



Ohio Revised Code

Section 1716.15 Investigations by attorney general - powers and duties.

Effective: March 20, 2025

Legislation: House Bill 184

(A) In order to carry out official responsibilities under this chapter, upon reasonable cause to believe that any person has violated or is violating any provision of this chapter or any rule adopted under it, or has filed any document as required under this chapter that contains false or misleading information, the attorney general may conduct an investigation to determine whether there has been a violation or filing of false or misleading information. In the conduct of the investigation, the attorney general may do the following:

(1) Examine or cause to be examined any person or any documentary material that is relevant to the alleged violation or false or misleading information, including a professional solicitor's pitch sheets, solicitation scripts, and recordings described in division (G)(1) of section 1716.07 of the Revised Code;

(2) Require the attendance during the examination of any person or require the production of any documentary material and the attendance of any person who has knowledge of the material, and take their testimony under oath. The testimony and examination shall take place in the county in which the person resides or has a place of business, or in Franklin county if the person consents to it, is a nonresident of this state, or has no place of business in this state.

(3) Require any professional solicitor, fund-raising counsel that at any time has custody of contributions from a solicitation, or charitable organization to produce an audited financial report prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles pursuant to section 1716.04 of the Revised Code and that has been examined by an independent certified public accountant for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the report.

(B) The attorney general shall give notice of the time, date, place, and cause of the examination or the taking of testimony not less than ten days prior to its date. Service of the notice may be made by any of the following means:



(1) Personal delivery of a duly executed copy of the notice to the person to be served or to a partner, officer, or agent authorized by appointment or by law to receive service of process on behalf of that person;

(2) Delivery by leaving a duly executed copy of the notice at the principal place of business in this state of the person to be served;

(3) Certified mail, return receipt requested, of a duly executed copy of the notice to the person to be served at the person's principal place of business in this state or, if the person has no principal place of business in this state, to the last address of that person known to the attorney general.

(C) The notice specified in division (B) of this section shall contain all of the following:

(1) The time, date, and place of the examination or the taking of testimony and, if known, the name and address of each person to be examined or to testify, or if that is not known, a general description sufficient to identify the person or the particular class or group to which the person belongs;

(2) The section of the Revised Code, if any, or the chapter of the Administrative Code containing the rule adopted by the attorney general, if any, that is allegedly violated and the general subject matter of the investigation;

(3) A description with reasonable specificity of the class or classes of documentary material that is required to be produced, if any, and the return date within which the documentary material is to be produced, which date shall be not less than ten days after the mailing of the notice.

(D) Every person upon whom the attorney general made service of the notice pursuant to this section shall comply with the terms of the notice unless otherwise provided by order of any court in this state.

(E) No person shall do any of the following:

(1) Fail to appear at any investigation under this section if the person is required to do so;



(2) With the purpose to avoid, evade, or prevent compliance in whole or in part with any investigation under this section, remove, conceal, withhold, destroy, mutilate, alter, or by any means falsify any documentary material in the possession, custody, or control of any person who is subject to the notice prescribed in division (B) of this section;

(3) With the purpose to avoid, evade, or prevent compliance in whole or in part with any investigation under this section, knowingly conceal any information.

(F) The attorney general may file a petition in the court of common pleas of the county in which the person who is subject to the notice resides or has its principal place of business or in the court of common pleas of Franklin county if that person is not a resident of this state or has no principal place of business in this state, asking the court to issue an order for the enforcement of this section. The court may assess a civil penalty of not more than ten thousand dollars for each violation against any person who violates division (E) of this section, and may award the attorney general the costs of investigation and litigation and reasonable attorney's fees.

(G) Any disobedience of any final order issued by the court under this section may be punished as for contempt of court or by imposing an additional civil penalty of not more than ten thousand dollars.