

Responding to Suspected Wrongdoing

Something is wrong—for example, with your team’s data or compliance records—and you wonder whether the errors are intentional. Eek!
Do not just stand by, but practice SMART strategies!

- 1 SEEK HELP:** Talk to trusted colleagues to get the information you need, to get advice, and to determine who should take action.
- 2 MANAGE EMOTIONS:** Be calm and curious. Do not act out of anxiety or anger, and do not take an accusatory tone with anyone involved.
- 3 ANTICIPATE CONSEQUENCES:** Consider the potential consequences of different responses to yourself and others. Consider formal and informal responses to the problem. Consider who might be in the best position to intervene.
- 4 RECOGNIZE RULES & POLICIES:** What rules may have been broken? What are formal policies for handling such matters?
- 5 TEST ASSUMPTIONS:** Stay curious and inquire. Maybe the errors were accidental? Maybe the suspected errors are actually correct and there was a communication failure?



FURTHER READING: Koocher G, Keith-Spiegel P. Peers nip misconduct in the bud. *Nature*. 2010; 466(7305):438-40. | Keith-Spiegel P, Sieber J, Koocher GP. Responding to Research Wrongdoing: A User-Friendly Guide. 2010. p. <http://www.ethicsresearch.com/free-resources.html>.