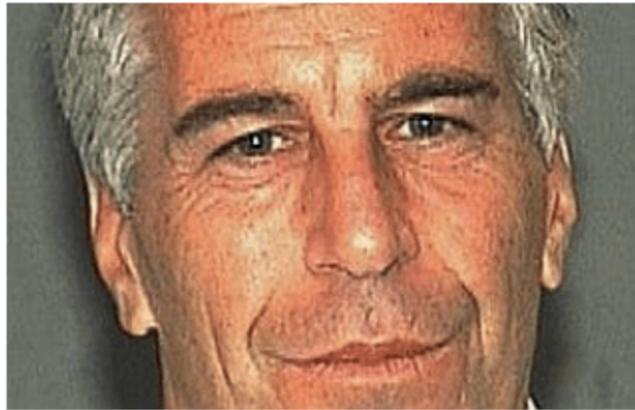


A Justice Dept. discipline office with limited reach to probe handling of controversial child sex abuse case

[Matt Zapotosky](#)



The Justice Department office that handles employee discipline has opened an investigation into whether attorneys committed “professional misconduct” in allowing a well-connected millionaire to spend just over a year in jail to resolve allegations that he molested dozens of young girls.

The department revealed the investigation Wednesday in [a letter](#) from Assistant Attorney General Stephen E. Boyd to Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), who has questioned how the department handled its inquiry of financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Epstein’s case had been the subject of an investigation by the Miami Herald, which [detailed](#) how then-U.S. Attorney Alex Acosta, now

President Trump's labor secretary, shelved a 53-page indictment that could have put Epstein behind bars for life.

Epstein, who counts among his friends Trump and former president Bill Clinton, assembled a high-powered legal team to address the allegations he faced. Ultimately, he pleaded guilty in 2008 only to state charges of soliciting prostitution. Victims told the Herald they felt betrayed by the arrangement.

The department's newly announced investigation is likely to be of limited consequence. According to Boyd's letter, it is being handled by the Office of Professional Responsibility, which explores allegations of employee wrongdoing. The office's findings, at worst, typically result in employees being fired, and they are not usually made public, though Boyd wrote to Sasse that the office would "share the results with you at the conclusion of its investigation as appropriate." It is possible, even likely, the investigation could drag on so long that Acosta, already outside the Justice Department, would by then be out of government entirely.

In a statement, Sasse said: "The victims of Epstein's child sex trafficking ring deserve this investigation — and so do the American people and the members of law enforcement who work to put these kinds of monsters behind bars. Parents should be grateful for the men and women at the DOJ who are committed to transparency and accountability and for the soon-to-be Attorney General who is committed to pursuing justice."

A representative for Acosta, who did not respond to requests for an interview for the Herald's investigation, did not immediately return a

message seeking comment for this report.

Martin G. Weinberg, an attorney for Epstein, said in a statement that Epstein's plea was "fairly negotiated by experienced teams of attorneys representing each party."

"It was anything but a sweetheart deal," Weinberg said. "And it was carefully and fully reviewed not only by senior prosecutors within the Southern District of Florida Office but also at multiple levels of the Department of Justice in D.C."

The government, he said, "avoided litigation risks including the risks of an acquittal and Mr. Epstein went to jail, served a period of probation, lived up to each and every obligation under the Agreement, and has fully conformed his conduct to the law for well over 10 years."