

# THE VOICE OF ETHICS

A Publication of the Ohio Ethics Commission

2022 Quarter 1



Do the best you can until you know better.  
Then when you know better, do better.

- Maya Angelou

## In Memoriam of Julie Korte

In October 2021, the Ohio Ethics Commission bid a heartbreaking farewell to one of our most dedicated team members, Julie Korte. Julie joined the Ohio Ethics Commission as an Investigative Attorney in 1999 and also served as the Chief Investigative Attorney since 2011. In addition to overseeing criminal investigations at the Commission, she also served as a special prosecutor in a number of ethics-related, public corruption prosecutions. Prior to her service at the Commission, Julie served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney with the Auglaize County Prosecutors Office.

In a 2014 interview, Julie responded to a question about her long tenure with the Ethics Commission by stating, "I fully stand behind the mission of the Ohio Ethics Commission: to promote ethical behavior in public service and to assure the public that the actions of government are impartial and represent the public's interest. It's been rewarding and an honor to be part of upholding that mission."

In addition to her friends and colleagues at the Ohio Ethics Commission, Julie's life will always be celebrated by her two amazing children, family, and many friends. For the final three years of her life, Julie was a tireless advocate for ALS research and funding. Her fighting spirit, sense of justice, and contagious laughter will be greatly missed. Ohio is a better place thanks to Julie's work and commitment.

Thank you, Julie; you'll always be a part of the Ohio Ethics Commission.



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# The Ethics Commission: Rising to the Challenge of an Arduous 2021

A recent survey invited readers to share one word to summarize 2021. The winner? “Exhausting.”

Members and staff of the Ohio Ethics Commission would agree that 2021 brought some struggles, but also opportunities to use technology and innovation to carry out its mission to ensure integrity in government. A summary of some of the Commission’s work and achievements in 2021 are summarized below.

## Advisory Opinions

The Ethics Commission is statutorily authorized to provide guidance regarding the Ohio Ethics Law to assist public employees and officials and in understanding and complying with the law. The Commission’s Advisory section helps to protect those regulated by that statute and taxpayers from wrongdoing in government. Our Advisory Attorneys had a productive 2021 as outlined below:

- 163 written requests
- More than 2,100 e-mails and
- More than 1,700 telephone inquiries.



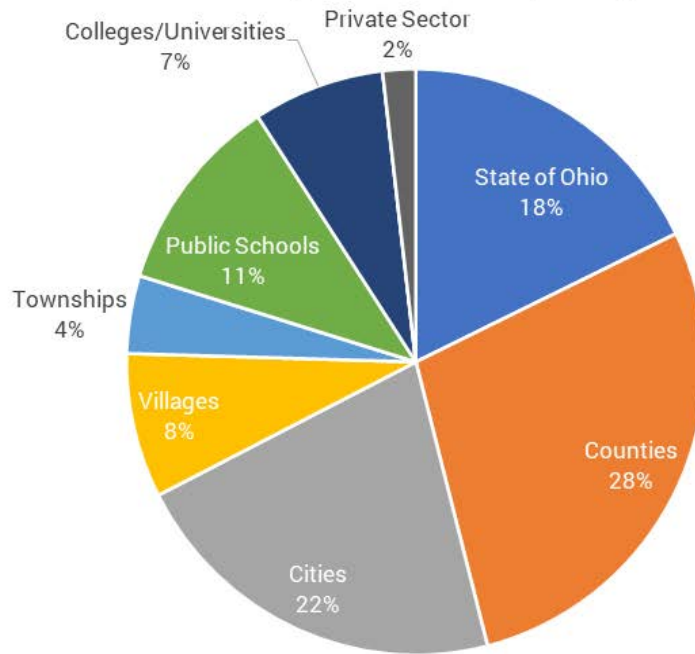
Advice was provided to both state and local government officials and employees. Common issues addressed by the Advisory Attorneys included:

- Nepotism & Public Contract Restrictions
- Gifts, Prizes and Donations
- Private Outside Employment
- Financial Disclosure and
- Post-Employment Issues.

