

A report to congressional requesters

For more information, contact: Howard Arp at ArpJ@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

From fiscal year 2021 through the first half of fiscal year 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE)'s Integrity Committee (IC) received 16,245 complaints, resulting in 460 cases for review. The IC also completed 15 reports of investigations during that period.

Integrity Committee's Intake, Review, and Investigations Processes



Sources: GAO analysis of Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency information; Icons-Studio/stock.adobe.com (icons). | GAO-26-107922

GAO found that IC intake processes did not consistently comply with documented policies. To the IC's credit, GAO estimates that 97 percent of complainants received an immediate response acknowledging complaint receipt. However, although required by policy, GAO found the IC lacked a process for legal counsel to conduct secondary reviews of program manager decisions on potentially frivolous complaints. Without such reviews, cases with merit could go uninvestigated, thereby undermining the IC's work.

GAO also estimates that 24 percent of cases met all time frame requirements for opening and review. The remaining 76 percent did not always meet timeliness requirements for, among other things, providing legal analyses for IC member review before meetings. Additionally, the IC did not always document required information in case summaries, including recusals of members with conflicts of interest. Without adherence to time frame and documentation requirements, members risk inconsistently handling cases and not fully evaluating them due to reduced review time and incomplete information.

GAO's review of five investigations completed between October 2020 and March 2025 found that

- none was completed within the 150-day time frame required by law. Instead, investigation length for the five reviewed investigations ranged from 427 days to 1,246 days. Although mandated to do so, the IC did not provide updates to Congress in some instances when investigations exceeded 150 days;
- the IC conducted limited oversight to ensure that assisting Offices of Inspectors General (OIG), who were responsible for performing investigations, complied with CIGIE's *Quality Standards for Investigations*. This oversight was hampered by assisting OIGs not providing required monthly status updates to the IC in 37 of 90 instances; and
- the IC's final investigative reports did not always reflect the conclusions reached by the assisting OIG and lacked detailed explanations for differences.

Why GAO Did This Study

The Inspector General community serves a critical role across the federal government by detecting and preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in federal agencies and helping ensure integrity and effectiveness in agency programs. Given this important role, the leadership in each OIG is held to the highest standards of professional conduct. The Integrity Committee within CIGIE is responsible for investigating noncriminal allegations against senior-level OIG personnel.

GAO was asked to assess the IC's policies related to its processes. This report addresses the extent that the IC processes for (1) intake, (2) review, and (3) investigation of complaints comply with applicable policies and standards required by the IG Act of 1978, as amended.

GAO reviewed the IC's policies and procedures and interviewed IC personnel and personnel from two OIG offices. GAO also analyzed a generalizable sample of opened cases and a judgmental, nongeneralizable sample of completed investigations from fiscal years 2021 through the first half of fiscal year 2025.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making eight recommendations to CIGIE, including adhering to policy on conducting secondary reviews of potentially frivolous complaints; strengthening policies to enhance compliance with required time frames and documentation; improving statutorily required reporting to Congress; and providing full explanations for IC investigative conclusions that conflict with conclusions reached by assisting OIGs.

CIGIE agreed with the recommendations and plans several actions to implement them.