



United States Attorney's Office

Common Requests for Assistance

REGARDING CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS & VIOLATIONS OF LAW

If you believe you have credible evidence of a violation of federal law:

If you believe you have credible evidence of a violation of federal law, you should contact your local FBI office for information or assistance. You can find your local FBI office through their website at: <http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field> or by calling 803-551-4200. If you have an emergency, you should call 911.

If you believe you have evidence of a violation of state or local law:

If you believe you have credible evidence of a violation of state or local law, you should contact your state or local law enforcement agencies as appropriate. If you have an emergency, you should call 911.

If your inquiry is regarding an unindicted criminal investigation:

Longstanding Department of Justice practice court rule, and ethical obligations, all of which are designed to protect the rights of persons accused, prevent the United States Attorney from confirming or denying the existence of particular matters or investigations. Further, the United States Attorney cannot discuss with concerned members of the public or the press the status of any matter that may be pending investigation in a United States Attorney's Office. However, the status of a pending federal case is available through a public website, PACER. Information about obtaining a PACER account is available at <https://www.pacer.gov>. Please be assured that all allegations of federal law violations are taken very seriously by all United States Attorneys' Offices.

If a case has been declined:

The United States Attorneys' offices carefully review potential cases in light of the guidelines set forth in the *Principles of Federal Prosecution*. Consistent with longstanding Department practice, we do not discuss the specific reasons a case is declined. As a general matter, federal prosecutions may be declined for a variety of reasons including but not limited to situations in which a person is subject to prosecution by the state or in another jurisdiction or another adequate alternative to prosecution is available.

If you have a question about the status of a pending federal criminal or civil case:

Information about the status of a pending federal civil or criminal matter is available through PACER, (Public Access to Court Electronic Records). PACER is a web-based case information retrieval system designed by the United States Courts. More information about how to access PACER is available at <https://www.pacer.gov>. You may also contact the Clerk of Court by telephone or visit the nearest federal Clerk of Court's office to determine the status of a federal case. Requests to examine dockets,

case files, exhibits, and other records are made at the public intake area in the Clerk's Office, and are generally free of charge. Location and contact information for the federal Clerk of Court is available at <http://www.scd.uscourts.gov/Court/index.asp>.

If you believe you were a victim of a civil rights violation:

The Federal Bureau of Investigations investigates both hate crimes and civil rights violations. Allegations that a law enforcement officer used excessive force are investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigations. You can find your local FBI office through their website at: <http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field>, or by calling 803-551-4200.

If you believe you were a victim of a civil rights violation, you may also direct your complaint and supporting evidence to the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division: U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Office of the Assistant Attorney General, Main, Washington, DC 20530. More information about filing a civil rights complaint can be found at <http://www.justice.gov/crt/how-file-complaint>.

If you believe you have credible evidence of human trafficking:

If you believe you have credible evidence of human trafficking in the form of sex trafficking or labor trafficking, you should contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline at 1-888-3737-8888 or www.polarisproject.org. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center maintains a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week toll-free hotline for victims of trafficking and for individuals offering tips related to human trafficking. You may also contact your local FBI or Homeland Security Investigations-ICE office for information and assistance. You can find your local FBI office through their website at: <http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field> or by calling 803-551-4200. You can find your local HSI-ICE office by calling 404-346-2300.

If you believe you have been the victim of identity theft:

If you believe you have been the victim of identity theft, the Federal Trade Commission recommends these steps:

- File a complaint with the FTC at identitytheft.gov.
- Contact one of the three major credit bureaus to place a 'fraud alert' on your credit records:

Equifax, www.Equifax.com, 1-800-766-0008
Experian, www.Experian.com, 1-888-397-3742
TransUnion, www.TransUnion.com, 1-800-680-7289

- Contact your financial institutions, and close any financial or credit accounts opened without your permission or tampered with by identity thieves.

If your SSN is compromised and you know or suspect you are a victim of tax-related identity theft, the IRS recommends these additional steps:



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- Respond immediately to any IRS notice; call the number provided or, if instructed, go to IDVerify.irs.gov.
- Complete IRS [Form 14039](#), Identity Theft Affidavit, if your e-filed return rejects because of a duplicate filing under your SSN or you are instructed to do so. Use a fillable form at IRS.gov, print, then attach the form to your return and mail according to instructions.
- Continue to pay your taxes and file your tax return, even if you must do so by paper.

