

## WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

A whistleblower, as defined by this policy, is an employee of the Early Learning Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties (ELC) who reports an activity that he/she considers to be illegal or dishonest to one or more of the parties specified in this Policy. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate management officials are charged with these responsibilities.

Examples of illegal or dishonest activities are violations of federal, state or local laws; billing for services not performed or for goods not delivered; and other fraudulent financial reporting.

If an employee has knowledge of or a concern of illegal or dishonest fraudulent activity, the employee is to contact his/her immediate supervisor or Executive Director. The employee must exercise sound judgement to avoid baseless allegations. An employee who intentionally files a false report of wrongdoing will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Whistleblower protections are provided in two important areas – confidentiality and against retaliation. Insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, identity may have to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law and to provide accused individuals their legal rights of defense. The ELC will not retaliate against a whistleblower. This includes, but is not limited to, protection from retaliation in the form of an adverse employment action such as termination, compensation decreases, or poor work assignment and threats of physical harm. Any whistleblower who believes he/she is being retaliated against must contact the Executive Director, immediately. The right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any personal wrongdoing that is alleged and investigated.

All reports of illegal and dishonest activities will be promptly submitted to the Executive Director who is responsible for investigating and coordinating corrective action.

If at any time a whistleblower feels uncomfortable speaking to the Executive Director due to potential involvement or otherwise, the employee may contact the Board Chair. Employees and anyone else may also file a complaint with the Office of Chief Inspector General, the Office's Inspector General, and the Florida Commission on Human Relations or the Whistleblower's Hotline number at 1-800-543-5353.