



Whistleblower Program

Frequently Asked Questions

About EthicsPoint

What is EthicsPoint?

EthicsPoint is a comprehensive and confidential reporting tool created by NAVEX Global to assist City government, employees and residents to work together in addressing fraud, abuse, and other misconduct in the workplace, all while cultivating a positive work environment. The City of Oakland uses EthicsPoint to manage the Whistleblower Program.

Why do we need a system like EthicsPoint?

- We believe that our employees and residents are important sources of information. By creating open channels of communication, we can promote a positive work environment and maximize City services provided.
- Oakland voters established the City's Whistleblower Program in 2009, as a function of the Office of the City Auditor, in accordance with the Whistleblower Protection Act (CA Government Code 53087.6 and Whistleblower Protection Ordinance (OMC 2.38))
- An effective reporting system will augment our other efforts to foster a culture of integrity and ethical decision-making.

Reporting – General

May I report using either the Internet or the telephone?

Yes. With EthicsPoint, you can file a confidential, anonymous report via either the telephone or the Internet.

What type of situations should I report?

The EthicsPoint system is available to employees, vendors, and residents to report any violation of our stated Code of Conduct or other concerns you may have.

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

When you observe some behavior that you believe violates our code of conduct, we expect you to report it. Ideally, you should bring any concerns forward to your direct manager, or another member of our management team. However, we recognize there may be circumstances when you are not comfortable reporting the issue in this manner. It is for these circumstances that we have partnered with EthicsPoint. We would rather you report anonymously than keep the information to yourself.

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

We all have the right to work and live in a positive environment; with that right comes the responsibility of acting ethically and letting the appropriate people know if someone is not



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behaving appropriately. By working together, we can maintain a healthy and productive environment. Misconduct can threaten the livelihood of an entire community.

Does City management really want me to report?

We certainly do. In fact, we need you to report. You know what is going on in our city - 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 City and community. Also, offering positive input may help identify issues that can improve the City of Oakland culture and its services delivery.

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 specific individuals within the City Auditor's office who evaluate reports based on the type of violation and location of the incident. Each of these report recipients has had training in keeping these reports in the utmost confidence.

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

The EthicsPoint system concentrates on being a positive aspect of our overall philosophy and allows us to assure a safe, secure, and ethical workplace and community. You are encouraged to seek guidance on ethical dilemmas, provide positive suggestions, or communicate a concern. Effective communication is critical in today's environment, and this is a great tool to enhance that communication.

We have carefully chosen the best reporting tool to meet our compliance obligations while maintaining a positive reporting environment.

Reporting Security & Confidentiality

It is my understanding that any report I send from a City of Oakland computer generates a server log that shows every website my PC connects with, so 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 computer or mobile device to EthicsPoint is available. In fact, EthicsPoint is contractually committed not to pursue a reporter's identity.

If you feel uncomfortable making a report on your work computer, you have the option of using a computer outside our work environment (such as one located at an Internet café, at a friend's house, etc.) through the EthicsPoint secure website. Many people choose this option, as EthicsPoint's data shows that fewer than 12% of reports are generated during business hours.



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Can I file a report from home and 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, preserving anonymity. Plus, EthicsPoint is contractually committed not to pursue a reporter's identity.

I am concerned 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, if you wish to remain anonymous, 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...".

Is the toll-free telephone hotline 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 website. These reports have the same security and confidentiality measures applied to them during delivery.

What if I want to be identified with my report?

If you wish, there is a section in the report for identifying yourself.

Tips & Best Practices

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

The City of Oakland chooses to promote ethical behavior. All unethical conduct, at any level, ultimately hurts the City, employees, and residents, including you. So, if you know of any incidents of misconduct or ethical violations, consider it your duty to yourself, your co-workers, and residents to report it.

I am not sure if what I have observed or heard is a violation of City policy, or involves unethical 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. We would rather you report a situation that turns out to be harmless than let possible unethical behavior go unchecked because you weren't sure.

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

By design, the EthicsPoint system and report distribution does not notify or grant access to reports in which implicated parties are named.



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What if I remember something important about the incident after I file the report? Or what if the City Auditor has further questions for me concerning my report?

When you file a report at the EthicsPoint website or through the EthicsPoint Call Center, you receive a unique username and are asked to choose a password. You can return to the EthicsPoint system again either online or by telephone to access the original report. Here you can add details and additional information, or answer questions posed by a City Auditor office representative that will help resolve open issues. We strongly suggest you return to the site, in the time specified, to answer any questions. You and the City Auditor office now have entered into an “anonymous dialogue,” where situations are not only identified but can also be resolved, no matter how complex.

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

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

Can I still submit 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 submit from home or public locations, including the public library, that has Internet computers. If you don't have access to or are uncomfortable using a computer, you can call the EthicsPoint toll-free hotline, which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.