

The Whistle-blower's Act

State employees who blow the whistle on fraud and abuse within state government are protected by law. Sections 112.3187–112.31895 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.) constitute the law known as the "Whistle-blower's Act." These and other Florida Statutes can be viewed on the official internet site of the Florida Legislature at www.leg.state.fl.us.

The legislative intent of the Whistle-blower's Act is to prevent agencies or independent contractors from taking retaliatory action against an employee who reports agency violations of law that create a substantial and specific danger to the public's health, safety, or welfare. It is also the intent of the legislature to prevent agencies or independent contractors from taking retaliatory action against an employee who discloses information alleging improper use of governmental office, gross waste of funds, or any other abuse or gross neglect of duty on the part of an agency, public officer, or employee.

Why have a Hotline?

The Chief Inspector General is responsible for promoting accountability, integrity, and efficiency in state government. That responsibility includes maintaining an in-state toll-free whistle-blower's hotline, notifying all employees of the various state agencies of its existence, and providing an address to which whistle-blower information may be forwarded.

Who should call the Hotline?

State employees, former employees, and applicants of agencies or independent contractors:

"Employee" means a person who performs services for, and under the control and direction of, or contracts with, an agency or independent contractor for wages or other remuneration.

"Agency" means any state, regional, county, local, or municipal government entity, whether executive, judicial or legislative; any official, officer, department, division, bureau, commission, authority, or political subdivision therein; or any public school, community college, or state university.

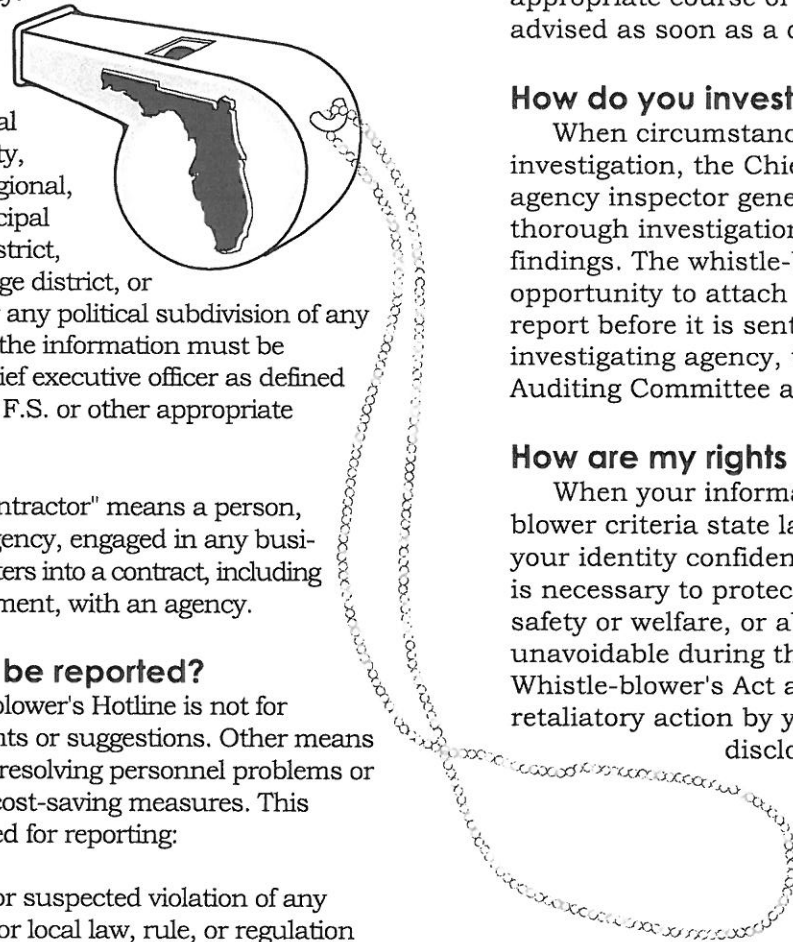
[Note: For disclosures concerning a local government entity, including any regional, county, or municipal entity, special district, community college district, or school district or any political subdivision of any of the foregoing, the information must be disclosed to a chief executive officer as defined in s. 447.203(9), F.S. or other appropriate official.]

