



OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION
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The Ohio Ethics Law And Ohio Ethics Commission

The Ohio Ethics Commission was created by the Ohio Legislature in 1974 and is charged with the responsibility of interpreting and enforcing the Ethics Law in Ohio. The Ethics Law ensures that governments in Ohio – both state and local – operate objectively and fairly.

Ohioans are entitled to demand that public decisions and public spending are objective and made with the public's best interest in mind. The Ethics Law was designed to ensure that public officials and employees are not influenced by personal, financial, or other interests when they spend public money or make decisions on behalf of a public agency. The Ethics Law is designed to prevent government decisions from being compromised by public employees' and officials' benefits or personal gain or that of their family or business associates.

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A Quick Summary of the Ohio Ethics Law

Among other restrictions, the Ethics Law generally prohibits public officials and employees from:

- Using a public position to benefit themselves, their family members or their business associates
- Awarding, discussing, or recommending public contracts in which the officials/employees, their family members or their business associates have a financial interest
- Hiring family members into public positions
- Engaging in prohibited revolving-door/post-employment actions
- Soliciting or accepting substantial and improper things of value
- Engaging in the unauthorized disclosure or use of confidential information
- Filing false or incomplete Financial Disclosure Statements
- Receiving improper supplemental compensation
- Misusing public equipment for private business

The Ohio Ethics Commission also may investigate anyone who:

- Provides substantial and improper things of value to public officials or employees, including outside employment, gifts, travel, meals, lodging, and entertainment
- Gives improper supplemental compensation to public officials or employees

Statutory Responsibilities of the Ohio Ethics Commission

Advice:

Ethics Commission Advisory Attorneys provide guidance and information to the public. The goal of this free and convenient service is to help public officials and employees identify potential conflicts of interest and protect against personal, family, and business conflicts. Advisory Attorneys respond to hundreds of written requests and thousands of telephone calls from officials, agencies, counsel, and the general public every year.

Services offered:

- Issues written advisory opinions that provide legal immunity if advice is followed in future actions
- Responds to requests for advice and provides ethics guidance to the public
- Assists public entities, private businesses, and non-profits in observing ethical decision-making in public processes
- Guides Financial Disclosure filers through questions involving disclosure and recognizing potential conflicts of interest

Training/Education:

The pro-active Training and Education responsibility of the Ethics Commission also seeks to help public employees and officials understand and comply with the Ethics Law.

The Commission's educational efforts are designed to help people understand and comply with the law. Our educational efforts include:

- e-courses
- live classroom trainings
- webinars
- informational fact sheets and brochures
- a free quarterly newsletter
- a web site at www.ethics.ohio.gov that offers easy access to useful information and dynamic search capabilities

Financial Disclosure:

Some public officials and employees file a document called a “Financial Disclosure Statement” with the Ethics Commission. Financial Disclosure is designed to remind public officials of financial interests they hold that may conflict with their duties. It also assists the public, and the Ethics Commission, in monitoring public officials’ potential conflicts of interest.

The Commission’s Financial Disclosure section receives thousands of annual filings from many different public entities. The Commission receives disclosures from all state, county, and city elected officeholders and candidates as well as state officials and board members. The Commission also reviews all interests contained in confidential filings required of uncompensated board members and school officials to identify potential conflicts of interest.

Investigations:

The Ethics Commission conducts criminal investigations into alleged violations of the Ethics Law. Professional investigators review allegations from prosecutors, auditors, agencies, and the public and prioritize the most serious charges and complaints for confidential factual investigation and possible criminal prosecution. Investigations include conducting witness interviews, issuing subpoenas, and working jointly with other law enforcement agencies. Alternative dispute remedies allow the Commission to resolve less-serious, non-continuing questions of conduct through alternative dispute remedies.

Under state law, the Commission’s investigations are confidential and are not subject to the public records law. The Commission may share information with other law enforcement authorities when relevant and necessary to the conduct of an investigation. Any complaints, charges, or investigations handled by the Ohio Ethics Commission are private and confidential and will not be disclosed without written permission of the Commission. This confidentiality protects those accused, the accusers, and the integrity of the investigative process.

[See Ohio Revised Code Section 102.06](#)

[Ohio Revised Code Section 102.07](#)

Issues Outside the Ethics Commission's Authority

The Ohio Ethics Commission seeks to assist public employees and officials in understanding and complying with the Ohio Ethics Law. The Commission's work promotes honesty in government and supports public confidence in public service. The Commission welcomes questions regarding the Ethics Law through direct contact with our office or through our website.

However, the Ethics Commission also receives numerous questions regarding issues outside the Commission's statutory authority. Please see below for a list of the most commonly asked questions/issues outside our jurisdiction:

Ohio Ethics Commission does not investigate:	Alternative agencies to contact for assistance:
Sunshine Law violations (open meetings/public records)	Attorney General of Ohio (800) 282-0515 ohioattorneygeneral.gov or Auditor of Ohio (800) 282-0370 ohioauditor.gov
Lobbying/lobbyists or members/staff of the General Assembly	Joint Legislative Ethics Committee (614) 728-5100 jlec-olig.state.oh.us
Judges or judicial employees	Board of Professional Conduct (614) 387-9370 bpc.ohio.gov
Federal officials or employees	U.S. Office of Government Ethics (202) 482-9300 oge.gov
Compatibility of dual public offices	Attorney General of Ohio (800) 282-0515 ohioattorneygeneral.gov

Campaign finance or elections

Ohio Elections Commission
(614) 466-3205
elc.ohio.gov

Civil service/labor
disputes/contract violations

U.S. Department of Labor
(866) 487-2365
dol.gov
or
your agency/job/company

Codes of professional conduct
(such as private attorneys,
engineers, doctors,
accountants, funeral home
directors, peace officers, etc.)

Appropriate professional licensing board
ohio.gov/help-center/state-directory

Private industry or
consumer complaints

Better Business Bureau
(703) 276-0100
bbb.org
or
Attorney General of Ohio
(800) 282-0515
ohioattorneygeneral.gov

Sexual harassment or
discrimination
(age, gender, religion,
equal protection, etc.)

Ohio Civil Rights Commission
(888) 278-7101
civ.ohio.gov

Poor or substandard
government customer service

State agencies: Inspector General's office
(800) 686-1525
watchdog.ohio.gov
Local agencies: local prosecutor

Selective enforcement
allegations against police,
prosecutors, or other
government officials/agents

Private cause of action

Theft in office or bribery

State agencies: Inspector General's office
Local government: local prosecutor