



Hidalgo County Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Prevention Policy

Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Purpose of Policy

To establish the expectation that all employees are responsible for preventing, detecting, and reporting fraud, waste, or abuse.

We at Hidalgo County are responsible for preserving the special trust placed in us by our many customers and stakeholders to properly use and protect the state's and county's resources.

It is the policy of Hidalgo County to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse, and, when necessary, stop continued fraud, waste, and abuse by any means within our authority. It is the duty of every employee to be vigilant in identifying and reporting suspected fraud, waste, and abuse in a timely manner to the appropriate supervisor whether the suspected activity concerns another employee or an individual who conducts business with or on behalf of the agency.

Understanding, preventing, and stopping the waste or loss of the county and state resources is a central element of Hidalgo County's philosophy and is absolutely critical to our maintaining the public's trust and ensuring the continued success of this agency.

County employees who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Definitions

Fraud involves obtaining something of value through willful misrepresentation. Fraud includes a false representation by words, conduct, or omission that deceives or is intended to deceive another, so the individual will act upon the misrepresentation or omission to his or her legal detriment.

Waste is the misuse or loss of state resources through inefficient or ineffective practices or behaviors. Waste may result from mismanagement, inappropriate actions, and/or inadequate oversight.

Abuse is the misuse of authority or position that causes the loss or misuse of state resources.

Reporting and Investigating Fraud, Waste, or Abuse

Employee Responsibilities

- Understand what constitutes fraud, waste, and abuse and the county policy and procedures on identifying, reporting, and stopping fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Immediately report all suspected fraud, waste, or abuse or conditions that could encourage fraud, waste, or abuse to your supervisor or division director.

- Cooperate in the investigation and disposition of cases of fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Do not discuss reports or investigations of suspected fraud, waste, or abuse with others except as authorized by your supervisor or division director.
- Employees may also contact the County Auditor's Office to report an incident by calling (956) 318-2511.

Supervisor and Division Director Responsibilities

- Ensure all employees understand what constitutes fraud, waste, and abuse and the county's policy and procedures on identifying, reporting, and stopping fraud, waste, and abuse, including maintaining confidentiality of an investigation.
- Supervisors – immediately review any reported concerns of fraud, waste, or abuse and forward to the appropriate manager.
- Managers – Upon receipt, review the reported concern and forward as necessary to the appropriate county tax assessor-collector, chief deputy, and county attorney.
- Do not discuss reports or investigations of suspected fraud, waste, or abuse with others except as authorized by the county tax assessor-collector, chief deputy, or county attorney.

Retaliation

Employees are prohibited from retaliating against another employee for reporting in good faith concerns of fraud, waste, or abuse.

An employee may register a complaint with the Department of Human Resources if the employee believes he/she is being retaliated against for reporting a violation of law (Whistleblower Act) or for participating in an investigation, proceeding, hearing, or litigation related to cases of fraud, waste, or abuse.