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## **How to establish a whistleblower protection policy**

Depending on your industry and the culture of your organization, it may be time for your board to adopt a formal policy to protect whistleblowers—that is, the individuals who believe that there is improper or even illegal wrongdoing, waste, fraud, or abuse. State up front that your policy has been developed in order to meet the standards of Sarbanes-Oxley (the Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act of 2002). It should be dated with a notation of its adoption by your board of directors. Here are suggested sections:

**POLICY /PURPOSE:** (NONPROFIT NAME) is committed to protecting any staff member or volunteer who reports wrongdoing, waste, fraud or abuse. Any such person will be not fired, removed from his/her position or otherwise retaliated against for making such a report. The report will be investigated and even if determined not to constitute wrongdoing, waste, fraud or abuse, the person who made the report will not be discriminated against for his/her action.

**PROCESS/METHOD FOR REPORTING:** State here how your organization wants to have persons make reports of suspected wrongdoing, waste, fraud or abuse. Examples would include submitting a report in writing, sending an e-mail, calling the telephone hotline, etc. Include your policy regarding instances where reports submitted anonymously will be investigated (this would include allegations of a crime), although the purpose of communicating this whistleblower protection is to encourage people to identify themselves and make needed reports to stop or prevent wrongdoing, waste, fraud or abuse.

**INVESTIGATION METHODS:** State here the specific steps that will be taken to investigate the report and/or accusation. This should include the title of the person, contact information, timelines for the investigation process and the person or group to whom the results of the investigation will be made. Include your policy on whether the results will be confidential (this is generally the case).

**DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS:** Issues to be addressed in this section include reporting back to the person who filed the report (including timing), a commitment to addressing issues that may have been revealed following the investigation, and how to manage/follow through with any criminal or legal issues related to the reports made.

*This suggested content is based on material originally developed by June Twinam.*

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