

The Whistle Blower Policy

WHISTLE BLOWER POLICY

The Aditya Birla Group Values of Integrity, Commitment, Passion, Seamlessness, and Speed are the foundation for all actions and decisions we take. They set standards for the organization and for employee conduct.

To ensure that there is a common minimum standard of professional behavior, the Group has articulated Policy 769 - The Aditya Birla Group Code of Conduct / Redressal Process. This policy lists down broadly the identifiable and non-negotiable set of actions/behavior applicable to all employees across the Group. It provides direction and limits. It explains how to report violations/potential violations of the Group Values or Aditya Birla Group's Code of Conduct and the process of redressal.

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the Group's point of view on whistle blowing, the process, and the procedure to strengthen whistle blowing mechanism at Aditya Birla Group.

This policy:

- Provides a platform and mechanism for the Employees and Directors to voice genuine concerns or grievances about unprofessional conduct without fear of reprisal
- It provides an environment that promotes responsible and protected whistle blowing. It reminds Employees and Directors about their duty to report any suspected violation of any law that applies to the Group and any suspected violation of the Group Values or Aditya Birla Group's Code of Conduct.
- Above all, it is a dynamic source of information about what may be going wrong at various levels within the Group and which will help the Group in realigning various processes and take corrective actions as part of good governance practice.

Applicability of this policy

All the listed companies and other companies of the Aditya Birla Group in India, which are required by law to have a vigil mechanism, shall adopt this policy and get it approved by its Board of Directors. All other companies in India are recommended to adopt this policy.

Coverage of this policy

This policy is applicable to all the Group Companies in India, including all Employees* and Directors.

Definition of Employees - An individual is an employee of the Aditya Birla Group of Companies who works 100% for us, directly or indirectly, under which the Group Companies have the right to control the details of work performance by providing specific wage or salary.*

Who is a whistle blower?

Any Employee or Director who discloses or demonstrates an evidence of an unethical activity or any conduct that may constitute breach of the Group's/Group Company's Code of Conduct or Group Values. This whistleblower has come to the decision to make a disclosure or express a genuine concern /grievance/allegations, after a lot of thought.

Protection

The process is designed to offer protection to the whistleblower (employees and directors) provided that the disclosure made / concern raised / allegations made ("complaint") by a whistleblower is in good faith and the alleged action or non-action constitutes a genuine and

serious breach of what is laid down in the Group Values or Aditya Birla Group's Code of Conduct , policy 769.

The Group affirms that it will not allow any whistleblower to be victimized for making any complaint. Any kind of victimization of the whistleblower brought to the notice of the Value Standards Committee ** will be treated as an act warranting disciplinary action and will be treated so.

As a Group, we condemn any kind of discrimination, harassment, victimization or any other unfair employment practice adopted against the whistleblowers. Complete protection will be given to the whistleblowers against any unfair practices like retaliation, threat or intimidation or termination/suspension of service, disciplinary action, transfer, demotion, refusal of promotion, or the like including any direct or indirect use of authority to obstruct the whistleblower's right to continue to perform his/her duties/functions in a free and fair manner.

*** - For further details, please refer to policy 769 - The Aditya Birla Group Code of Conduct / Redressal Process*

Reporting in good faith

Every Whistle Blower is expected to read and understand this policy and abide by it. It is recommended that any individual who wishes to report, do so after gathering adequate facts/data to substantiate the complaint and not complain merely on hearsay or rumour. This also means that no action should be taken against the whistleblower, if the complaint was made in good faith, but no misconduct was confirmed on subsequent investigation.

However, if a complaint, after an investigation proves to be frivolous, malicious or made with an ulterior intent, the Value Standards Committee shall take appropriate disciplinary or legal action against the concerned whistleblower.

List of exclusions

The following types of complaints will ordinarily not be considered and taken up:

1. Complaints that are Illegible , if handwritten
2. Complaints that are vague , with pseudonyms
3. Complaints that are trivial or frivolous in nature
4. Matters which are pending before a court of Law, State, National Human Rights Commission, Tribunal or any other judiciary or sub judiciary body
5. Any matter that is very old from the date on which the act constituting violation is alleged to have been committed
6. Issue raised, relates to service matters or personal grievance

The Whistle Blowers are encouraged to make complaints that have an impact on Group's Brand & reputation, cases of financial irregularities, or People related issues of bias, partiality, and discrimination of any kind, abuse, victimization or harassment.

