



# Whistleblower Protection

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## POLICY STATEMENT

Cornell University prohibits any form of retaliation, intimidation, harassment, or adverse employment action against any trustee, officer, employee, former employee, independent contractor, agent, or volunteer of the university for disclosing or threatening to disclose any conduct that they have a good-faith belief or reasonably believe (1) violates any law, rule, regulation, executive order, or any judicial or administrative decision, or order; (2) constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety; or (3) violates university policy. The university investigates reports of such activity promptly, fairly, and in accordance with this policy.

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## REASON FOR POLICY

The university strives to operate ethically and lawfully in all of its operations, to encourage reporting, and to address appropriately, without retaliation or other adverse consequences, reports of illegal activities, fraud, or policy violations by employees or agents of the university.

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## ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

- Ithaca-based locations
- Cornell Tech campus
- Weill Cornell Medicine campuses

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## WHO SHOULD READ THIS POLICY

- All university community members

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## MOST CURRENT VERSION OF THIS POLICY

- [policy.cornell.edu/policy-library/whistleblower-protection](https://policy.cornell.edu/policy-library/whistleblower-protection)

**POLICY 4.17 (INTERIM)**  
**Whistleblower Protection**

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## POLICY 4.17 (INTERIM) Whistleblower Protection

### RELATED RESOURCES

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#### University Policies and Information Applicable to All Units of the University

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[University Policy 1.2, Research Integrity](#)

[University Policy 1.7, Financial Conflict of Interest Related to Research](#)

[University Policy 3.1, University Fundraising](#)

[University Policy 3.6, Financial Irregularities, Reporting and Investigation](#)

[University Policy 3.25, Procurement of Goods and Services](#)

[University Policy 4.6, Standards of Ethical Conduct](#)

[University Policy 4.14, Conflicts of Interest and Commitment \(Excluding Financial Conflict of Interest Related to Research\)](#)

[University Policy 5.1, Responsible Use of Information Technology Resources](#)

[University Policy 6.4, Prohibited Bias, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual and Related Misconduct](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

[Equal Education and Employment Opportunity Statement](#)

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#### University Policies and Information Applicable to Only Ithaca-Based Locations and Cornell Tech

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[University Policy 3.14, Business Expenses](#)

[University Policy 6.3, Consensual Relationships](#)

[Faculty Handbook](#)

[Human Resources Policy 6.13.1, Conflict of Commitment: Dual Appointment, Nonacademic Staff](#)

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#### University Policies and Information Applicable to Only Weill Cornell Medicine Campuses

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[Academic Staff Handbook \(Weill Cornell Medicine Office of the Faculty\)](#)

Personnel Manual

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#### External Documentation

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[New York Nonprofit Revitalization Act, as codified by §715-b of the New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation Law](#)

[New York State Labor Law §740](#)

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#### University Forms and Systems Applicable to All Units of the University

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[Cornell Ethics and Compliance Hotline](#)

## POLICY 4.17 (INTERIM) Whistleblower Protection

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### CONTACTS

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Direct any general questions about this policy to your college or unit administrative office. If you have questions about specific issues, contact the following offices.

| Subject  | Contact                             | Telephone      | Email/Web Address  |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------|--|
| <b>Policy Clarification and Interpretation</b> | University Audit Office             | (607) 255-9300 | <a href="mailto:audit@cornell.edu">audit@cornell.edu</a>   |
|  | Weill Cornell Medicine Audit Office | (646) 962-6940 | <a href="mailto:audit@cornell.edu">audit@cornell.edu</a>   |
| <b>Reporting Suspected Violations</b>          | University Audit Office             | (607) 255-9300 | <a href="mailto:audit@cornell.edu">audit@cornell.edu</a>   |
|  | Weill Cornell Medicine Audit Office | (646) 962-6940 | <a href="mailto:audit@cornell.edu">audit@cornell.edu</a>   |
|  | Cornell University Hotline          | (866) 293-3077 | <a href="http://compliance.cornell.edu/cornell-ethics-and-compliance-hotline">compliance.cornell.edu/cornell-ethics-and-compliance-hotline</a> |

If you believe your questions have not been answered or you wish to remain anonymous, you may file a report through [Cornell University's Ethics and Compliance Hotline](http://compliance.cornell.edu/cornell-ethics-and-compliance-hotline) call-in number at (866) 293-3077 or website at [compliance.cornell.edu/cornell-ethics-and-compliance-hotline](http://compliance.cornell.edu/cornell-ethics-and-compliance-hotline).

