

## DEPARTMENTS

# Ethics Inquiries

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### Allegation of a Kickback

**Scenario:** The county manager was stunned to learn that the city's police chief is spreading rumors about him. The most serious allegation is that the county manager got a kickback from the finance director in return for approving the finance director's four-month leave of absence. A local reporter told the county manager about the allegation in confidence, noting that the chief had made other allegations of misconduct.

Later, the county manager learned that the police chief had made the same allegation to the county attorney. The chief told the county attorney that he had no proof of a kickback but was repeating a rumor he had heard.

The county manager is concerned that the police chief will continue to repeat these allegations and that he has been doing so in order to avoid facing discipline for poor performance. While he would like to share the reporter's conversation with the county attorney, he promised the reporter he would keep it confidential. How can he put these issues behind him without disclosing the reporter's conversation?

**Response:** The county manager does need to confront the issue directly, and he can do so by working directly with the county attorney. He can suggest that the county attorney meet with the chief and ask for any and all documentation the chief has about the manager's alleged misconduct. Taking the initiative to get the issues out in the open is the best way to short-circuit a smear campaign.