



FAQ:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SARASOTA COUNTY FRAUD HOTLINE



All government employees share the important responsibility of upholding the highest professional and ethical standards to ensure the public trust. Likewise, those doing business with the government share this responsibility. Sarasota County has provided a fraud hotline for employees, and the public, to report suspected or observed fraudulent activity. The Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller is responsible for receiving, reviewing and investigating concerns regarding fraud within Sarasota County Government operations.

What is Fraud?

Fraud is an unlawful, dishonest or unethical act that is intentionally, deliberately and willfully perpetrated against an organization, in a deceptive, secretive and clandestine manner, concealed or covered-up, and committed for personal enrichment or to gain unauthorized benefit or advantage.

What is the Sarasota County Fraud Hotline? Who is EthicsPoint?

The hotline is a call center managed by EthicsPoint— an independent, outside reporting company—that provides an anonymous way for employees and the public to report fraud, waste and abuse in Sarasota County government.

Why does Sarasota County need a Fraud Hotline?

County leadership believes that its employees are its most important asset. By creating open channels of communication, Sarasota County can promote a positive living and work environment, and maximize employee productivity. The hotline—an effective reporting system —will augment other County efforts to foster a culture of the highest professional and ethical standards to ensure the public trust.

How do I make a report?

Call the Sarasota County Fraud Hotline at 855-506-0304. A live EthicsPoint operator will walk you through the reporting process. During the phone call, the interviewer will ask you questions and type your responses into the EthicsPoint secure reporting system.

What type of situations should I report?

The hotline is intended for reporting suspected fraud, waste and abuse, but resources for other issues are also available.

- **To report fraud, waste or abuse**, call the Fraud Hotline at 855-506-0304 to speak with an EthicsPoint representative.
- **To report employee harassment, discrimination, or any bargaining unit labor issues**, call the Sarasota County Human Resources Department, 941-861-5353.
- **To report improper moral or unethical conduct**, call Sarasota County Government Ethics, 941-861-5000.
- **To report ethics concerns regarding Sarasota County Elected Officials**, call the Florida Commission on Ethics, 850-488-7864.

Where do Sarasota County Fraud Hotline reports go?

When calling the hotline, reports are received by EthicsPoint staff and entered directly into the EthicsPoint system to prevent any breach in security.

Does Sarasota County management really want me to report?

They certainly do. In fact, they *need* you to report. Employees know what is going on in the organization, both good and bad. Citizens interact with government every day. You may be in a position to have initial knowledge of an activity that may be cause for concern.

Who can access reports?

EthicsPoint makes reports available only to the specific individuals charged with evaluating the report; each investigator is trained to hold reports in the utmost confidence.

I'm an employee. If my boss or managers are reported for a violation, will they see the report?

The EthicsPoint system and its report distribution methods are designed so that implicated parties are not granted access to reports in which they have been named.

What if I remember something important about the incident after I file the report? Or what if the company has further questions for me concerning my report?

When you call the fraud hotline and file a report with an EthicsPoint operator, you receive a unique user identifier. You can call the hotline again and EthicsPoint staff can access the original report if you intend to add further information.

I am concerned that the information I provide on the hotline will ultimately reveal my identity.

Calls to the fraud hotline remain anonymous— you may remain anonymous, unless you choose to be identified—when following proper reporting protocol. The hotline is designed to protect your anonymity. If you intend to remain anonymous, ensure that the information given to the interviewer does not reveal your identity. For example, stating “from my cube next to Jane Doe,” or “in my 33 years in this department,” may reveal your identity.

Are calls to the hotline subject to Public records?

The information you provide regarding an allegation may be considered a public record unless confidential pursuant to [Florida Statute Section 112.3188](#) or other applicable law. Your call does not constitute a disclosure pursuant to the [Florida Whistleblower's Act](#).

What if anonymity is not important to me, or if I want to be identified with my report?

You may identify yourself if you wish: When you call the hotline, the interviewer will ask if you would like to identify yourself. If you prefer not to use the hotline, you may also report suspected fraud, waste and abuse directly.

- By mail: The Sarasota County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller
Fraud / Internal Audit Department Att: Fraud Hotline
P.O. Box 3079, Sarasota, Florida, 34236
- By fax: 941-861-5704
- Walk in: Sarasota County Administration Center, Internal Audit Department
1660 Ringling Boulevard, Sarasota, Florida 34236

What are some fraud, waste or abuse terms and definitions?

- **Deliberate Misrepresentation of Financial Matters** concerns intentional misstatement, omission, concealment or other misrepresentation of material financial facts or conditions (under or overstating reported revenues, expenses, or assets, misapplication of GAAP principles)
- **Embezzlement** is deliberately misappropriating an organization’s assets or resources without authorization for one's own use (personal, fictitious, duplicate or overstated expense reimbursement, unauthorized disbursements, personal purchases on company credit card).
- **Falsification of Contracts, Reports or Records** is to intentionally misrepresent, alter, fabricate, falsify, or forge all or any part of a document, contract, report or record for personal benefit or to gain an advantage (fictitious, misstated or altered invoices, timecards, payroll records or travel expense reports, forged or altered checks).
- **Misuse of Assets or Services** is to deliberately use or borrow company resources, assets or equipment, without permission, for non-business or personal purposes or benefit (vehicles, computers, office equipment supplies).
- **Theft** is the act of stealing, taking and removing cash or other property with intent to deprive the rightful owner of its use (supplies, petty cash, larceny or skimming of cash collections).
- **Corruption- Conflict of Interest, Bribery** is the use of employee influence for unlawful benefit, contrary to fiduciary duty. It can be 1) an employee with an undisclosed private or personal interest influences an official action or decision (self-dealing) or 2) giving, offering, receiving or accepting something of value for special consideration, unfair advantage or to influence an official action or decision (kickbacks, bid-rigging).

SARASOTA COUNTY FRAUD HOTLINE
CALL TOLL FREE: 855 - 506 - 0304