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### DEFINITIONS

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These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

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| <b>Adverse Employment Action</b> | Failure to promote; adverse impact on compensation; termination; discharge; suspension; demotion; contacting U.S. immigration authorities regarding an employee's immigration status; other change in responsibilities, whether formal or informal; or other negative consequences.  |
| <b>Whistleblower</b>             | Individual who discloses or threatens to disclose any conduct that they have a good-faith belief or reasonably believe (1) violates any law, rule, regulation, executive order, or any judicial or administrative decision, or order; (2) constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety; or (3) violates university policy. |

## POLICY 4.17 (INTERIM) Whistleblower Protection

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### RESPONSIBILITIES

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The major responsibilities each party has in connection with this policy are as follows:

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| <b>Investigating Office</b>                 | Conduct timely investigations of whistleblower reports.<br>Provide fair processes for those facing accusations of misconduct, including notification of allegations and opportunity for response.<br>Communicate findings and conclusions to the responsible senior leadership and University Audit Office.  |
| <b>Unit Head</b>                            | Communicate the provisions of this policy, to all unit faculty and staff members.  |
| <b>University Audit Office</b>              | Receive whistleblower reports and refer them to the appropriate university offices (including where appropriate, retaining responsibility within the Audit unit) for investigation and corrective action.<br>Inform Cornell's Office of General Counsel and University Compliance of all whistleblower reports received.<br>Communicate information regarding whistleblower reports, when appropriate, to the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee of the Board of Trustees.<br>Refer reports of whistleblower retaliation arising under this policy to Cornell's Workforce Policy and Labor Relations for investigation and corrective action.  |
| <b>University Community Member</b>          | Report any conduct that they have a good-faith belief or reasonably believe (1) violates any law, rule, regulation, executive order, or any judicial or administrative decision, or order; or (2) constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety; or (3) violates university policy.<br>Refrain from retaliating against whistleblowers.<br>Report any known or suspected acts of whistleblower retaliation.<br>Cooperate fully and in a timely manner with investigations, including, but not limited to, participating in interviews and providing all requested information, documentation, and access to records, systems, personnel, and physical spaces. |
| <b>Workforce Policy and Labor Relations</b> | Investigate reports of retaliation against whistleblowers, and take corrective action, as appropriate.   |

## POLICY 4.17 (INTERIM) Whistleblower Protection

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### PRINCIPLES

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#### **University Encourages Reporting**

The university encourages the reporting of any conduct that individuals have a good-faith belief or reasonably believe (1) violates any law, rule, regulation, executive order, or any judicial or administrative decision, or order; (2) constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety; or (3) violates university policy. Reports will be fully investigated by the university.

◆ **Note:** Policies to which whistleblower protection applies include:

- Policies to prevent financial wrongdoing, such as internal and external financial controls, accounting policies, and policies prohibiting fraud, theft, embezzlement, bribery, kickbacks, or abuse or misuse of university assets.
- Conflict of interest policies.
- Policies addressing unethical conduct, harassment, or discrimination.
- Policies prohibiting academic or research misconduct or other regulations applicable to conduct of research or use of federal funds.

Reports of policy violations in areas unrelated to these may not be entitled to whistleblower protection.

#### **Retaliation Prohibited**

Individuals who disclose or threaten to disclose any conduct that they have a good-faith belief or reasonably believe (1) violates any law, rule, regulation, executive order, or any judicial or administrative decision, or order; (2) constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety; or (3) violates university policy will not be subject to any form of retaliation, intimidation, harassment, or adverse employment action by the university.

A whistleblower is not necessarily granted immunity from consequences that are the result of participating or being complicit in the violation or suspected violation that is the subject of the whistleblower's report.

Individuals who engage in retaliatory actions against whistleblowers are subject to discipline, up to and including separation from the university.

#### **Confidentiality**

When requested by an individual who reports a suspected violation or conduct that constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety, the university will take reasonable steps to keep the subject matter of such reports and the identity of the reporter confidential, subject to applicable legal requirements, and the need to conduct an appropriate investigation, afford fair process to accused individuals, and resolve actual violations or conduct that constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety.