



The First 24 Hours

A practical checklist for receiving, stabilizing, and planning a workplace investigation.

USE SOUND JUDGMENT

- ☐ Respond immediately to urgent safety, medical, violence, or evidence-destruction concerns.
- ☐ Use neutral interim measures and avoid decisions that could appear retaliatory or prejudice the outcome.
- ☐ Consult qualified legal, HR, labor-relations, or compliance counsel when the matter requires it.

1. Stabilize and protect

- ☐ Address immediate safety, medical, security, or operational concerns.
- ☐ Remind appropriate people that retaliation is prohibited and concerns should be reported promptly.
- ☐ Consider temporary measures that protect people and evidence without implying a conclusion.
- ☐ Limit information to people with a legitimate need to know; do not promise absolute confidentiality.
- ☐ Record who approved each urgent action, the reason, and the time it occurred.

2. Capture the initial concern

- ☐ Record the reporter's words, contact information, and preferred method of follow-up.
- ☐ Identify what allegedly happened, when and where it occurred, and who may be involved.
- ☐ Ask what documents, messages, photographs, recordings, or physical items may exist.
- ☐ Identify witnesses and anyone who may hold relevant records.
- ☐ Ask whether the concern is continuing and whether immediate support is requested.

3. Preserve time-sensitive evidence

- ☐ Identify email, chat, text, video, access-control, scheduling, and device records that may be overwritten.
- ☐ Preserve original files and metadata; avoid editing, renaming, or repeatedly forwarding source evidence.
- ☐ Document who collected each item, when it was collected, and where the protected copy is stored.
- ☐ Coordinate preservation notices or legal holds with authorized counsel or records personnel when appropriate.



The First 24 Hours - Continued

Move from initial response to a fair, organized, and documented investigation plan.

4. Assign responsibility and check independence

- ☐ Name the decision owner and the person responsible for managing the investigation record.
- ☐ Select an investigator with appropriate skill, authority, neutrality, and availability.
- ☐ Check for conflicts of interest, prior involvement, reporting relationships, or perceived bias.
- ☐ Identify applicable policies, collective-bargaining provisions, reporting duties, or insurer requirements.

5. Define the initial scope

- ☐ Separate the concern into clear, neutral allegation statements that can be investigated.
- ☐ Identify the period, locations, policies, people, and decisions potentially within scope.
- ☐ List known evidence sources, likely witnesses, and unresolved questions.
- ☐ Record what is outside the present scope and who can authorize a scope change.
- ☐ Set an initial timeline while allowing it to change as new information is discovered.

6. Plan the next communication and interviews

- ☐ Decide who will acknowledge the complaint and explain what the reporter can expect next.
- ☐ Prepare neutral opening questions before moving to detailed or challenging questions.
- ☐ Sequence interviews to protect evidence and reduce unnecessary coordination between witnesses.
- ☐ Plan how notes, corrections, documents, and follow-up questions will be handled.

Before the first day ends

Confirm that the case record is secured, urgent preservation steps are documented, responsible people know their assignments, and the next contact or interview is scheduled. Create dated follow-up tasks for anything still open.