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# Enhancing Partnerships of Institutions and Journals Working Group – Overview

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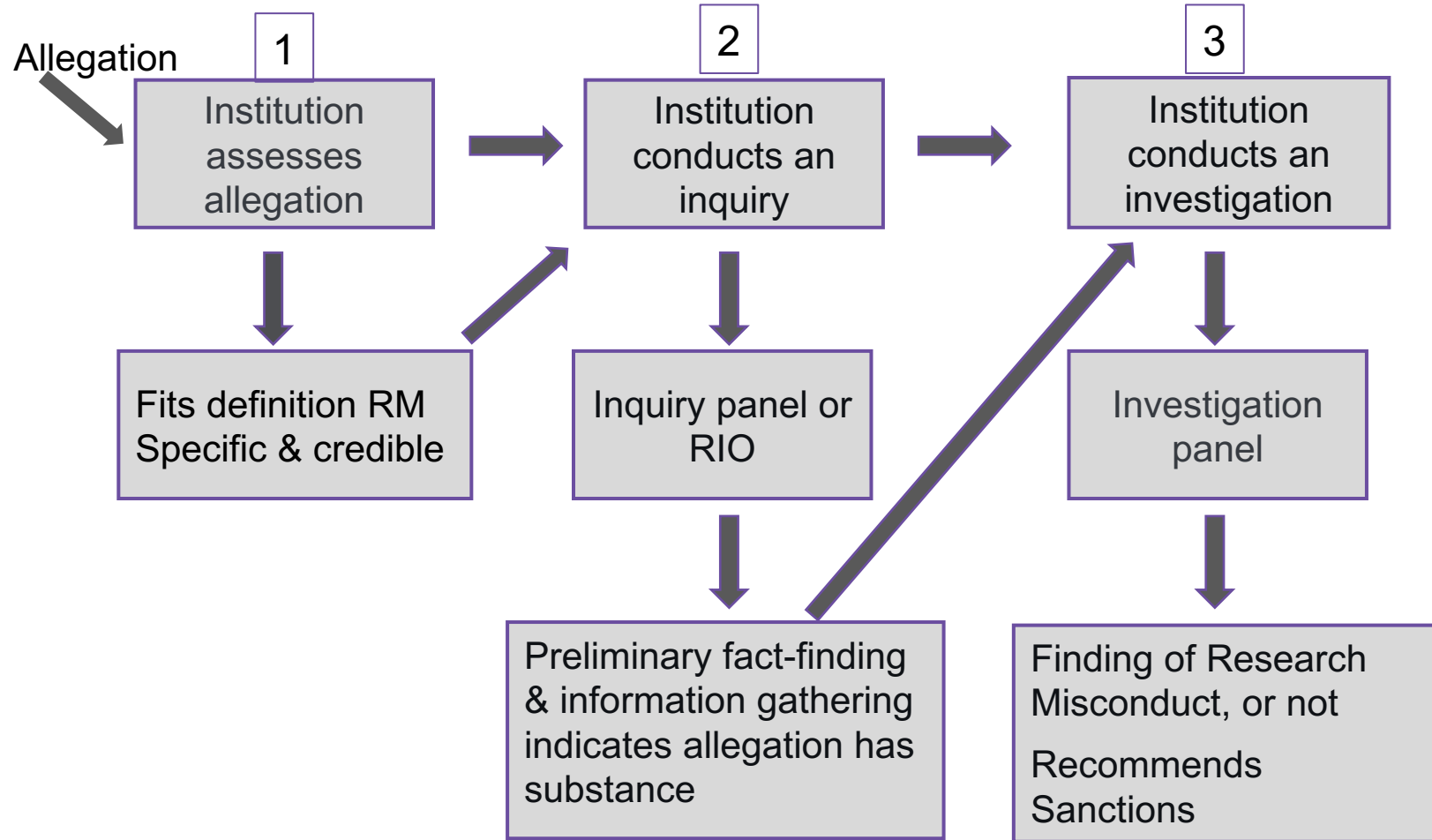
Ohio State University

