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Ethics/Whistleblower Hotline FAQs Emerging Business and Workforce Development Programs

1. What is an Ethics Hotline?

An ethics hotline, also referred to as a whistleblower's hotline, is a tool used by organizations to provide Program participants 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 WHEDA have an Ethics Hotline?

WHEDA 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:

- questionable business or accounting practices, violations of state or federal laws, rules or regulations violation of WHEDA's policies and procedures.
- 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. WHEDA believes that the only way the Ethics Hotline can be successful in its purpose to provide Program participants 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 WHEDA, LIHTC owners, subcontractors/contractors and others involved in the process. This pledge by WHEDA 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 WHEDA (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 for 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 this report number down, it will be required for any follow-up calls.**

8. What happens after my report is filed?

Once the report is filed, the report is emailed to case managers and the Chairperson of the WHEDA'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 WHEDA's Finance Committee and the Members of the Authority Board.

9. Who are the Case Managers?

The Authority has two Case Managers – the Chief Financial Officer and the Director of Human Resources. 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 WHEDA'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 (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 WHEDA, not the hotline service provider. WHEDA 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.