

10 Tips for being a whistleblower and guide to receiving a reward for reporting fraud against the government

Survival guide for being a whistleblower and ten tips for getting a whistleblower reward

It can be a hard choice to become a whistleblower. First, there are a lot of risks. Second, there are some pitfalls that need to be avoided. What you need is guidance and a list of tips for making the decision to blow the whistle on fraud.

Here is your whistleblower guide and a list of the top 10 tips for both protecting yourself and being eligible for a reward.

1. **Keep quiet.** “Loose lips sink ships.” Only the first to properly file reward application is eligible for a reward. Even if you don’t want a reward, another good reason to keep a lid on your suspicions of fraud until getting legal advice is that it might not turn out to be fraud. No reason to risk losing your job unless you got it right. In addition, tipping off the company may hinder the government investigation and defeat what you hope to accomplish.
2. **Seek a reward.** You might not want a reward, but filing for a reward is the only way you can ensure that an investigation takes place and to have any role in the process. In fact, 80% of all fraud cases the government acts upon come through the reward program. The only other option is to call a fraud hotline. The sad reality is that most hotline calls never get a full investigation or go anywhere. It makes sense for the government to take more serious claims of wrongdoing when brought by high caliber attorneys on behalf of whistleblowers. The government knows that the attorney will screen the case and make sure it really is a fraud case and that there has been sufficient loss to the government to warrant opening a case.
3. **Hire an experienced attorney.** The government turns away most fraud allegations or claims for rewards. Because only 20% of whistle blowers receive a reward, you need to hire an attorney that has a lot of experience with the main government whistleblower reward program, preferably someone that worked for in the Fraud Section of the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., which oversees the reward program.
4. **Tell your attorney all the facts.** Don’t hold back talking to your attorney. Anything you tell them is confidential, even before you sign a retainer agreement and they formally become your attorney. It’s better to find out before you blow the whistle if it is the right type of case that the government will open an investigation or pay a reward. Also, if there are missing facts, your attorney can help gather them.
5. **Gather proof.** Documents are the heart of proving fraud cases. But before you go crazy grabbing documents at your place of work, you may want to talk to your attorney about the law in your state. This article should not be construed as giving legal advice, but if you are allowed to copy documents you should never take originals, copy only what is within your normal duties, and don’t send documents over the internet (but photocopy

them or put them on a thumb drive) to give to your attorney. Again, before taking documents, talk to an attorney about the risks.

6. **Understand the process.** Not every type of fraud is eligible for a reward. The two main reward programs have completely different rules, procedures and requirements. As more explained in my book, one program is handled by the Civil Fraud Section of the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., and it pays 15% to 25% of the amount recovered from a person or entity that submits false claims to get government funds. It applies to each of the more than 20 government programs, such as Medicare and the military. As more explained in my other book, the second big reward program is handled by the IRS and pays rewards for reporting income tax evasion when the underpaid taxes exceed \$2 million. There are many special requirements, which is why you should follow all 10 tips from this article.
7. **Be patient.** The process takes time. The government may take years to complete its investigation or pay a reward. Because the fraud is against the government, it usually gets to set the pace, which you can imagine is slower than you hope. But, the silver lining is that if your attorney can convince the government to open an investigation and take the case, the government wins nearly every case it pursues.
8. **Weigh the risks.** Although the law prohibits retaliation for reporting fraud against the government, it doesn't mean that it won't happen. It can be stressful to become a whistleblower. Under the main reward program, to get a reward, your name will eventually be made known. Your attorney will discuss the risks with you and ensure you are comfortable before reporting the fraud.
9. **Right reasons.** Even though you should seek reward, be careful not to be motivated by getting rich. Many people play the lottery hoping to cash in so they can kiss their jobs goodbye. However, "Money doesn't buy happiness." If you were to interview everyone who won a lottery, very few would say they are truly happier today. Choose to become a whistleblower because you want to right a wrong or because it is the right thing to do.
10. **Keep your faith!** This is similar to number 9, but reminds you that you will need to keep relying upon your faith and keep up your regular lifestyle and daily routines. Your fortitude will be tested. But with the right support system, you will be fulfilled while also doing the right thing by reporting fraud against the government.

About the Author. Joel D. Hesch, Esq, worked over 15 years as an attorney with the Civil Fraud Section of the Department of Justice (DOJ) in Washington, D.C., which is the office overseeing the national whistleblower reward program. Joel has worked on fraud cases recovering nearly \$1.5 billion and paying out hundreds of millions in rewards. Joel now exclusively represents whistleblowers nationwide who wish to report fraud and file for rewards. He has written a book outlining the main government reward program and another book outlining the IRS reward program. Visit his website, www.HowToReportFraud.com, to find out more about reporting fraud against the government or how to earn a reward.