Dealing with anonymity

A whistleblower may choose to keep his/her identity anonymous. In such cases, the complaint should be accompanied with strong evidence and data.

Confidentiality

The Value Standards Committee will treat all complaints in a confidential and sensitive manner. In specific cases where the criticality and necessity of disclosing the identity of the whistleblower is important, it may be disclosed, on a 'need-to-know-basis', during the investigation process and only with the prior approval of the whistleblower.

Who is a whistle blower officer?

For the purpose of this policy, the Company Secretary (or in his absence, the Legal Head) of the relevant Unit/Business would act as the Secretary of the relevant Values Standard Committee and is also known as a Whistle Blower officer.

Procedure for raising a complaint

A whistleblower can make a complaint in multiple ways:

1. Can write to the relevant Value Standards Committee. The information about name of members and list of Value Standards Committee (VSC) at various levels, their e-mail id are available on the Values micro site that can be accessed from Poornata (<https://www.poornataghr.com>), or the Group's Intranet Onstream, (<http://www.abgonstream.com>).
2. A whistle blower can send a complaint to the ethics hotline by calling on a toll free number 1800 103 9868, or write to abg.whistleblower@ethicshelpline.in, or send a fax on 1800 103 9868 or mail it to P. O. Box No 71, DLF Phase 1, Qutub Enclave, Gurgaon – 122002, Haryana. . This is operated by an independent third party vendor.
3. By writing to the Chief People Officer or Company Secretary of the relevant Group Company, as these officials are duty bound to share the complaint with the Ethics Hotline.
4. By writing to Unit Head or Business Head of the relevant Group Company, who will forward this to the Ethics Hotline.
5. In exceptional cases, the complainant can directly report his/her complaint to the Chairperson of the respective Audit Committee. Details of the Chairperson is available on the Company website.

Procedure for handling a complaint is as given below:

1. A whistle blower identifies non-adherence of Group Values or Aditya Birla Group's Code of Conduct by any employee or a segment of the organization, will compile information that supports the case.
2. The whistle blower sends the complaint to the respective Value Standards Committee or ethics hotline, depending on:
 - The level at which the violation is perceived to be happening, or
 - The seniority of the individual/s involved.If the breach or misdemeanor is at:
 - The Unit Head level (Strategic Business Unit Head, Regional Head, Circle Head, Unit Head etc) and above, the employee will write to the Group level Value Standards Committee (GVSC)
 - Unit Function Head level, the same will be reported to the respective Business level Value Standards Committee (BVSC)

- Any other level, the same will be reported to the respective Unit level Value Standards Committee (UVSC)
3. Upon receipt of information, the secretary of the relevant Values Standard Committee will first do a preliminary investigation to check whether the complaint seems to be genuine and falls under the purview of whistle blower policy. If complaint is sent with malicious intent, then the committee will take appropriate disciplinary action against the whistle blower.
 4. If complaint does not fall under purview of whistle blower policy, then same would be redirected to the right forum. For eg – If complaint is related to sexual harassment, same will be forwarded to the Complaints Committee and would be dealt as defined under circular no. 728. – Policy to Prevent Sexual Harassment at the Workplace If complaint is related to a personal grievance, e.g. appraisal rating, promotion etc, it will be forwarded to the relevant Chief People Officer.
 5. Once established that the case needs investigation, the secretary of the Value Standards Committee after discussion with the committee shall appoint a team to investigate the case, with utmost confidentiality. The investigative team can be a pool of internal people specially trained to investigate or can be an external agency specialized to investigate such cases.
 6. Under no circumstances, the secretary, investigation team and the committee would reveal / disclose the identity of the “accused” to anyone else (including the immediate manager) – other than all those who are required to know about the case.
 7. The investigation team should work towards ensuring that the investigation is completed by following the laws of the land and principles of natural justice within 3 weeks of the complaint being reported. If the investigation cannot be completed within 3 weeks, then the committee needs to have very valid and strong reasons for the same.
 8. Once the investigation is completed, the secretary will submit the report of investigation to the committee and the committee will then decide on the quantum of punishment to be given. While deciding on this, the committee will consider the following:
 - Severity of the misconduct
 - Impact on the Organization (Reputation, Financial / Non – Financial)
 - Past record of the employee
 - Past precedence of treating similar violations (a summary of the same will be kept with Organization Effectiveness portfolio at Group Human Resources)
 9. The punishment shall constitute a minimum of written warning and may lead to withdrawal of last increment/ demotion, withholding promotion, dismissal from service and/ or even prosecution in a court of law.
 10. Once the report is received, the committee will put its recommendation and forward it to the respective Management team. The team will consider the recommendation and decide on appropriate action within 15 days of receiving the recommendation.
 11. While implementing the recommendation, the management will ensure that the name of the whistle blower and the person accused is kept confidential at all times.