COPE Webinar

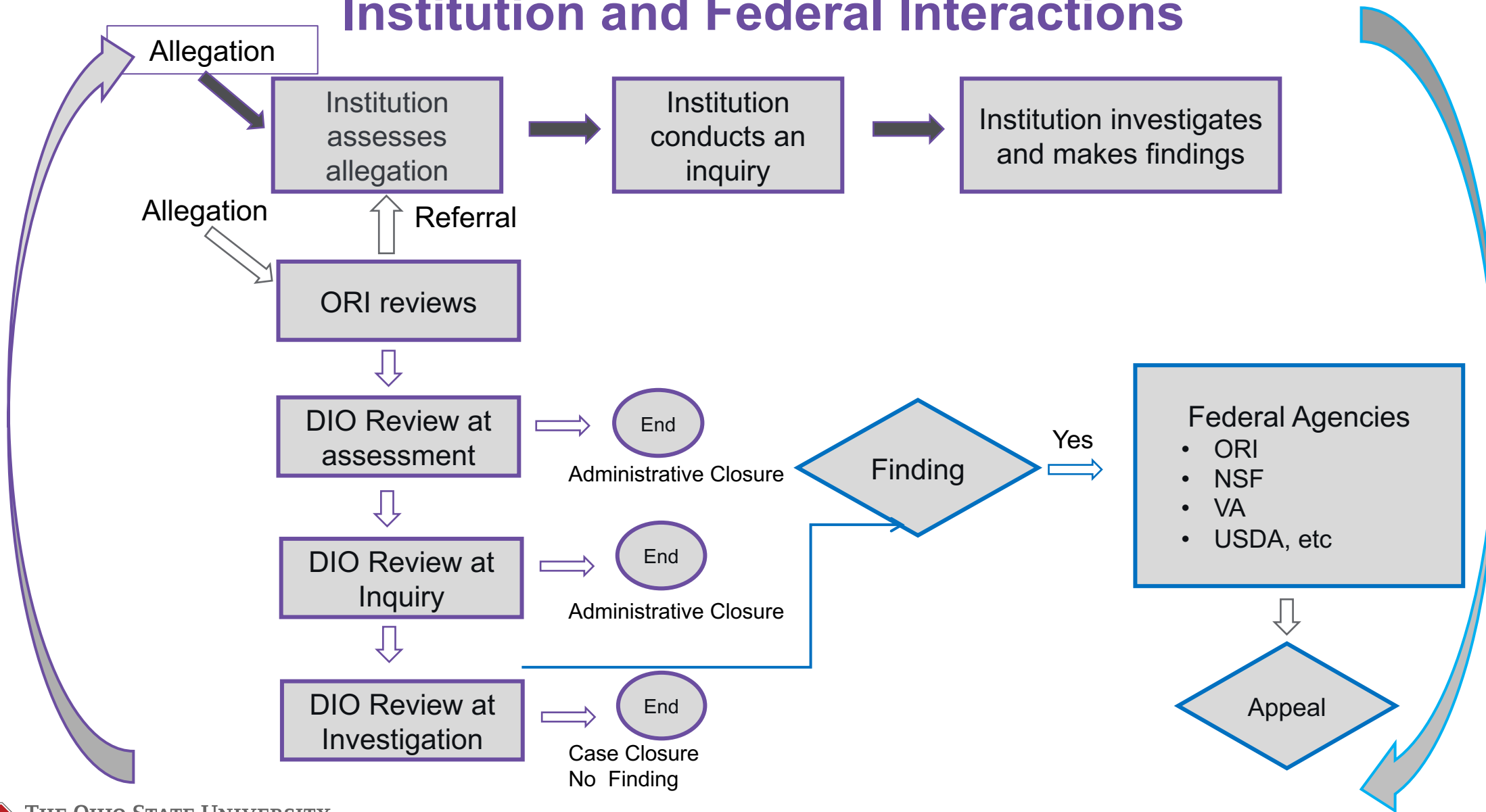
July 28, 2023



# Institution's Process



# Institution and Federal Interactions



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# Interactions: Institution Research Integrity Officers (RIOs) and Journals

Communication between groups can be challenging with corrections & retractions

- Confidentiality requirements – what information should be shared?
- Groups work on different timelines – when should groups interact?
- Who journals should contact – institution or author?



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# The Working Group

- Six topics discussed in 12 virtual meetings June 2021 – March 2022:
  - Topic 1 – Handling Allegations and those with special circumstances
  - Topic 2 – Proper contacts at journals and institutions
  - Topic 3 – Appropriate institutional contacts when concerns arise – institution or author?
  - Topic 4/5 – Information to share between institutions and journals
  - Topic 6 – Handling expressions of concern, retractions & corrections
  
- Each session started with a brief presentation by a RIO and an editor and then an open forum and discussion on developing best practices
  - Learn current practices
  - Identify the concerns to improve the interactions between these groups
  - Develop practical solutions/procedures to maintain the reliability of the published research record



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# Institution Research Integrity Officers (RIOs) and Journals

What did we learn?

