



Questions and Answers for The Rice University Community

Q. What is Ethicspoint®?

Ethicspoint® is a comprehensive and confidential Internet and telephone based reporting tool that assists the University and its employees and community members to work together to address fraud, abuse, misconduct, and other violations in the workplace, while helping to cultivate a positive work environment.

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

Yes you may. By giving you choices, Ethicspoint helps ensure that our employees and community members can file a report anonymously and in the manner most comfortable or convenient to them.

Q. Why do we need a system like Ethicspoint®?

It is important to note that our existing internal mechanisms are still considered to be the primary method of gaining information about potential concerns, e.g., face-to-face meetings between concerned parties with the offices of Employee Relations, Internal Audit, General Counsel, Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Risk Management, and others. The external mechanism will only be used to supplement our existing channels of communication, especially for those complainants or reporting parties who wish to remain anonymous.

We believe that you are our most important asset. Through open channels of communication, you can participate in improving our University and helping to maintain a safe and ethical environment.

Q. Does the University really want me to report?

It certainly does. You may have initial knowledge of an activity that may be cause for concern. Your reporting can minimize the potential negative impact on the University and its community members. Also, offering positive input may help identify issues that can improve our working and learning environment and the functioning of the University.

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

We all have the right to work in a positive environment. But with that right comes the responsibility of acting in an ethical manner and letting the appropriate people know if someone is not acting appropriately. By working together, we maintain a healthy and productive university environment. Misconduct anywhere on our campus can threaten our entire University.

Q. What type of situations should I report?

Ethicspoint® is a communications tool providing an avenue for sharing information of any kind. The purpose of the mechanism is to enable faculty, staff, and other individuals to communicate (anonymously if they wish) concerns or irregularities about accounting, auditing, or internal control processes including financial malfeasance. Other types of issues that may be communicated relate to employment practices and actions, research misconduct, sexual harassment, workplace violence, unsafe work conditions, and others.

Q. If I see a violation, shouldn't I just report it to my manager, to security, or to human resources and let them deal with it?

You certainly can report such instances in this way, as well as to other offices on campus. However, there are several good reasons why you may consider using Ethicspoint® as well. First, Ethicspoint ensures that your report gets to the appropriate people. That may or may not happen if you simply report something to your manager, especially when dealing with issues not under his/her control. More importantly, reports can be filed anonymously and all report information is secure and treated confidentially.

Q. It is my understanding that any report I send from a University 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. Industry trends indicate that fewer than 12% of reports are generated during business hours, most people prefer to report from the comfort of their home after hours and on the weekend.

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 (if you wish). An Internet portal never identifies a visitor by screen name and the Ethicspoint system strips away Internet addresses so that anonymity in the EthicsPoint system is 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. I am aware of some individuals involved with unethical conduct, but it doesn't affect me. Why should I bother reporting it?

Our University chooses to promote ethical behavior. All unethical conduct, at any level, ultimately hurts the University and all employees and community members, including you. You only have to consider what happened in recent scandals in the business community to see disastrous effects that a seemingly harmless lapse in ethics can have on an otherwise healthy organization. So if you know of any incidents of misconduct or ethical violations, we hope that you will be motivated to report it.

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

File a report. Ethicspoint® will help you prepare and file your report so it can be properly understood. We'd rather you reported a situation that turned out to be harmless than let possibly unethical or illegal 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 a report available only to designated officials within Rice University who are charged with evaluating that type of report. Each of these report recipients has had training in treating these reports confidentially. Ethicspoint® and Rice work together to ensure that no report is ever shared with implicated parties, their peers, or subordinates.

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 no report is ever shared with implicated parties, their peers or their subordinates. There are protocols for appropriately handling even those reports implicating high-level employees; these include providing the report to the trustee chair of the Board of Trustees' Audit Committee. This will help to eliminate cover-ups by any implicated individual.

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

When you file a report at the Ethicspoint Web site or via our international toll-free number, 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 add further information or to answer questions posed by , a Rice representative . We strongly suggest that you return to the site in 48 hours to answer University questions that would help resolve any open issues. You and the University now have entered into an "anonymous dialogue" which can help clarify and resolve a situation, no matter how complex.

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

All Ethicspoint correspondence is held in the same confidence as the initial report.

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. You can file from home. 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 (866-294-4633) toll free, 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 reporting system. These reports have the same security and confidentiality measures applied to them during delivery.