
Whistleblower Protection Policy

Effective Date: October 10, 2022

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to encourage and enable the Public Library of Science (“PLOS”) community without fear of retaliation, to raise concerns regarding suspected unethical and/or illegal conduct or practices on a confidential (and if desired) anonymous basis so that PLOS can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions.

PLOS is committed to complying with all applicable laws, promoting honesty and integrity and maintaining the highest ethical standards in all its activities. PLOS requires directors, officers, employees, contractors, freelancers and volunteers (“PLOS community”) to observe high standards of professional and personal ethics in the performance of their duties and responsibilities. The PLOS community members must practice honesty, ethics and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities and advancing PLOS’s mission while complying with all applicable laws and regulations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all PLOS directors, officers, employees, contractors, freelancers and volunteers.

3. Reporting Responsibility

This policy is intended to encourage and enable PLOS community members to raise serious concerns internally so that PLOS can address and correct unethical or illegal conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of PLOS community members to report concerns about violations or suspected violations of PLOS’s code of ethics, policies or applicable laws and regulations.

4. Duty to Act in Good Faith

Any person who submits or makes a report verbally, in writing or through the PLOS Speak Up Helpline (“Reporting Party”) about a violation or suspected violation must act in good faith. The Reporting Party must have a good faith basis or reason to believe there was a violation or potential violation. Unsubstantiated, malicious, or false allegations will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense which may subject the Reporting Party to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5. No Retaliation

It is contrary to the values of PLOS and various laws for anyone to retaliate against an individual who reports in good faith an ethics or legal violation (or a suspected violation), such as a report of discrimination or possible suspected fraud. Any PLOS director, officer or employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. This protection from retaliation is not intended to prohibit supervisors from taking disciplinary action in the usual scope of their management duties, including those based on valid performance-related factors.

6. Reporting Procedure

PLOS has an open-door policy and suggests that employees share their questions, concerns, suggestions or reports with their supervisor, the Legal Department or the People & Culture Department. Supervisors and managers are required to submit reports or concerns about suspected ethical and legal violations in writing either to the PLOS Speak Up Helpline or to the applicable PLOS Department (People & Culture, Legal or Finance). Depending on the nature of the report, it will be directed to the applicable PLOS Department for further investigation. Employees with concerns may submit their concerns confidentially through the PLOS Speak Up Helpline [online](#) or by calling 1-800-461-9330 (USA), 0808 189 1053 (UK), 0800 181 2396 (Germany), 800 852 3912 (Singapore).

7. Investigation Procedure

The General Counsel is responsible for ensuring that all reports about unethical or illegal conduct are investigated and resolved. The General Counsel may delegate the investigation of the reports to other departments at PLOS, including but not limited to the People & Culture and Finance Departments, or to external investigators (if appropriate).

The Reporting Party will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of the report. All reports, including suspected but unproved matters, will be promptly reviewed and investigated by the appropriate PLOS department or external investigator. Appropriate corrective action will be taken, if necessary, and findings may be communicated to the Reporting Party and his/her/their supervisor, if appropriate.

8. Periodic Reporting of Reports

The General Counsel shall periodically notify the Chief Financial Officer (if appropriate under the circumstances) and the Board of Directors Audit and Risk Management Committee of reports made under this Policy.

9. Confidentiality

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the Reporting Party. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, except for circumstances where PLOS may need to comply with a law and/or provide accused individuals with legal defense rights. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent it does not impair the ability of PLOS to conduct a thorough investigation of the report.

10. Forms and Related Information

[US Employee Handbook](#)

[UK Employee Handbook](#)

[PLOS Speak Up Helpline Link](#)

11. Questions

Please contact the PLOS Legal Department at legal@plos.org if you have questions about this policy or any related policies.