



Workplace Investigation Planning Template

Plan the investigation before the first interview: allegation, scope, witnesses, evidence, order, and timeline on one page.

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU DO

Use this template to plan a workplace investigation before anyone is interviewed — so scope, evidence, interview order, and timeline are decided deliberately instead of improvised under pressure.

WHEN TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

- When complaint triage routes a matter to formal investigation
- Before the first witness interview is scheduled
- When an anonymous report or hotline tip needs structured follow-up
- When a supervisor is the accused and neutrality must be designed in
- Before engaging (or deciding not to engage) an outside investigator

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT HELPS PREVENT

- Investigations that expand or shrink based on what's convenient
- Key witnesses interviewed last — after they've compared stories
- Evidence lost because nobody preserved it in week one
- Conclusions that outrun the allegation actually investigated
- Reports that can't explain why the investigation took three months

Faulkner HR Solutions focuses on the system behind the people problem. This tool is designed to help employers slow down the decision, identify the risk, and create proof before the issue becomes a claim, complaint, turnover event, or credibility problem.

BEFORE YOU START: READINESS CHECKLIST

Gather the following before working through this document. Incomplete inputs are one of the most common reasons employer decisions fail under later scrutiny.

Have it	Input	Notes / location
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee name and role	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Date of incident, request, or separation	



Have it	Input	Notes / location
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervisor involved	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy or handbook section that applies	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prior documentation on file	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay records, if applicable	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Relevant emails, texts, notes, or complaints	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decision-maker name	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Deadline, if applicable	



INVESTIGATION PLAN

A defensible investigation is prompt, thorough, and impartial — and all three are decided at the planning stage. Complete this template before the first interview.

Part 1 — Allegation Statement

State exactly what is alleged: who did what, to whom, when, and what policy or law it would violate if true. This sentence controls the scope of everything that follows.

Part 2 — Scope

In scope (specific incidents, time period, locations)	
Out of scope (and who decides if scope must expand)	
Policies potentially violated	
Investigator assigned (and why they are neutral)	
Who receives the final report	

Part 3 — Witness List

Name / role	What they likely know	Requested by	Interview date



Part 4 — Evidence List and Preservation

Evidence item	Source / custodian	Preserved? (date)	Notes
Emails / messages between parties			
Video, access logs, or system records			
Personnel files of parties			
Schedules, timecards, or pay records			

Part 5 — Interview Order

Standard order: complainant first, witnesses next, accused last (so the accused can respond to everything). Deviations are fine — but write down why.

Order	Interviewee	Key topics	Date

Part 6 — Timeline

Milestone	Target date	Actual date
Investigation opened		
Evidence preserved		
Interviews complete		
Findings drafted		
Decision-maker briefed		
Parties informed of outcome		

Part 7 — Confidentiality Reminder

Instruct every participant: information will be shared only with people who need it to conduct or act on the investigation. Do not promise absolute confidentiality. Remind all parties and witnesses that retaliation



against anyone who participates is prohibited and will be treated as a separate violation — and document that this instruction was given.

Part 8 — Report Outline

- Allegation and scope as investigated
- Investigation steps: who was interviewed, what was reviewed, and when
- Factual findings, with credibility notes where accounts conflict
- Whether each allegation is substantiated, unsubstantiated, or inconclusive — measured against policy, not criminal standards
- Recommendations kept separate from findings (the decision-maker decides discipline)

Role	Name / signature	Date
Investigator		
Plan approved by		

STOP AND REVIEW BEFORE ACTING

If any statement below is true, pause. Get the decision reviewed by HR, counsel, or Faulkner HR Solutions before you act.

- The employee recently complained about pay, harassment, discrimination, safety, leave, or retaliation.
- The supervisor has no prior documentation.
- The decision is inconsistent with how similar cases were handled.
- The employee is on, or recently requested, protected leave.
- The issue involves pay, deductions, final wages, medical information, disability, pregnancy, injury, or protected activity.
- The decision will be visible to a board, council, funder, auditor, plaintiff attorney, or agency.

MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION STANDARD

Before this file is closed, the employer should be able to answer every question below and point to where the proof lives.

Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
What happened?	



Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
When did it happen?	
Who observed or reported it?	
What policy, standard, deadline, or expectation applies?	
What decision was made?	
Who had authority to make the decision?	
What alternatives were considered?	
What risk was reviewed?	
What follow-up is required?	
Where is the proof stored?	

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Interviewing the accused first and educating them on the whole case.
2. Letting the allegation drift — investigating rumors that were never in scope without a documented scope decision.
3. Failing to preserve video or messages in week one, then discovering the retention window was 30 days.
4. Choosing an investigator who reports to the accused.
5. Writing findings that say 'no policy violation' when the finding is really 'conflicting accounts, no corroboration.'
6. Delaying weeks between interviews so witnesses can align stories.
7. Putting discipline recommendations inside the findings, collapsing the investigator and decision-maker roles.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Once the plan is approved, preserve evidence the same day, schedule interviews using the Witness Interview Question Bank, and log everything in the Investigation Evidence Log. When interviews are complete, draft findings against the report outline and brief the decision-maker — who should be someone other than the investigator.

Before you terminate, deduct, discipline, classify, or respond, get the decision reviewed.

Call 210.446.8730 or email thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info.



Before you process payroll, terminate, classify, deduct, or respond to a claim, get the decision reviewed.

Need help applying this to a real workplace decision?

Faulkner HR Solutions helps Texas employers, nonprofits, municipalities, and growing businesses fix the people systems behind recurring workplace problems.

If this document raised a risk flag, do not guess your way through the next step.

Call: 210.446.8730

Email: thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info

Website: faulknerhrsolutions.info

DISCLAIMER

This resource is provided for general employer education and planning purposes. It is not legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship. Employment laws, agency guidance, and local requirements may change. Employers should review the facts of each situation before acting and consult appropriate HR or legal counsel when needed.