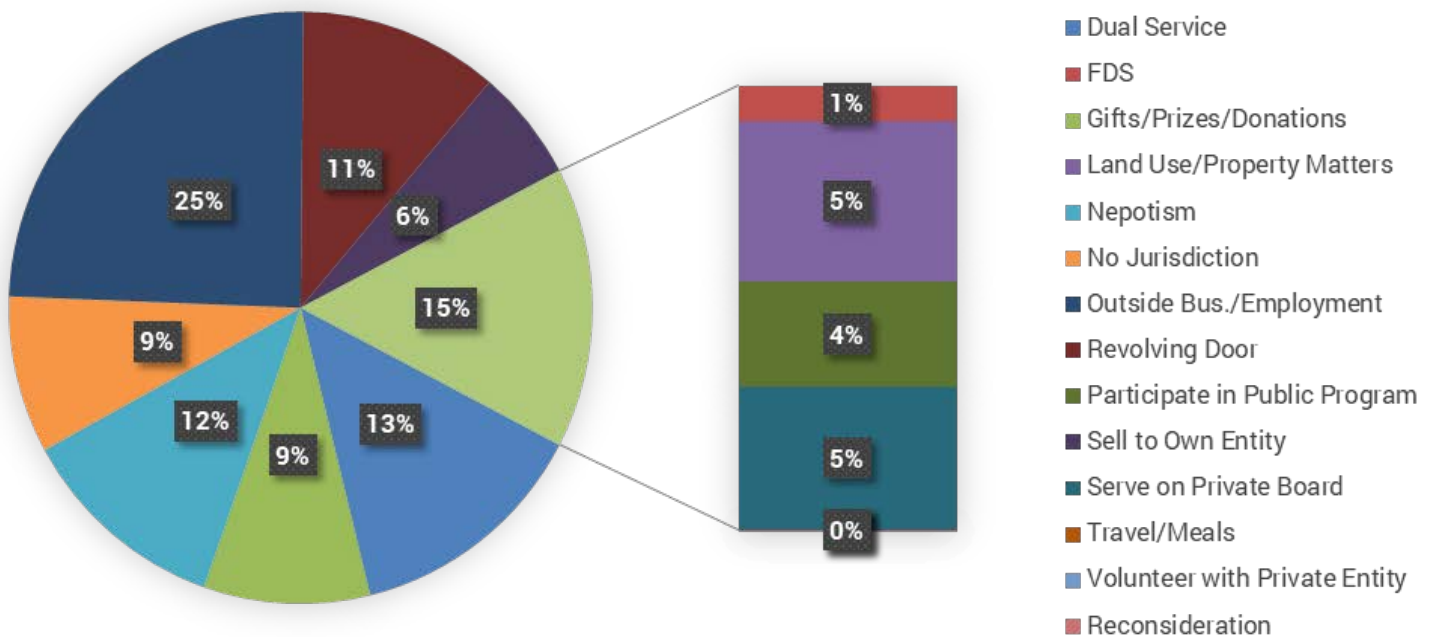


The charts below represent the types of questions the Commission received in writing and the types of entities requesting written advice. Once again in 2021, responses were provided promptly and thoroughly, which benefits the requestors, their public entities, and the public.

**2021 Opinions Issued by Entity**



**2021 Opinions Issued by Topic**



Should you ever have questions under the Ohio Ethics Law, please don't hesitate to contact us. Visit our [Advice Page](#) for more information.

## Ethics Education

The Commission's Education and Training program provides information about the Ethics Law in readily-available and easy-to-understand formats. Our toolkit includes in-person speeches, live webinars, recorded on-demand classes Continuing Legal Education classes, fact sheets, and newsletters. For information on training opportunities in 2022, keep reading this newsletter! If you would ever like to discuss training options for you or your office, please email [susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov](mailto:susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov).

