**Introduction When Interviewing Witnesses**

**Purpose.** The SHO may state that they are investigating a workplace complaint and that their role is to investigate the matter by gathering as much information as possible.

If the complainant is being interviewed, the SHO should advise the complainant that their complaint is being investigated.

If the subject of the complaint is being interviewed, the SHO should notify the individual that they are the subject of the of the complaint.

**Process.** Explain that the investigation process involves interviewing multiple witnesses and reviewing any necessary documents. Witnesses should be made aware that the agency will take appropriate steps if it finds that misconduct has occurred.

**Confidentiality.** Explain that the interview will be treated as confidential as much as possible by the agency and that the agency hopes the witness will use discretion and limit their disclosure of anything discussed in the interview to maintain the integrity of the investigation process. Generally speaking, the SHO cannot, however, require the witness to maintain confidentiality. However, the SHO can inform the witness that they may be subject to discipline if any information from the interview is used in a manner that improperly obstructs or interferes with the investigation or leads to retaliation against those who participate in the investigation. The SHO should also not promise or guarantee a witness total confidentiality by the agency, as the investigation and subsequent actions will require the agency to disclose information about the complaint as necessary.

**Retaliation.** Explain that retaliation for a witness’ cooperation in the investigation is prohibited and that the witness should immediately notify an EEO counselor if any retaliation occurs due to the witness reporting sexual harassment or participating in the investigation process.

**Rights and obligations.** Explain witnesses’ obligations, including but not limited to the obligation of government employees generally to cooperate in agency investigations of sexual harassment complaints pursuant to Mayor’s Order 2023-131 subject to discipline pursuant to Chapter 16 of the DPM.

Additionally, if the complaint includes allegations of sexual assault or other possible crimes, the SHO must let the complainant know that they may also get help from the DC Victim Hotline, which provides free, confidential, around-the-clock information and referrals for victims of all crime in the District of Columbia. (The DC Victim Hotline is available by phone at 844-443-5732 and online at https://dcvictim.org.)

**Questions or concerns.** Ask the witness if they have any questions or concerns about the process.