TERVALUM SYSTEMS

FIRST 24 HOURS OF A WORKPLACE INVESTIGATION

A practical first-day checklist for establishing a fair, organized, and defensible investigation process.

Case / Matter _____ **Date received** _____

Investigator _____ **Received from** _____

1 Receive and stabilize the matter

- [ ] Record what was reported, who reported it, when it was received, and the exact issue(s) raised. Separate reported facts from assumptions or conclusions.
- [ ] Identify any immediate safety, welfare, retaliation, evidence-loss, operational, or legal-risk concerns that may require prompt action.
- [ ] Determine whether interim measures are needed. Avoid measures that unnecessarily burden a complainant, witness, or other participant.
- [ ] Confirm the organization's reporting, escalation, and notification requirements before proceeding.

2 Confirm authority, independence, and conflicts

- [ ] Identify who authorized the investigation and what authority the investigator has to obtain records, interview people, and make or support findings.
- [ ] Check for actual or apparent conflicts of interest, prior involvement, reporting-line conflicts, or relationships that could impair neutrality.
- [ ] Confirm whether counsel, a collective bargaining agreement, insurer requirements, regulator obligations, or internal policy changes the process.

3 Preserve potentially relevant information

- [ ] Identify likely sources: email, chat, text messages, HR records, schedules, access records, photographs, video, documents, notes, devices, and system logs.
- [ ] Issue or request appropriate preservation steps before routine deletion, overwriting, device replacement, or account changes can affect relevant material.
- [ ] Preserve originals where practicable and record source, date obtained, custodian, and any copying or handling performed.
- [ ] Do not alter, annotate, rename, or reorganize original evidence in a way that obscures provenance; use working copies when review or annotation is

4 Define the initial scope

- [ ] Convert the report into neutral investigation questions or allegations that can be tested against evidence.
- [ ] Identify the relevant time period, locations, policies, decisions, events, and people currently known.
- [ ] List what is in scope, what is not yet in scope, and what facts would justify expanding or narrowing the investigation.
- [ ] Avoid treating the initial complaint wording as the final scope if credible new issues emerge.

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FIRST-DAY CONTROL CHECKLIST - CONTINUED

5 Protect people and the integrity of the process

- [ ] Plan communications so participants receive only the information they need for their role in the process.
- [ ] Protect privacy to the extent possible while recognizing that a thorough investigation may require disclosure of some information.
- [ ] Identify retaliation concerns and decide how they will be monitored and escalated during the investigation.
- [ ] Avoid promises of absolute confidentiality, predetermined outcomes, or deadlines that the investigation may not be able to meet.

Practice note: The EEOC describes prompt, thorough, impartial investigation, privacy to the extent possible, and protection against retaliation as core investigation practices in the

6 Plan the first interviews

- [ ] Identify the complainant/reporter, respondent, and witnesses who could reasonably have relevant first-hand or contextual information.
- [ ] Sequence interviews to preserve evidence and reduce avoidable coordination or contamination of recollections.
- [ ] Prepare topic-based questions tied to each allegation or investigation question, while leaving room for open-ended accounts and unexpected facts.

7 Create the investigation control record

- [ ] Open a case chronology beginning with the first report and every material action taken afterward.
- [ ] Create a people/witness list, allegation or issue matrix, evidence index, task list, and outstanding-information list.
- [ ] Assign unique references to important records so later notes and findings can point back to the exact supporting material.

8 Document first-day decisions

- [ ] Record why immediate measures were or were not taken, including any alternatives considered.
- [ ] Record preservation requests, notifications, access restrictions, and evidence collected or requested.
- [ ] Record the initial scope, known limitations, unresolved questions, and any decisions deferred for counsel or management.

9 24-hour checkpoint

- [ ] Can another qualified investigator understand what was reported, what has been done, what remains open, and why key decisions were made?
- [ ] Is relevant evidence being preserved before it can be lost or overwritten?
- [ ] Is the investigator sufficiently independent, and are conflicts or constraints documented?
- [ ] Are immediate safety, retaliation, privacy, and operational concerns being managed without prejudging the outcome?
- [ ] Is there a documented plan for interviews, evidence collection, chronology, findings analysis, and status communication?

Practice note: If any answer is no, make that gap an immediate documented task before the investigation proceeds further.

USE NOTE

This is a professional planning aid, not legal advice. Requirements vary by jurisdiction, subject matter, policy, contract, and collective bargaining agreement; verify current requirements and counsel direction when needed. Reference basis: U.S. EEOC, Promising Practices for Preventing Harassment; Checklist Three: A Harassment Reporting System and Investigations. Accessed September 2026.

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