### Education Highlights of 2021 include:

- 123 total presentations with 11,295 attendees, including 78 webinars with 8,818 attendees
- Three virtual Continuing Legal Education (CLE) classes for public practice attorneys with more than 1,400 attendees
- New online educational documents, including "The Ohio Ethics Law for Public Universities & Colleges" and "Private Sector FAQs"
- Introduction of a new webinar: "The Ohio Ethics Law: A Deeper Study" designed for learners with existing strong understanding of the law

Some of the feedback we received in 2021 include the following comments:

#### In-Person Classes

- For many years, I have sought out and participated in your many trainings on being a good steward of the public funds, which some may also call "ethics". These sessions have been a highlight in my career.
- "I just wanted to tell you what a great job you did on the 2021 Ethics Training! You've made a legal topic enjoyable to learn about. This is your best year yet!"

#### CLE Classes

- Without a doubt the best and most interesting ethics CLE I've ever attended. Great job!
- Probably the best Ethics and Professional Conduct presentation I've ever experienced (32 years in the profession). Kudos!







### Webinars

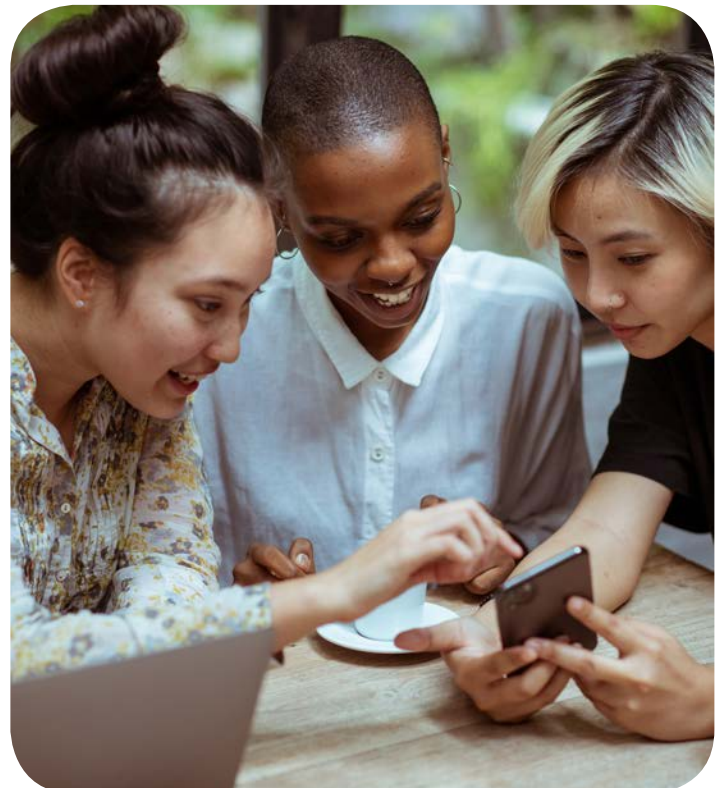
- Just a quick email to let you know how much I appreciated the presentation today- not only the information but you are wonderfully engaging! Thank you for making the session understandable AND fun!
- BEST. WEBINAR. EVER

### E-Course

- Terrific presentation. Interesting, informative, and interactive. I continue to be impressed by the training opportunities offered by the OEC!
- You guys did a great job of creating this - especially during the pandemic! I appreciate that you change it up and keep it engaging!

### Newsletters

- I just want to let you know that in my opinion, this is your best newsletter yet! Thank you for all of your hard work. As an HR Director, and taxpayer, it is appreciated.
- Thank you for this newsletter! Great work as always.



## Investigations

Another important statutory duty of the Ohio Ethics Commission is investigating alleged violations of the Ethics Law. The Commission's Investigative team conducts professional and confidential investigations and refers cases supported by substantial evidence for prosecution or alternative resolution.

In 2021, Investigative Staff responded to 1,021 telephone investigative inquiries and processed hundreds of information requests or allegations of wrongdoing. Last year, the Commission formally opened 32 new cases (bringing the total number of active investigations to 158), closed 29 investigative cases, and processed 16 censure cases and 56 settlements.

Common investigations included violations of:

- Conflicts of Interest
- Outside Business/Employment
- Nepotism
- Securing Things of Value



## Financial Disclosure

Another statutory responsibility of the Ohio Ethics Commission is administering the financial disclosure program. Financial disclosure statements (FDS) are an important step in assisting some public servants, such as certain elected officials and high-ranking state employees, in identifying potential conflicts of interest and providing transparency to Ohio citizens.