12. In case the whistle blower or the person accused is not satisfied with the decision of the relevant Value Standard Committee, he/she has the option to appeal within 7 days of the order, to the next higher-level committee.
13. Based on the appeal, the next higher-level committee will decide whether to re-investigate / relook at the quantum of punishment. The next higher-level committee will close the case within 21 days of receiving the appeal.
14. If the charges framed on the accused is found to be false after investigation, it is very essential to demonstrate that the employee's dignity is respected. Hence, the Business Head / Unit Head should thank the employee personally for having cooperated in the process. A formal closure letter has to be sent informing that the charges has not been proved during the investigation process and hence he / she is fully exonerated of all the charges.

Reporting process

An Annual and Quarterly report will be prepared by the Business Value Standards Committee of which copies will be placed before the Audit Committee of the relevant Group Company and Organization Effectiveness portfolio at Group Human Resources.

Guidelines for communication and implementation of this policy

An ethics hotline is made available. This toll free number will be available for reporting of any violation or misconduct. A communication mechanism should be put in place to create awareness about this policy with the existing employees and for new joiners in all Group Companies operating in India.

It is the responsibility of the Chief People Officer of relevant Group Company to ensure that the updated names and email id of the various Business and Unit level Value Standards Committee is made available to all employees through the local intranet and/or any other communication mechanism they may adopt. A copy of this policy shall also be placed on the corporate website of the relevant Group Company.

A separate, detailed Operationalizing Guideline is available for each Values Standard Committee to ensure that this policy is implemented in letter and spirit. The details of the Values Standard Committee is available on Values Microsite on Poornata.

Important Templates

Annexure 1 – Template for reporting violations

Annexure 2 – Sample workflow /procedure for reporting, resolving and closing a case

Annexure 1 - Template for Reporting Violation

To: Value Standards Committee <at Group/ Business or Unit level>: _____

Please select the applicable incident type(s) from the list below that best describes the issue(s) you are reporting. Please note that multiple issues can be selected

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Misappropriation of company assets or resources | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Conflict of interest | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Inappropriate sharing of confidential information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Financial fraud of any nature | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Violation of gifts and entertainment policy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Non-adherence to safety guidelines | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Inaccurate financial reporting | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Bribery & Corruption | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Insider trading | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Other forms of Harassment – Victimization, Bullying, Discrimination etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Social Media Usage | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Misuse of authority | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Environment, health and safety | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Concurrent employment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Others _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please provide name, designation and department of the person(s) involved?

	Name	Department	Designation
Individual 1			
Individual 2			
Individual 3			
Individual 4			

When did the incident occur? (Please provide tentative date if you do not know the exact date)

Please confirm the location of the incident

How did you find out about this incident?

How long has this been occurring for?

- Less than a month
- 1-6 months
- 6-12 months
- Greater than 12 months

Please provide a detailed description of the incident. To enable your company to act on your complaint, you are requested to provide specific information where possible including names, location, date, time etc. Please note that this field is limited to 5,000 characters.

Do you have any evidence in support of your allegations?

- Yes
- No

Is anyone else aware of this incident?

- Yes
- No

Is there any additional information that would facilitate the investigation of this matter?

- Yes
- No

Have you reported this incident to anyone in the company?

- Yes
- No

Date: _____

Location: _____

Name of the Person reporting (optional): _____

Contact Information (incl email optional): _____

The complaint should be either reported on Values Microsite on Poornata to the relevant Values Standard Committee at Unit, Business or Group level or can be shared to ethics hotline at either verbally over a phone or through email. The details of the Values Standard Committee is available on Values microsite on Poornata and Onstream.

Annexure 2 - Sample workflow for reporting, resolving and closing a case

