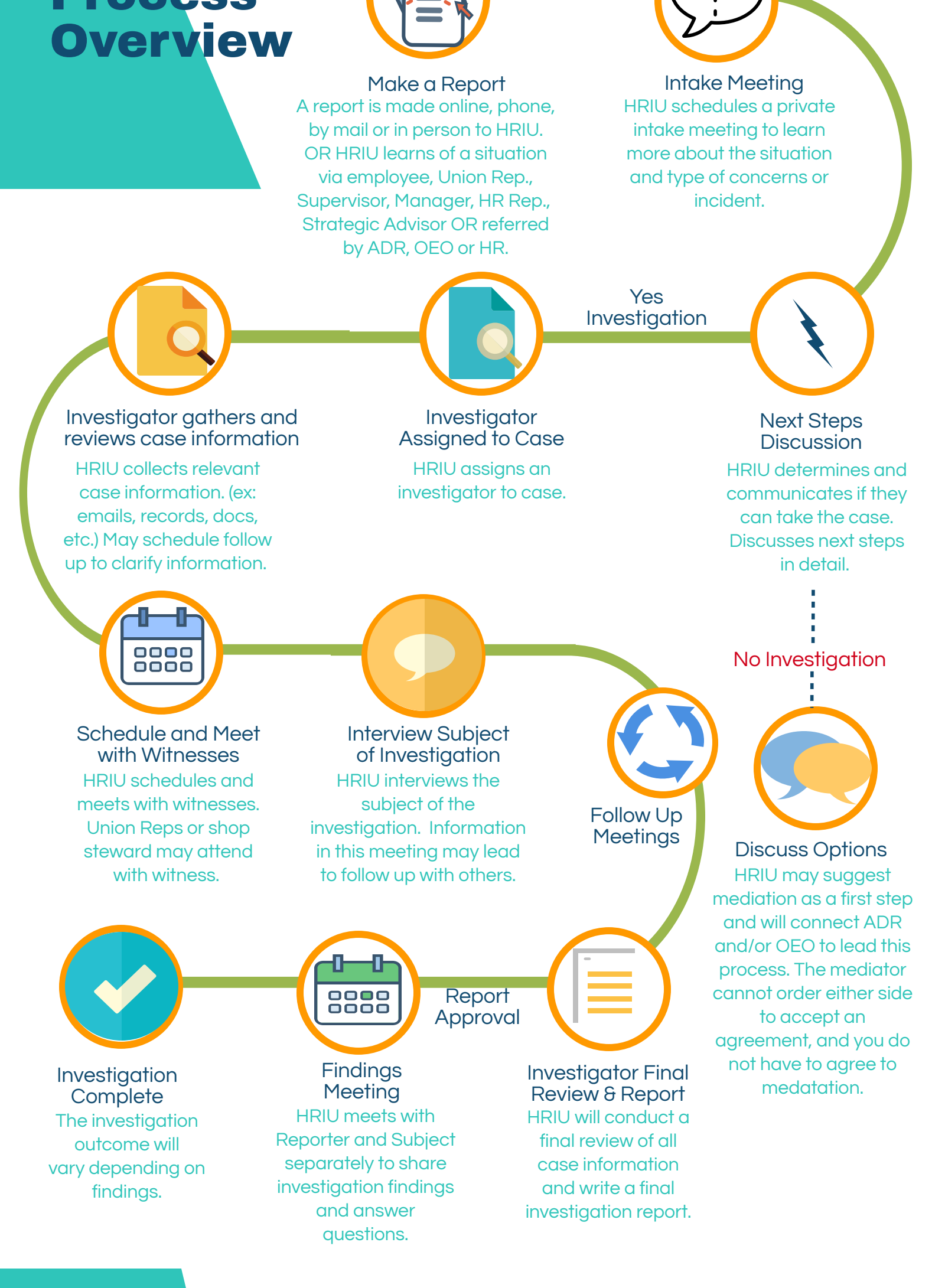


Human Resources Investigation Process

At a Glance

Acronyms
 HRIU - Human Resources Investigations Unit
 ADR- Alternative Dispute Resolution
 OEO- Office of the Employee Ombud
 HR - Human Resources



During the Investigation

Anytime During the Investigation
 Either side may request to stop the investigation and try to resolve the matter through ADR/OEO. The investigator may check in with either party to recommend this option as well.