Our FDS team was busy in 2021 as the Commission received 10,500 statements with 94 percent of these filers using the Commission's convenient and highly-professional online filing system.

If you are new to financial disclosure filing or want additional information regarding this program, please visit the [Financial Disclosure page](#) of our web site or check out our [FDS FAQ](#)!

## So, that's a wrap for 2021!

Remember the survey mentioned above? Want to guess what word was voted as the "favorite" summary word of 2021? "Next!" So, let's move on to 2022 with hope, vigor, and best wishes for one another!

# Ethics Law Training - the 2022 Plan!

Like almost everything else in 2021, training at the Ohio Ethics Commission took on a “hybrid” vibe. In-person classes resumed, though at fewer numbers, and online classes became the “go to” training for those seeking to know more about the Ohio Ethics Law.

As 2022 kicks off, the Commission is currently scheduling on-site “live” sessions since they provide for such robust interaction and opportunities for questions. For those who are more comfortable with distance learning for now, the Ethics Commission has numerous options that allow for safe and effective training regarding the Ohio Ethics Law. To schedule an in-person session or a webinar customized just for your public entity, please email [susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov](mailto:susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov).

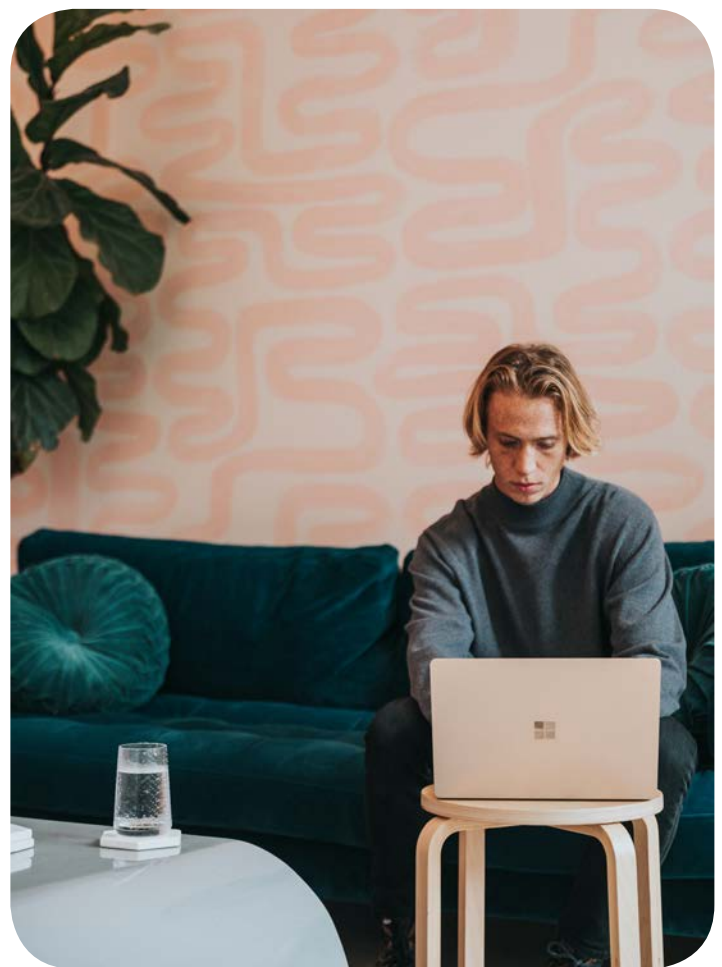
For other electronic options, see below!

## E-Course: The Ohio Ethics Law 2022: Just the Facts (of Jaw-Dropping Investigations)

Once again, the Ohio Ethics Commission is providing a brand new e-course to allow public employees and officials to electronically dive into the Ethics Law! Our newest offering uses actual ethics investigations from across the United States to demonstrate potential ethical dilemmas that could occur under the Ohio Ethics Law. The course studies our statute to examine how it could have been implicated had that investigation occurred in our state. The 2022 e-course is available on our website – pull out your Sherlock Holmes hat and magnifying glass and enjoy!

