

# Employee Complaint & Open-Door Policy

Policy · US · Updated 2026-07-13 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

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An employee complaint and open-door policy is the written route for raising work-related concerns — unfair treatment, working conditions, manager decisions, policy violations — with a commitment about who will listen, how the concern will be handled, and that raising it costs the employee nothing. It is the US counterpart of a grievance procedure, minus most of the formality.

Complaints are going somewhere; the only question is whether that is to management or to a lawyer, an agency, or the group chat. An open door that actually works — where concerns get heard, looked into, and answered — resolves most problems at the cheapest possible stage and tells leadership what is really happening in the business.

This template gives you the intake channels, the handling and investigation basics, the no-retaliation commitment, and the confidentiality rules, drafted to sit alongside the anti-harassment and whistleblower policies rather than duplicate them.

## Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how anyone at [Your company] can raise a work-related concern and what happens when they do. It applies to all employees and covers concerns about [treatment, working conditions, workload, manager decisions, policy application, coworker conduct].

Two kinds of concern have dedicated routes that take priority: harassment and discrimination complaints follow [the anti-harassment policy], and reports of suspected illegal activity follow [the whistleblower policy]. A complaint raised here that belongs there is routed there — never bounced back to the employee to refile.

Nothing in this policy creates a contract of employment or changes the at-will nature of employment at [Your company].

## The open door

Any employee can raise any work concern with any level of management — their own manager first where they are comfortable, because that is usually fastest, but a skip-level manager, [HR contact], or [senior leader] are equally legitimate doors. Nobody is required to start with the person the complaint is about.

Managers who receive a concern own the next step, not necessarily the answer: listen, write down the facts, resolve it if it is theirs to resolve, and route it to [HR / name/role] if it is not. "That is not my department" is not an open door.

## How to raise a complaint

- In person or by [phone/message] to any manager, for anything you want handled informally.
- In writing to [HR contact / email / form at location] when you want a documented, tracked complaint — include what happened, when, who was involved, and what outcome you are seeking.
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[Anonymously via channel at location/system, if offered] — anonymous complaints are investigated as far as the information allows.

- Together with coworkers, if the concern is shared — group complaints about wages, hours, or working conditions are lawful and welcome here.
- To a government agency, at any time — nothing in this policy requires internal steps first or limits any legal right.

## How complaints are handled

1. Acknowledgment: written complaints are acknowledged within [timeframe], and the employee is told who is handling the matter.
2. Triage: [name/role] decides whether the issue needs a conversation, a management decision, or a formal investigation — and routes harassment, discrimination, safety, and legal matters into their dedicated processes immediately.
3. Investigation, where needed: an impartial investigator gathers the facts, hears the people involved — including the person complained about — and keeps notes. Nobody investigates a complaint about themselves or their own decisions.
4. Outcome: the employee hears the result within [timeframe] and, where appropriate, what will change. Not every complaint ends in agreement; every complaint ends with an answer.
5. Follow-up: [name/role] checks in with the employee after [interval] — both whether the fix held and whether any retaliation followed.

## No retaliation

No one at [Your company] may retaliate against an employee for raising a concern in good faith, participating in an investigation, or supporting a coworker's complaint. Retaliation includes discipline, demotion, cut hours, worse assignments, exclusion, and harassment — and it is grounds for discipline up to and including termination.

Good faith means honest, not correct: a complaint that is not upheld carries no consequences for the person who raised it. Knowingly false accusations are misconduct, handled under [the progressive discipline policy].

## Confidentiality

Complaints are shared only with the people needed to look into them and act on them. Complete confidentiality cannot be promised — fairness usually requires the person complained about to hear the substance — but discretion binds everyone involved, and "who complained?" curiosity is not a need to know.

The same discretion is asked of the employee and any witnesses while a matter is being looked into — not silence about their own concerns, which the law protects, but care with details that could make a fair process impossible.

## Records and review

Complaints, investigation notes, outcomes, and follow-ups are logged at [system/location], access-restricted to [roles], and retained for [period]. [Name/role] reviews the log [frequency] for patterns — the same manager, the same team, the same issue — because patterns are what individual complaints exist to reveal.

This policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] and after any complaint that exposes a gap in it. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

## How to use this template

1. Name real people for every channel and check they can be reached by every shift — an open door that only opens 9-to-5 excludes the people most likely to need it.
2. Draw the routing lines with your anti-harassment and whistleblower policies before publishing, so the three documents hand off cleanly instead of overlapping.
3. Train managers on receiving a complaint: listen, write it down, act or route — and never promise secrecy they cannot keep or outcomes they cannot deliver.
4. Track every written complaint to an answer; the fastest way to teach people the door is fake is one complaint that vanishes.
5. Review the complaint log at leadership level [quarterly], anonymized, so patterns get owned above the level that created them.

## Official guidance

- › [EEOC — Harassment](#)
- › [EEOC — Retaliation](#)
- › [OSHA — Workers' rights and protections](#)
- › [NLRB — Concerted activity](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/employee-complaint-policy-us> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.