"Independent contractor" means a person, other than an agency, engaged in any business and who enters into a contract, including a provider agreement, with an agency.

What should be reported?

The Whistle-blower's Hotline is not for general complaints or suggestions. Other means are available for resolving personnel problems or recommending cost-saving measures. This hotline is reserved for reporting:

- (a) Any violation or suspected violation of any federal, state, or local law, rule, or regulation committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor which creates and presents a substantial and specific danger to the public's health, safety, or welfare.
- (b) Any act or suspected act of gross mismanagement, malfeasance, misfeasance, gross waste of public funds, suspected or actual Medicaid fraud or abuse, or gross neglect of duty committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor.



What happens when I call?

When you call the Whistle-blower's Hotline we will take your information and ask basic questions concerning your case. Whether you call or write to the hotline, your information will be reviewed to determine the appropriate course of action. You will be advised as soon as a decision is made.

How do you investigate?

When circumstances require investigation, the Chief Inspector General or agency inspector general will conduct a thorough investigation and report its findings. The whistle-blower has an opportunity to attach comments to the final report before it is sent to the Governor, the investigating agency, the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee and the Comptroller.

How are my rights protected?

When your information meets whistle-blower criteria state law enables you to keep your identity confidential, unless disclosure is necessary to protect the public's health, safety or welfare, or absolutely necessary or unavoidable during the investigation. The Whistle-blower's Act also protects you from retaliatory action by your agency for disclosing adverse information.



Executive Office of the Governor
Office of the Chief Inspector General

Whistle-blower's Hotline
Post Office Box 151
Tallahassee, Florida 32302

(800) 543-5353 toll free
(850) 922-1060 in Tallahassee
(850) 921-0817 facsimile

If you are retaliated against

If you are an employee of a state agency and you disclose information under the Whistle-blower's Act and that disclosure results in alleged retaliation by an employer in the form of an adverse personnel action, you may file a written complaint with the Florida Commission on Human Relations no later than 60 days after the prohibited personnel action. You can contact the Commission by calling (800) 342-8170 or by writing to the following address:

Florida Commission on Human Relations
2009 Apalachee Parkway
Suite 100
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

"State agency" or "agency" means any official, officer, commission, board, authority, council, committee, or department of the executive branch of state government. For purposes of this chapter and chapter 215, "state agency" or "agency" includes, but is not limited to, state attorneys, public defenders, the capital collateral regional counsels, the Justice Administrative Commission, the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, and the Florida Public Service Commission.

Any other person protected by the Whistle-blower's Act may, after exhausting all available contractual or administrative remedies, bring a civil action in any court of competent jurisdiction within 180 days after the action prohibited by the Whistle-blower's Act.

State employees should contact the Whistle-blower's hotline to report:

- Violations of law that present a clear and present danger to the public's health, safety, or welfare
- Gross mismanagement
- Gross waste of funds
- Gross neglect of duty

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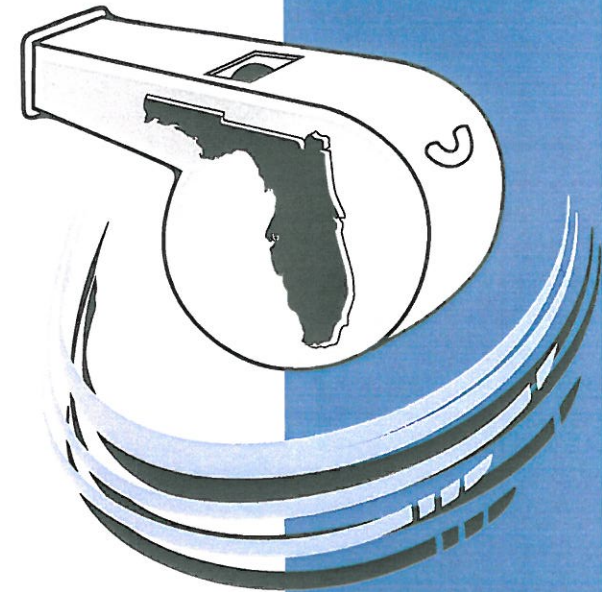
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