If you previously contacted the IRS and did not have a resolution, you may contact the IRS for specialized assistance at 1-800-908-4490. Additional information about identity theft is available at <https://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Identity-Protection>

REGARDING REQUESTS FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE

If you are requesting legal assistance or advice:

The United States Department of Justice, as the federal agency representing the United States Government, is generally limited by law to giving legal advice only to federal officials and agencies. You may want to consult private legal counsel, contact a local law school that has a legal clinic program, or contact a legal aid society regarding your rights and any remedies that may be available to you in this matter. The South Carolina Bar has a helpful list of resources on the SC Bar website located at <http://www.scbars.org/Public-Information>, or call (803) 799-6653. The direct contact for the SC Bar Lawyer Referral Service is 888-346-5592 or <http://www.scbars.org/lrs>.

If you believe you have received ineffective assistance of counsel on a federal conviction:

If your attorney was appointed by the court and you believe that your attorney is not effectively representing your interests, you may want to raise this issue with the court, which can address any considerations you have and may be able to appoint a different attorney. Forms are on the federal district court website to assist in filing a post-conviction challenge to legal representation. <http://www.scd.uscourts.gov/Forms/index>

If you believe that your attorney has not honestly represented you, you may want to raise your concerns with your state bar association or the S.C. Supreme Court's Office of Disciplinary Counsel. More information about this topic is available at <http://www.scbars.org/Public-Information/LawLine/Filing-a-grievance-against-an-attorney>

REGARDING FEDERAL CASES WHICH HAVE BEEN/ARE BEING PROSECUTED

If you are contending that you should receive a reduction in your sentence for providing substantial assistance to the government:

The United States Attorney has exclusive jurisdiction to file a Rule 35(b) motion for downward departure of a sentence based upon the defendant providing substantial assistance. If you believe your cooperation warrants a reduction in your sentence, you may want to consult with the attorney that represented you during the adjudication of the original charge before the District Court. Alternatively, if you are no longer represented by counsel, you can write the Assistant United States Attorney and/or case agent who prosecuted your case. Your letter should include all relevant information about the assistance you gave, including the names of persons against whom you provided information, the law enforcement agencies/agents to whom you provided the information, and the approximate date(s) you provided the information.

If you believe your sentence is too long or unfair:

Although the sentence may seem harsh to you, the Department of Justice and the courts are bound by law and must impose a sentence under the law, taking into consideration the sentencing guideline range fixed for that offense. The guideline ranges were established to narrow the disparity in sentencing for similar offenses and/or defendants and to establish proportionality for differing severity in criminal conduct. If you believe your sentence was calculated incorrectly, you may want to contact the attorney that represented you during the adjudication of the original charge before the district court or the Federal Public Defender or other private bar attorney to discuss your concern. Forms are available on the Federal District Court website which can be modified for purposes of filing a pro se challenge to your sentence. <http://www.scd.uscourts.gov/Forms/index> See below for additional information on federal pardons and commutations.

If you are requesting a review of your motion to vacate your sentence or other court filing or appeal:

The United States Attorney's Office, as the federal agency representing the United States Government, is generally limited by law to giving legal advice only to federal officials and agencies. However, you may want to contact the attorney that represented you during the adjudication of the original charge before the district court or other private bar attorney in order to discuss your concern. If you have any questions regarding the status of the case or how to properly file your motion or appeal, you should contact the Clerk of Court who will be able to assist you in the proper procedures. <http://www.scd.uscourts.gov/contact.asp>

If you are contesting your federal conviction:

As the federal district court judge that heard your case advised at the time of sentencing, the appropriate venue for appealing your conviction is a court of law. The attorney that represented you during the adjudication of the original charge before the district court or other private bar attorney would be in the best position to determine what, if any, possible recourse exists for you at this time. You may also want to contact the Federal Public Defender's Office if you cannot gain the assistance of a private attorney. If you have any questions regarding the status of the case or how to properly file your motion, you should contact the Clerk of Court who will



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be able to advise you on the proper procedures.
<http://www.scd.uscourts.gov/contact.asp>

If you are requesting a pardon or commutation of a federal criminal sentence for yourself or on behalf of someone else:

You should contact the Office of the Pardon Attorney for information on eligibility and procedures for applying for Executive Clemency. Additional information can be found at:
<http://www.justice.gov/pardon/>

If you believe you were a victim of a federal crime in the State of South Carolina:

You should contact the Victim-Witness Coordinator at the United States Attorney's Office for the District of South Carolina at 803-929-3000 who will be able to provide information and assistance within the law.

