

Interviewing the subject (sometimes referred to as “the accused”) during the investigation process can be challenging and uncomfortable. The interviewer must be respectful but impartial and cannot allow prior experiences with the individual to affect questioning. The goal is to collect facts. Use this guide as you prepare your questions and move through the process to keep the interview fair and work to uncover the facts behind what happened.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Review this guide as you begin to plan your interview.
- Prepare a list of short, open-ended questions.
- Find a discrete space for the interview.
- When possible or practical, ask another investigator to join to take notes and observe the conversation.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Be respectful. Those affected are less likely to retaliate or seek legal alternatives if they feel the process was handled fairly and all sides were given due consideration.
- Allow the interviewee plenty of space to do the talking.
- Start with broad questions, such as “Did anything unusual happen on Monday?”
- Continue to focus questions until the subject hones in on the specifics of the incident and can fill in details.
- Work toward establishing a chronological timeline of events from the subject’s perspective.
- Remain objective so the subject feels comfortable providing as much information as possible.
- Ask the tougher questions at the end of the interview. Once the subject is on the defensive it may limit their cooperation.
- Make sure the subject is fully aware of the allegation(s) against them and allow them an opportunity to respond.
- If the allegations are denied, ask what motive someone might have for making up the allegations.
- Ask if there is any way someone may have gotten a false impression that they behaved improperly.
- Ask for the names of any witnesses who could corroborate their version of events.
- Inquire whether there is any tangible evidence that the subject could provide, such as notes or documents.
- End by asking if there is any other information of which the company should be aware. This is an opportunity for the subject to provide relevant information that you may have missed.
- Remind the subject that retaliation is not allowed against anyone, including those who may cooperate with the investigation.
- Provide your contact information with the subject so that they can reach you if they have additional information to share.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Keep in touch with the subject and let them know the investigation is still in progress.
- Review & finalize your documentation of the interview, then attach any relevant evidence or supporting materials or policies.
- Follow up with additional interviews of involved parties.
- Compare the information you’ve gathered.