



HARRIS COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

FRAUD, WASTE OR ABUSE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Fraud, Waste or Abuse?

Fraud is defined as the unauthorized use of Harris County (County) resources for personal gain by deception intended to result in financial or other personal gains. Fraud includes a false representation of fact, making false statements, or concealment of information. It can be perpetrated for the benefit of, or to the detriment of, the County and by persons outside or inside the County.

Waste is defined as the extravagant, careless, or needless expenditure of government funds, consumption of County property/resources, or the unnecessary incurring of costs to the County as a result of grossly inefficient practices, systems, controls, or decisions.

Abuse is defined as the use of a County office, employment, contract, or other position with the County to obtain personal gain or favor from a citizen or other County employee or vendor. Abuse also consists of violations and circumvention of departmental or County regulations, which may negatively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of operations.

How can I report Fraud, Waste or Abuse?

You can report instances of fraud, waste or abuse through EthicsPoint anonymously or not. EthicsPoint is a third-party hosted solution that enables County officials, employees, vendors, grant applicants and the general public to report suspected fraud, waste or abuse of the County's funds or resources. Individuals can report instances online at www.harriscounty.ethicspoint.com or via **Phone at 866-556-8181**.

Who can file a report?

The general public, County officials, employees, vendors, and grant applicants who suspect fraud, waste or abuse of the County's funds or resources. Anyone who believes or has evidence that fraud, waste, or abuse **of a Harris County resource** may have occurred, or is occurring, should file a report.

Anonymous reporters are encouraged to save their EthicsPoint login details and to login to EthicsPoint periodically as this is the only way we can follow-up with you. Named reporters may provide their name, phone number and/or email addresses to be contacted directly.

What types of situations should I report?

Below are examples of situations or conduct in Harris County that should be reported:

- Illegal or fraudulent conduct
- Theft of County funds or other County assets
- Abuse or misuse of County time, property or resources
- Grossly inefficient processes leading to waste
- Falsification of records (expense reports, timesheets, etc.)
- Contract or procurement fraud or misuse
- Bribery and acceptance of gratuities
- Conflicts of interest or Code of Conduct violations
- Abuse of authority or position by County officials or employees
- Waste of County funds, time, or resources



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

Harris County is committed to lawful and ethical behavior in all of its activities. All unethical conduct, at any level, ultimately hurts Harris County, its employees, affiliated parties and the citizens it represents, including you. If you know of any incidents of misconduct or ethical violations, you should consider it your duty to report them. By working together, we can maintain an ethical and lawful environment.

What information should I include in my complaint?

For a thorough investigation to be completed, the following information should be included, if applicable:

- Date and time the incident occurred
- Suspected person(s) and witness(s) involved
- Description of complaint (What, where, when, how, and who else may be aware of the incident)

Additionally, you should state the facts with specificity and upload any relevant supporting documents, including photos, to EthicsPoint.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SUBSEQUENT FOLLOW UP OF REPORTING:

Where do these reports go? Who can access them?

Reports are entered directly on the EthicsPoint secure server to protect the anonymity of the reporter. EthicsPoint makes these reports available to the Harris County Fraud, Waste or Abuse Team and the County Attorney's designee(s). In addition, the District Attorney may review allegations for possible criminal conduct. If the report is related to a human resource policy, the report will be routed in EthicsPoint to the Harris County Human Resources and Risk Management (HRRM) Department. The EthicsPoint system access is designed so that implicated parties on the Fraud, Waste or Abuse Team, County Attorney's Office, or HRRM are not notified or granted access to reports in which they have been named.

Will my report be confidential?

Any information reported through the hotline will be kept confidential by the Harris County Fraud, Waste or Abuse Team to maintain the integrity of the Fraud, Waste or Abuse Hotline reporting and investigation process to the extent provided by law.

Will I be retaliated against for reporting Fraud, Waste and Abuse?

Harris County does not tolerate retaliation against those who, in good faith, report suspected fraud, waste or abuse, or who participate in an investigation per the Harris County Personnel Policies and Procedures, Section 2.08. An act of retaliation should be reported immediately to the Harris County HRRM Department for instances involving Harris County employees.

What if I need to add information after I file the report or Harris County has further questions?

When you file a report on EthicsPoint or through the EthicsPoint call center, you will receive a unique username and will be prompted to choose a password to access your report. You can return to EthicsPoint, either by internet or telephone, and access the original report to help resolve any open issues, provide additional information, or answer questions posed by the Harris County Fraud, Waste



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or Abuse Team. We strongly suggest that you return to the site within 10 days from the request of additional information to answer any questions regarding the investigation.

How long does it take to complete an investigation?

An investigation can take weeks or several months to complete depending on the nature of the allegation, the number of interviews required, documents analyzed to identify facts, availability of resources, the degree of cooperation, and other factors. The Harris County Fraud, Waste or Abuse Team is committed to completing investigations as expeditiously as possible.