If you believe that a business in the State of South Carolina has treated you unfairly:

If you believe that a business in the State of South Carolina has treated you unfairly, you may want to contact the SC Department of Consumer Affairs. More information about filing a complaint can be found on the internet at <http://www.consumer.sc.gov>. You may contact the Department of Consumer Affairs at

Phone: 803-734-4200
1-800-922-1594
Toll free in S.C.
Fax: 803-734-4286
scdca@scconsumer.gov
Mailing Address:
PO Box 5757
Columbia SC 29250-5246

If you have a concern about a state criminal case or conviction, please note:

The U.S. Attorney's Office has no authority to intervene in a state criminal case. The U.S. Attorney does not supervise or serve as an appellate forum for state criminal convictions. The U.S. Attorney can assume jurisdiction only when there has been a violation of federal law. Accordingly, you may want to talk with the attorney that represented you during the state criminal case or another private attorney. The S.C. Bar has a list of helpful legal resources as well as a lawyer referral resource on the S.C. Bar website. <http://www.scbarr.org/Public-Information>

The S.C. Commission on Indigent Defense – Appellate Division represents indigent criminal defendants on appeal. More information is available at
<https://www.sccid.sc.gov/about-us/overview>.

Information about pardons for state criminal offenses is available at <http://www.dppps.sc.gov/Parole-Pardon-Hearings/Pardon-Application>.

If you are interested in expungement of state charges, more information is available at:

<http://www.judicial.state.sc.us/expungementInfo/expAppProcessGS.cfm>

REGARDING YOUR STATUS AS AN INMATE

If you have complaints regarding prison conditions or conflicts with inmates or Bureau of Prison officials:

Typically, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) has primary responsibility for addressing these types of complaints. You should first consider raising your complaints through your facility's Administrative Remedy Program. That program provides for a formal and graduated process for bringing complaints, starting with a Request for Administrative Remedy Informal Resolution, and escalating all the way to a BP-11 national appeal. We suggest you review your Admissions and Orientation Handbook, which explains the Administrative Remedy Program in detail. If you have exhausted your administrative remedies, you may want to consult the web site for the federal district court which has additional information and forms for filing challenges to your conditions of confinement.

<http://www.scd.uscourts.gov/Forms/index>

If you are a federal inmate requesting a prison transfer:

All requests for transfers or re-designations must originate with the inmate's Unit Team at his or her current facility. The Designation and Sentence Computation Center (DSCC) then evaluates referrals submitted by institution staff and makes decisions based on the information provided by the institution to determine if transfer to a facility closer to the inmate's family and friends is possible. The Bureau of Prisons attempts to designate inmates to facilities commensurate with their security and program needs within a 500-mile radius of their release residences. If an inmate is placed at an institution more than 500 miles from his or her release residence, generally it is due to specific security, programming or population concerns.

If your letter pertains to a state or local prison:

State prisons do not fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Justice. Information about the South Carolina Department of Corrections can be found at <http://www.doc.sc.gov/pubweb/>. Concerns with conditions of confinement should be addressed to the state correctional institution in the first instance. Once administrative remedies have been exhausted, forms are available on the federal district court web site which can be modified and used to challenge conditions of confinement. <http://www.scd.uscourts.gov/forms/index>

REGARDING ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

Allegations of judicial misconduct:

If you believe that the federal judge who presided over your case engaged in judicial misconduct, you may file your complaint and any supporting documents with the Clerk of the Court for the United States District Court in which your case was handled. The Court Clerk can advise you of the proper procedures to follow. In addition, you may file your complaint with the Administrative



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Office of the United States Courts at: One Columbus Circle, NE, Washington, DC 20544.

Allegations of misconduct by an Assistant United States Attorney:

The United States Attorney's Office seeks in all proceedings to maintain the utmost ethical and professional conduct. It is the goal of the USAO to guarantee a fair trial to all citizens who come under federal prosecution. If you believe that the Assistant United States Attorney handling your case engaged in misconduct in connection with his or her official duties, you may contact the Department's Office of Professional Responsibility at 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 3266, Washington, DC 20535-0001. That office is responsible for investigating allegations that Department attorneys have engaged in misconduct in connection with their duties.

Allegations of misconduct by FBI agents or other federal law enforcement officials:

You may report such allegations to the Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General, which conducts independent

investigations into allegations of misconduct by Department employees. You should direct your complaint to the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice, Investigations Division, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 4706, Washington, DC 20530.

If the matters you have raised in your letter pertain to issues not covered elsewhere in this document, please note:

The Department of Justice has limited authority to intervene in matters being adjudicated in state courts. The Department of Justice can assume jurisdiction only when there has been a violation of federal law. Accordingly, you may want to consider consulting with local law enforcement agencies, the South Carolina Attorney General's Office, or the appropriate state or local officials regarding concerns about possible violations of state law. Administrative members of the court with jurisdiction over your matter or private counsel may also be useful in addressing your concerns.