

PART THREE: AFTER THE WHISTLE BLOWS. NEXT STEPS.

The process for ethical reporting (AKA whistleblowing) is comprehensive. Whether fraud, ethical, personal, or personnel issues such as workplace bullying and sexual harassment or simple mismanagement pertaining to supervision or minor disputes, the result of an employee stepping forward can influence the behaviour of entire groups and organizations. This often creates a domino effect bringing about reform and betterment.

So, what happens after the whistle blows? The standard process of an ethics reporting program is:

1. an employee discloses information through a mechanism of communication;
2. the matter is reviewed and, if warranted, investigated by the designated officer or an independent professional third party experienced to perform an investigation (this step includes controls in place to immediately prevent or address high risk situations);
3. the subject of disclosure will be provided an opportunity to respond to the allegations;
4. and if wrongdoing is found, the appropriate corrective measures are carried out.

Throughout the process, confidentiality is maintained to the greatest extent possible. All parties need to be treated fairly and equitably, and the reporting person should be protected from reprisal. In Canada specifically, the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act "prohibits employers from taking retributive action against a public servant who has made a protected disclosure or has, in good faith, cooperated in an

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investigation commenced under the Act" and should be applied across all corporate sectors.

The ethics reporting process also includes evidence and documentation discovery, managing confidentiality, internal policy and procedures and following Occupational Health & Safety Administration guidelines. Any sort of ethics report must have evidence. It requires more than just suspicion to put an ethics reporting process into action. Concrete and legitimate documentation of the wrongdoing is necessary. Names, contact information, laws, or workplace policies believed to have been violated, and locations of any incriminating data, photographs, documents, or files are needed to create a solid foundation of proof.

Lastly, support for the individual disclosing information is arguably the most important part of any ethics reporting process. Coming forward takes bravery and should be encouraged. The individual should come through the process with the knowledge that they have made a positive contribution to the organization.

Information for this article was gathered from Lexology, KCY At Law, and EY.com.