Regular Updates
 The HRIU Investigator will typically update you on the investigation's progress every week or every other week.

Human Resources Investigation Unit (HRIU)
steve.zwerin@seattle.gov
Intake line: 206-733-9888
seattle.gov/human-resources/rules-and-resources/human-resources-investigations-unit

Human Resources Investigation Unit
 Updated August 2020

Seattle Human Resources

Human Resources Investigation

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

How do I request an investigation?
 Email or call our office. An HRIU investigator will listen to your concerns and figure out whether they are within HRIU's scope, as defined by City policy.

I'm scared of retaliation. What will you do to protect me?
 The City takes concerns about retaliation seriously, as listed in section 1.1 of the Personnel Rules. It could be considered retaliation to discipline or fire someone because they brought a good faith concern to the HRIU. If at any time you believe you're being retaliated against, please contact the HRIU immediately.

Can I file a complaint anonymously?
 In some cases, yes. In limited situations, and under unique circumstances, we can conduct a Director Initiated Investigation (DII). If the HRIU determines that a DII is an appropriate approach, the HRIU director could file a charge on behalf of an employee who is unable to do so themselves. If this is something you want to learn more about, please discuss with someone on the HRIU team.

Will you tell me the result of the investigation?
 For the Reporter and Subject, yes. However, to protect the Reporter and Subject, witnesses will simply be notified that the investigation is complete. They will not receive a copy of the investigation's findings.

Are there time limits?
 Yes. Matters that occurred more than 18 months prior to an HRIU request cannot be accepted for an HRIU investigation, in accordance with Seattle Municipal Code.

What if I disagree with the findings?
 You'll have a chance to discuss that with the investigator before the end of the investigation. If we've missed something important that could have changed the investigation's outcome, we will review it, and if relevant, rewrite the report. If the report is final, and you still disagree, you can write a response (rebuttal) to the investigation. The response will be part of the investigation file.

What happens if HRIU cannot take my case?
 We will refer you to other options that may work best to address your situation.

What if I don't want my issue to be investigated?
 Under PR 1.1.5, the HRIU must investigate serious allegations of harassment brought to its attention. For all other situations, we help the Reporter determine whether an investigation or another process is their best option. Typical options may include any of 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.

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.

Is my information subject to public disclosure?
 Under Washington State law, the Reporter's and witnesses' names are redacted when there is a public disclosure request. There are narrow exceptions, but in most cases these names would not be disclosed.

Can I get fired because of this investigation?
 If the Subject of the investigation is found to have committed a policy violation or another serious matter, they could be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Can you subpoena people during the investigation?
 We don't have subpoena power. However, most people cooperate with the investigation. In the rare cases when someone is unwilling to cooperate, we can work with SDHR, department Human Resources, the Law department, or that employee's management to get cooperation.

Does HRIU discipline or fire people?
 The HRIU does not have that authority. We are a neutral investigations program. At the end of the investigation, we share our investigation report with the Reporter, Subject, and department Human Resources. The department's appointing authority (usually the department leader) determines what disciplinary action, if any, is warranted.

If you do not discipline or fire people, what is the point?
 If we find a policy violation, we call it out to leadership, management, department Human Resources, SDHR, and others. They take our recommendations very seriously and are expected to take appropriate action. Even in cases where we don't find a policy violation, we often raise other concerns, such as a need for management coaching or training, communication challenges on the team, underlying conflicts, and more. We frequently refer matters to ADR or OEO after an investigation to help resolve those ongoing issues.