but it doesn't affect me. Why should I bother reporting it?

All improper conduct, at any level, ultimately hurts the County and its employees and citizens, including you. You only have to consider what happened in recent corporate scandals to see disastrous effects that a seemingly harmless lapse in conduct can have on an otherwise healthy company. So if you know of any incidents of fraud, waste, or abuse, consider it your duty to yourself and your coworkers to report it.

Q. I am not sure what I have observed or heard is a violation of County policy, or involves improper conduct, but it just does not look right to me. What should I do?

File a report. EthicsPoint can help you prepare and file your report so it can be properly understood. The County Auditor's Office would rather you report a situation that turns out to be harmless than let possible improper behavior go unchecked because you weren't sure.

Q. Where do these reports go? Who can access them?

Reports are entered directly on the EthicsPoint secure server to prevent any possible breach in security. EthicsPoint makes these reports available only to the County Auditor (or to the Audit Committee Chairman if the report involves an allegation within the County Auditor's Office) who is charged with evaluating the possible violation. He is required by his ethical code of conduct to keep these reports in the utmost confidence.

Q. What if my boss or other managers are involved in a violation? Won't they get the report and start a cover-up?

The EthicsPoint system and report distribution are designed so that implicated parties are not notified or granted access to reports they have been named in. Only the County Auditor (or the Audit Committee Chairman if the report involves an allegation within the County Auditor's Office) receives these reports.

Q. What if I remember something important about the incident after I filed the report? Or what if the County Auditor's Office has further questions for me concerning my report?

When you file a report, you receive a unique user name and are asked to choose a password. You can return to the EthicsPoint system again either by Internet or telephone and access the original report to answer questions posed by the County Auditor's Office and add further information that will help resolve open issues. The County Auditor's Office strongly suggests that you return to the site in the time specified to answer follow-up questions. You and the County Auditor's Office now have entered into an "anonymous dialogue" where situations are not only identified but can be resolved, no matter how complex.

Q. Are these follow-ups on reports as secure as the first one?

All EthicsPoint correspondences are held in the same strict confidence as the initial report, continuing under the umbrella of anonymity.

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Q. What if I want to be identified with my report?

There is a section in the report for identifying yourself, if you wish.

Q. Can I still file a report if I don't have access to the Internet?

You can file an EthicsPoint report from any computer that can access the Internet. Many public locations, including the public library, have Internet computers. If you don't have access or are uncomfortable using a computer, you can call the EthicsPoint toll-free hotline 1-888-279-5286 which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Q. Is the telephone toll-free hot line confidential and anonymous too?

Yes. You will be asked to provide the same information that you would provide in an Internet-based report and an interviewer will type your responses into the EthicsPoint Web site. These reports have the same security and confidentiality measures applied to them during delivery.