



Seattle Department of Human Resources

ABOUT THE HUMAN RESOURCES INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

The Human Resources Investigations Unit (HRIU) investigates alleged violations of the City's Personnel Rules, section 1.1. HRIU also resolves cases in partnership with the Office of Employee Ombud (OEO) and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

HRIU's Role

HRIU does not represent the City, Complainant, or the Subject. HRIU acts as an impartial factfinder. We cannot offer personal or legal advice.

Early Resolution of Cases

HRIU strongly encourages early resolution of complaints. It can save time and emotion. When a case is appropriate for mediation, we refer it to the OEO or ADR, which can help resolve the case quickly, professionally, and confidentially. If the parties cannot reach an agreement, HRIU will conduct a fair and objective investigation.

Complaint Investigation

You should share all information about the case with the investigator, including copies of related documents. After meeting with you, the investigator will interview relevant witnesses, and the Subject(s). The investigator may also gather additional information and documents. Each case is different, but the HRIU intends to complete investigations within 90 days.

What to Expect from HRIU

We provide professional, respectful service. If you have questions, please ask the investigator, who will respond within one working day. We will listen to you, let you know your options, explain our process in clear language, and discuss realistic expectations for your case.

Your Role and Responsibilities

Tell us if you have filed or intend to file the same or similar complaint with a civil rights agency or court. (HRIU may not be able to investigate if you have an active case elsewhere.)

Please respond promptly when the investigator asks you for information, and requests to schedule interviews or appointments.

Please tell us if you need an interpreter or reasonable accommodations for a disability.

Keep track of the harm you feel has happened and discuss it with the investigator.

Tell the investigator immediately if anyone takes negative actions toward you that may be connected to this complaint. This may be retaliation, which is unacceptable.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does HRIU investigate?

HRIU investigates complaints that someone has violated City Personnel Rule (PR) 1.1, and/or related policies. This includes allegations of harassment, discrimination, and misconduct.

Who can request a HRIU investigation?

Any current or former City of Seattle employee, their management, Human Resources representative, union representative, or shop steward may request an HRIU investigation.

How do I request an investigation?

Email us at shr_hriu@seattle.gov, or call 206.733.9888. An HRIU investigator will listen to your concerns and figure out whether they are within HRIU's scope, as defined by City policy.

Are there time limits?

Yes. Matters that occurred more than 18 months prior to an HRIU request will not be accepted for an HRIU investigation, in accordance with Seattle Municipal Code.

What if I don't want my issue to be investigated?

Under PR 1.15, the HRIU must report serious allegations of harassment brought to its attention. For all other situations, we help the Complainant determine whether an investigation or another process is their best option. Typical options may include any or all the following:

- 1) Proceeding with an HRIU investigation.
- 2) Filing a grievance or appeal (i.e., for disciplinary action).
- 3) Meeting with OEO or ADR to discuss possible conflict resolution options.

How are HRIU investigations conducted?

HRIU investigators act as neutral, objective fact-finders under the procedures outlined in PR section 1.1.5. HRIU interviews the person who has raised the concerns, the person(s) accused, and relevant witnesses. Investigators also review relevant documents and gather related information. Wherever possible, we strive to complete investigations within 90 days.

Are communications with HRIU confidential?

Information about HRIU investigations is provided only to those with a "business need to know," such as the person(s) accused, the department director, and Human Resources leaders. HRIU investigators ask interviewees to please not discuss their testimony with others, as it might discourage others from participating. However, because the City is a public entity, information contained in HRIU files may be subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act. Other information may be disclosed if required by law, such as a subpoena or court order.

What about the risk of retaliation for contacting HRIU?

City policy prohibits retaliation against those reporting concerns regarding discrimination, or participating in the complaint investigation process. Let an HRIU investigator know immediately if you believe that you have been retaliated against.

What if I still have questions, or I'm not sure this is the right option for me?

That's okay! We're happy to answer your questions, listen to your concerns, and help you explore your options. Please contact us at shr_hriu@seattle.gov, or call 206.733.9888.