Wisconsin Housing & Economic Development Authority
Ethics Hotline

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
UPDATED FEBRUARY, 2013

1. **What is an Ethics Hotline?**
   An ethics hotline, also referred to as a whistleblowers hotline, is a tool used by organizations to provide employees and business partners with a vehicle to report incidents of fraud, waste, abuse, and conflicts of interest. An effective way to learn about issues has proven to be through a 24/7 365 day per year hotline which users can call at their convenience.

2. **Why does the Authority have an Ethics Hotline?**
   The Authority wants to promote ethical behavior and reduce losses from illegal or unethical behavior while protecting the person making the report from retaliation.

3. **What incidents should be reported to the Hotline?**
   The Ethics Hotline may be contacted to disclose the following:

   i. questionable accounting practices, internal accounting controls or auditing matters
   ii. violations of state or federal laws, rules or regulations governing the Authority or its employees, including ethics violations
   iii. violation of the Authority's internal policies and procedures
   iv. any observed or perceived conflict of interest

4. **Do I have to give my name when I file a report?**
   No. As part of the interview process, the interview specialist will ask if you want to provide your name or remain anonymous. You may remain anonymous. The process is confidential.

5. **Is there a possibility of retaliation?**
   No. The Authority believes that the only way the Ethics Hotline can be successful in its purpose to provide employees and business partners with a vehicle to report incidents of fraud, waste, abuse, and conflicts of interest, is to eliminate any possibility of retaliation on the part of Authority management. This pledge by the Authority applies regardless of your decision to remain anonymous.

6. **Who is answering the Ethics Hotline?**
   The Hotline is answered by trained interview specialists employed by a hotline service provider contracted by the Authority (the current contract is with a company known as The Network).

7. What process do I go through to file a report?

Following is the process to file a report.

i. Call 800-481-9589; toll free, 24/7.
ii. You will be prompted to select a language (translation services in more than 150 languages are available 24/7) and a prerecorded message will provide a brief message on the hotline.
iii. An experienced interview specialist will introduce themselves and begin the process, which is a series of questions asked of the caller.
iv. The interviewer will explain the process which takes between 10 to 15 minutes for a new report. If the call is a follow up call on an existing report, the interviewer will work with you to provide status or may ask additional questions as requested by the case manager.
v. The interviewer will insure that you are satisfied with the report. Prior to ending the conversation, the interview specialist will provide a report number for new incidents and will ask that you call back for follow up, typically within two weeks. Write the report number down as you will need that on follow up calls.

8. What happens after my report is filed?

Once the report is filed, the report is e-mailed to case managers and the Chairperson of the Authority's Finance Committee. The case managers are responsible for overseeing each case to ensure that they are adequately addressed. On a monthly basis, executive summary reports of all calls are submitted to the Finance Committee and the Members of the Authority.

9. Who are the Case Managers?

The Authority has two Case Managers – the Chief Financial Officer and the Director of Administrative Services. A Case Manager will be assigned to each incident that is reported. It is his/her responsibility to ensure the incident is properly investigated and appropriate action is taken. Case Managers will generally be assigned cases within their area of expertise. Case Managers will not be assigned cases that name them as part of the issue. The Chairperson of the Authority's Finance Committee is the Oversight Case Manager. He/she will monitor all incidents reported and will ensure proper investigation and action is taken.

10. What responsibility do I have after I make a report?

When you have completed your report, the interview specialist will provide a report number and a call back date. To insure that your report is being properly investigated, you should call back on the date provided. When you call back (Call 800-481-9589; toll free, 24/7), you must provide the report number to the interview specialist. The interview specialist will advise you of the status of your report or may ask you additional questions that the case manager or investigator has provided. The interview specialist will advise you on the next steps you should take related to your report.

11. What should I do if additional information related to a previous report becomes available?

If additional information becomes available before your callback date, call the toll free number (800-481-9589; 24/7), give the interview specialist your report number and then the information related to the report. The interview specialist will advise you on the next steps you should take related to your report.

12. Are the reports that are filed subject to open records requests?

The information gathered from the hotline report belongs to the Authority and not to the hotline service provider. The Authority determines what information the general public has rights to, and what should fall under regulations that protect sensitive information from public record scrutiny.

The Freedom of Information Act declares that a government agency's records are subject to disclosure upon request, EXCEPT records "solely related to internal personnel rules and practices" or records like personnel files, which would lead to an invasion of personal privacy.

13. Who should I ask if I have questions about the process?

There are many resources available should you have any questions. The Chief Financial Officer, Director of Human Resources, Controller, or Human Resource Analyst should be able to answer your questions related to the Ethics Hotline. You are also encouraged to call the Ethics Hotline number with any questions you may have.