

Whistleblower Protection Practice in the Republic of Korea

@ IAACA Webinar, 18 November 2025



Anti-Corruption &
Civil Rights Commission
Republic of Korea

Overview of ACRC

Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission

Korean Independent Commission Against Corruption

- Handle corruption and public interest violation reporting cases
- Operate whistleblower protection and reward system(2011~)

⋮

Ombudsman of Korea

Administrative Appeals Commission

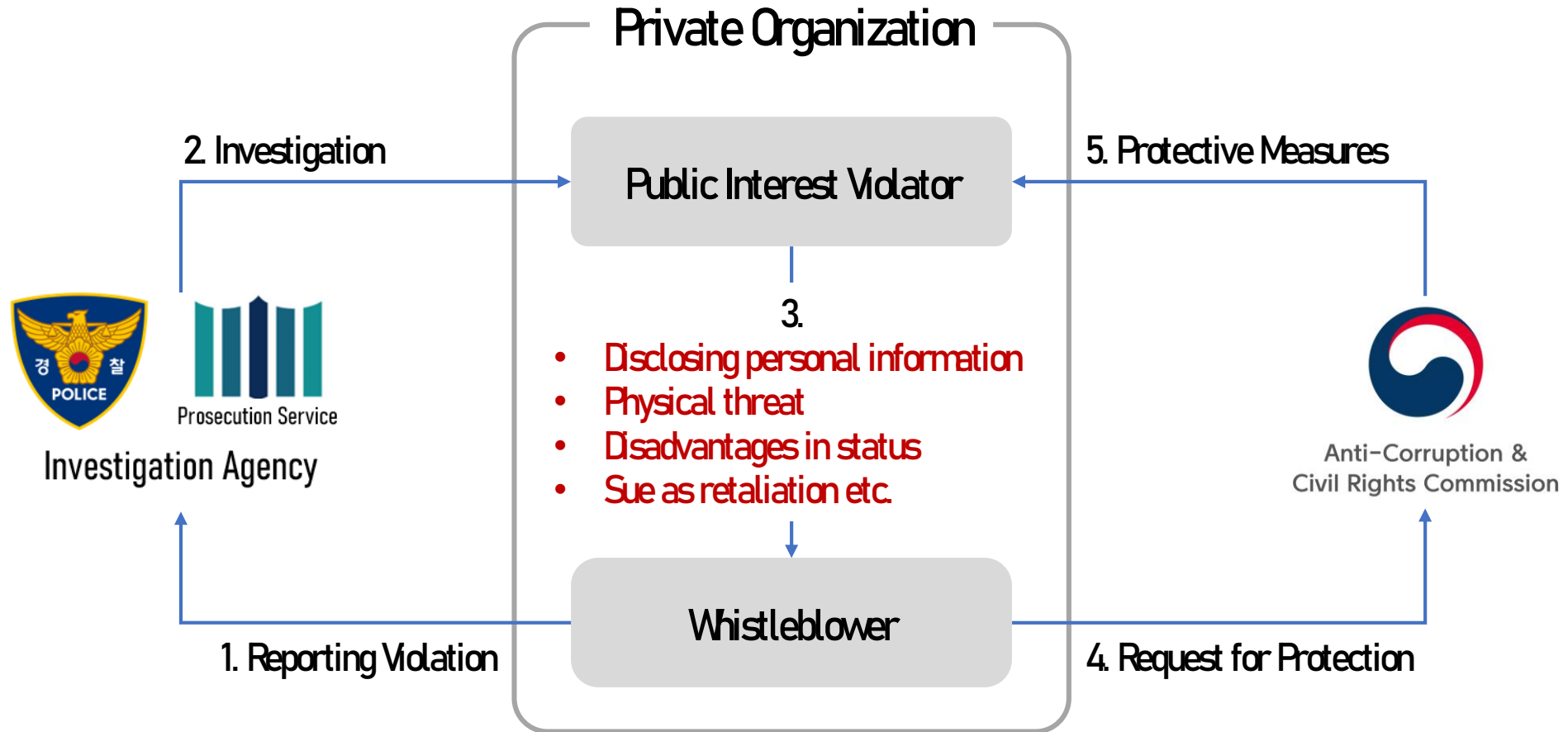


Whistleblower Protection System of Korea

Whistleblower

- ☑ Legal Basis : Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act
- ☑ Definition : A person who reports public interest violation
- ☑ Public interest violation
 - Acts punishable or sanctionable under 497 designated laws
 - Acts harming Public health, safety, the environment, consumer rights, and fair competition

Basic Structure of Whistleblower Protection



Whistleblower Protection Practice (cont.)

☑ Confidentiality of Whistleblower's Identity

- Disclosing or transferring the whistleblower's identity to others without consent is strongly prohibited
 - ↔ Disciplinary action & criminal penalty : up to 5 years of imprisonment or a fine of 50 million KRW (appx. 36,000USD)
- Case :

Violation	The CEO of an asset management company invested in a firm in which his wife had a personal stake
Report	The compliance officer reported the CEO's violation to the Financial Supervisory Service
Disadvantage	The CEO disclosed the identity of the whistleblower to staff members and his successor
Committee Action	The ACRC referred the CEO to the Prosecutor's Office for violating the confidentiality obligation

Whistleblower Protection Practice (cont.)

☑ Personal Protection

- Protecting whistleblower and his/her family from personal threats
- ACRC request police protective measures : safe housing, escorts, security guards, patrols, etc.
- Case

Violation	A cult leader deceived followers by selling spoiled milk as a “special potion”
Report	Several followers reported the cult leader to the police for violation of relevant laws
Disadvantage	The cult repeatedly stalked, assaulted, and threatened the whistleblowers
Committee Action	The ACRC requested emergency protection from the police, providing smartwatches for immediate police calls and regular patrols around the whistleblowers’ residences

Whistleblower Protection Practice (cont.)

☑ Status Guarantee

- If a whistleblower suffers (or is likely to suffer) disadvantage due to the report, he/she may apply to the ACRC for protective measures
- Examples of disadvantages (prescribed by law)
 - [Employment-related] dismissal, disciplinary action, transfer / [Financial] discrimination in wages, bonuses, or allowances / [Psychological] blacklisting, ostracism, verbal abuse / etc.

• Case

Violation	The chairman of a private school foundation inflated project costs and wasted the budget
Report	A private school teacher reported the chairman to the local education authority
Disadvantage	The whistleblower was falsely accused of verbally abusing the principal, was disciplined, and was denied a private school allowance
Committee Action	The ACRC ordered the cancellation of the disciplinary action and the payment of the allowance to the whistleblower

Whistleblower Protection Practice

☑ Mitigation of Culpability

- If a whistleblower is found to have been involved in the wrongdoing but comes forward and reports it, the ACRC may ask the authorities or courts to reduce the punishment.

- Case

Violation	A private company concealed an industrial accident
Report	An employee reported the concealment to the Ministry of Labor
Disadvantage	The whistleblower was prosecuted for being involved in the concealment and fined 1 million KRW
Committee Action	The ACRC requested the court to reduce the penalty, acknowledging the employee as a public interest whistleblower. The court imposed a suspended fine of 500,000 KRW instead.

Q & A

Thank You