

SOP: Investigation and Evidence Gathering Protocol

This SOP defines the **investigation and evidence gathering protocol**, detailing systematic procedures for conducting thorough investigations, collecting, preserving, and documenting evidence, maintaining chain of custody, ensuring legal compliance, and supporting accurate incident analysis. The goal is to guarantee integrity, reliability, and validity of collected evidence to facilitate fair and effective resolutions.

1. Purpose

Establish clear guidelines for investigation, evidence collection, handling, storage, documentation, and chain of custody to ensure evidence integrity and compliance with legal and organizational requirements.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all personnel involved in investigative activities and evidence handling within the organization.

3. Responsibilities

- **Investigators:** Conduct investigations, collect and document evidence, maintain chain of custody.
- **Supervisors:** Oversee investigative procedures and compliance.
- **Legal/Compliance team:** Ensure adherence to legal standards and proper documentation.

4. Procedure

4.1 Initiation of Investigation

- Receive and review incident report or trigger event.
- Assign investigation lead and team members.
- Define objectives, scope, and timelines for investigation.

4.2 Planning and Preparation

- Review relevant policies, procedures, and legal requirements.
- Prepare investigation plan: evidence types, required resources, and confidentiality needs.

4.3 Evidence Collection

- Identify sources and types of evidence (physical, electronic, testimonial, documentation).
- Collect evidence using approved methods to prevent contamination or loss.
- Label, date, and initial all evidence at the point of collection.

4.4 Evidence Preservation and Storage

- Secure and preserve evidence in appropriate containers/environments.
- Restrict access to authorized personnel only.
- Monitor evidence storage for environmental/physical controls as required.

4.5 Documentation

- Maintain detailed records of evidence: description, origin, date/time, collectors, and condition.
- Complete chain of custody forms for all evidence transfers.
- Document all investigative steps, findings, and actions taken.

4.6 Chain of Custody

- Record every instance of evidence transfer, including identities, dates, times, and purposes.
- Ensure signatures of transferees and transferors on custody documents.
- Secure chain of custody records with the investigation file.

4.7 Legal and Policy Compliance

- Comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and organizational policies.
- Consult legal or compliance teams as needed for guidance.

4.8 Reporting and Analysis

- Summarize investigation process, findings, evidence, and conclusions in a final report.
- Submit report to relevant authorities or management for action.
- Retain records securely for required retention period.

5. Documentation and Forms

Document/Form	Description
Investigation Plan	Outlines objectives, scope, and steps for the investigation.
Evidence Log Sheet	Formal record of all evidence collected, including descriptions and handlers.
Chain of Custody Form	Tracks all evidence transfers to ensure integrity.
Final Investigation Report	Summary of findings, actions taken, evidence reviewed, and recommendations.

6. Review and Training

- SOP reviewed annually or as needed; revisions documented.
- Training provided to all relevant personnel on investigative procedures and evidence handling.

7. References

- Organizational policies and procedures
- Relevant national laws and regulations
- Industry standards and best practices