



Unauthorised access of prisoner details

A public sector employee was found to have accessed information on the prisoner database without authorisation. What could happen next?

The story

In March 2018, the former (Victorian) Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR) informed the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) of allegations against a Corrections Victoria employee. The allegations included that the employee had failed to disclose declarable associations with current and former inmates of facilities managed by Corrections Victoria. It was also alleged this employee had accessed information on eight individuals via the Department's prisoner database without a valid reason.

After this behaviour was identified, the employee was suspended from duty. IBAC commenced an investigation into the allegations in April 2018. The employee had commenced their role as a Justice Property Officer with Corrections Victoria in December 2017, and in being appointed to the role they declared they were not related to or associated with anyone currently or previously held in correctional facilities in Australia.

IBAC's investigation determined the employee:

- ▼ failed to declare associations with current and former inmates in Victorian correctional facilities and their connections to criminal entities, and
- ▼ accessed restricted information on numerous occasions, outside the scope of their official duties, for at least 13 individuals known to them or their partner, using two different computer systems.

The employee admitted to these actions, stating to IBAC they did not fully understand their obligations under Corrections Victoria policies at the time they were working as a property officer.

IBAC found the employee's mobile phone number was already listed in Corrections Victoria systems on phone lists for two prisoners. IBAC referred the information detailing the extent of the employee's identified misconduct back to Corrections Victoria for appropriate disciplinary action.

With thanks to IBAC Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, Victoria

Questions – Facilitator copy

1. List all of the ethical issues around this situation.
 - ▽ Misuse of work information
 - ▽ Failure to declare associations with current and former inmates in Victorian correctional facilities
 - ▽ Failure to declare connections to criminal entities
 - ▽ Inadequate pre-employment checks
2. What parts of the employee's story don't add up?
 - ▽ Failure to disclose associations and yet number on phone lists for two prisoners
 - ▽ Access of restricted information using two different computer systems, implying they were perhaps trying to cover up their actions
3. In terms of controls and governance, what might the public sector organisation do to prevent this occurring again?
 - ▽ Expand pre-employment probity checks
 - ▽ Ensure employees sign off on understanding their obligations
4. Is there anything else the public authority should consider?
 - ▽ Regular checking of database access authorities to ensure multiple incidents of unauthorised access does not occur
 - ▽ Expand pre-employment probity checks to include partners



The Commission can help

We are available to provide support and assistance with identifying, reporting, investigating, managing and preventing misconduct: prevention@integrity.tas.gov.au or 1300 720 289.

For more Integrity Commission resources go to www.integrity.tas.gov.au/resources