- Different objectives, interests, and focus when managing integrity issues
- Editors & RIOs can engage in hypothetical discussions – allay fears that author's reputation may be harmed when notifying an institution
- Understanding the concerns and processes builds trust and leads to better transparency



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# Institution Research Integrity Officers (RIOs) and Journals

Many similarities in processes dealing with integrity and ethics issues

- Both care about protecting integrity of the scientific record
- Both bound by strict confidentiality restrictions
- Both experienced problems with our current interactions that need to change
- Both have difficulty finding the right person on the other side
  - Prominently post contact information for the correct person handling misconduct ethical issues
    - Journal: Editor-in-Chief, Publishing Ethics Manager, Managing Editor
    - Institution: RIO, Vice President for Research, etc.
- Both have trouble getting timely responses, if at all, and often do not continue communications until the issue resolved



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Aug 2022 – Enhancing Partnerships of Institutions and Journals:  
A US Perspective for Best Practices

*preprint posted for comments at:*

<https://osf.io/4qehs/>

June 28, 2023 – **Special Communication**

***JAMA Netw Open. 2023;6(6):e2320796***

doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.20796

Enhancing Partnerships of Institutions and Journals to Address Concerns About Research Misconduct: Recommendations From a Working Group of Institutional Research Integrity Officers and Journal Editors and Publishers,  
Susan Garfinkel, PhD *et al.*





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# What we learned

## RIO perspective:

- ✓ RIOs learned that editors handle many publication ethics issues outside of research misconduct
- ✓ RIOs learned editors feel constrained by “contract” with authors
- ✓ Institutions timelines longer since must consider whether data are accurate *and* who is responsible
- ✓ RIOs struggle with determining when to contact journals and what information to share



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# What we learned

## Journal perspective:

- ✓ Editors learned that a RIOs job is complex; handle more than research misconduct; research misconduct dictated by federal laws and regulations and federal oversight
- ✓ Editors learned that non-FFP allegations are often reported to RIOs, but then directed to other entities at the institution such as the academic unit (department or school), internal auditing, or legal affairs. Authorship disputes are typically the purview of the academic unit(s) of the author(s).
- ✓ Journals primary focus is the accuracy of the data
- ✓ Journals struggle with determining who to contact with concerns (author or RIO) and when to make the contact
- ✓ Editors learned that when authors aware of allegations – destruction or tampering with data may occur and impairs conducting an investigation by the institution



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## Key Recommendations

A **call-to-action** for both institutions and journals to:

1. Expand the **need-to-know criteria** for institutions to include journals, in considering when to correct the research record
2. Suggest a separation of the **accuracy and validity of research data** and the issues of an **individual's culpability and intent** be separated
3. Apply **changes to journal policies** to include contact with institution regarding FFP concerns and to raise author awareness about such policy changes



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# Key Recommendations

A **call-to-action** for both institutions and journals to:

1. Expand the **need-to-know criteria** for institutions to include journals, in considering when to correct the research record
  - a. Change applies primarily to institutions to allow institutions to engage with journals
  - b. Significant change in how institutions interpret confidentiality provisions
    - Historically institutions have narrow definition
    - Next step – develop SOPs for the implementation of this change

**Call to Editors and RIOs!**



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## Key Recommendations

A **call-to-action** for both institutions and journals to:

2. Suggest the separation of the **accuracy and validity of research data** and the issues of an **individual's culpability and intent** be separated
  - a. Enables earlier communications between institutions and journals when focus remains only on data
  - b. Helps determine what information to share
    - Provide information about data or text concerns, including evaluations/reviewer concerns, communications with authors related to the allegations, forensic analyses
  - c. Implementation -maintain confidentiality as much as possible – limited sharing of information to other parties



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## Key Recommendations

A **call-to-action** for both institutions and journals to:

3. Apply changes to journal policies to include journal contact with institution regarding FFP concerns; raise author awareness of changes
  - a. Take seriously all allegations— including anonymous allegations
  - b. Collaborate with other journal editors whose journals are involved (e.g., for plagiarism)
  - c. Recognize that author's explanations may be misleading and may not provide the 'full story'



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## Key Recommendations

A **call-to-action** for both institutions and journals to:

3. Apply changes to journal policies to include contact with institution regarding FFP concerns and to **raise author awareness** of changes
  - d. Raise author awareness that editors may contact institutions during peer review
    - Create Information for Authors (IFA) with clearly stated ethical policies
    - Include statements in the IFA & author forms that authorship criteria includes responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the work
    - Update IFAs to include a notice to authors of the journal's intent to contact an author's institution when an author's response to a concern about the accuracy and integrity of the work is unsatisfactory



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## Key Recommendations

A **call-to-action** for both institutions and journals to:

3. Apply changes to journal policies to include contact with institution regarding FFP concerns and to **raise author awareness** of changes
  - d. Raise author awareness that editors may contact institutions during peer review
    - State in IFAs that editors may contact authors' institutions for assistance with publishing
    - Allow journals to contact institutions, not authors, under certain circumstances when there are serious concerns or suspicions of FFP, *without author's knowledge*





Many Thanks  
for Listening

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