*Note for state officials and employees:* The e-course fulfills the Ohio Ethics Law training requirement under Executive Order 2019-11D for state officials and employees (including financial disclosure filers).

*Note for attorneys:* The 2022 e-course has been approved for one hour of general Continuing Legal Education credit.



Click [here](#) for the e-course  
The Ohio Ethics Law 2022:  
Just the Facts (of Jaw-Dropping Investigations)



## Webinars

While the Ohio Ethics Commission has offered webinars for numerous years, these free one-hour classes became especially popular during 2020 and 2021. The webinars are live, interactive and provide a helpful overview of the Ohio Ethics Law.

Last year, the Commission introduced the “Deeper Study” webinar to allow those who already have a solid understanding of the statute to dig a bit deeper into the Ethics Law through the study of specific advisory opinions.

Take a look below to determine which webinar is right for you! Once registered, you will receive an email confirming your registration with information you need to join the webinar.

### Webinar Option #1: The Ohio Ethics Law: Watching our Ethical Step!

This one-hour webinar provides a solid overview of the Ohio Ethics Law with summations of conflicts of interest, gift restrictions, public contract prohibitions, nepotism, post-employment, and more. Relevant and timely examples will help solidify the concepts and restrictions outlined in this webinar. This webinar is an excellent choice for those who seek a solid foundation regarding the Ethics Law or need a “refresher” course. This webinar is also an excellent option for those who may be new (or returning) to public service. These webinars will occur on the following dates:

Thursday, February 10	10:00 - 11:00 AM
Wednesday, March 16	10:00 - 11:00 AM
Tuesday, April 12	2:00 - 3:00 PM
Friday, May 13	10:00 - 11:00 AM
Monday, June 13	1:00 - 2:00 PM
Thursday, July 14	1:00 - 2:00 PM
Monday, August 15	1:00 - 2:00 PM
Friday, September 23	10:00 - 11:00 AM
Wednesday, October 12	2:00 - 3:00 PM
Tuesday, November 15	10:00 - 11:00 AM
Thursday, December 15	10:00 - 11:00 AM



[Click here](#) to register for the webinar  
**The Ohio Ethics Law: Watching Our Ethical Step!**

## Webinar Option #2: The Ohio Ethics Law: A Deeper Study

For those who have participated in our trainings for numerous years, this fresh approach to the Ethics Law might be for you! This webinar is also one-hour long and will also cover all primary areas of the Ethics Law but will focus on specific applications of the law. Each area of the law will be studied in correlation with germane legal advisory opinions previously issued by the Ethics Commission. Anyone is welcome to this webinar, but those who already have a solid understanding of the statute will likely find this one especially stimulating and thought-provoking. The schedule for this webinar is listed below:

Thursday, April 21	10:00 - 11:00 AM
Tuesday, June 21	1:00 - 2:00 PM
Thursday, September 15	10:00 - 11:00 AM
Wednesday, October 19	1:00 - 2:00 PM
Wednesday, December 14	10:00 - 11:00 AM



Click [here](#) to register for the webinar  
The Ohio Ethics Law: A Deeper Study

*Note for state officials and employees:* Both webinars fulfill the Ohio Ethics Law training requirement under Executive Order 2019-11D for state officials and employees (including financial disclosure filers).

*Note for attorneys:* Both types of webinars have been approved for one hour of general Continuing Legal Education credit.

### Questions?

If you have questions or concerns regarding any of the training options outlined above or the Ohio Ethics Law, please contact Susan Willeke at (614) 466-7090 or [susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov](mailto:susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov).



## Continuing Legal Education Classes Announced

The Ohio Ethics Commission and the Ohio Board of Professional Conduct have teamed up once again to provide three Continuing Legal Education (CLE) courses for public practice attorneys. The 2022 CLE classes are free of charge and have been approved for 2.5 hours of attorney professional conduct instruction.

Two classes will be webcast sessions with live Q&A and we have optimistically scheduled an “in-person” CLE at the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation Auditorium. If you sign up for the in-person class, we will notify you should we be required to convert it to an online class.

- May 10, 2022 - webcast with live Q&A
- September 27, 2022 - in-person class at BWC Auditorium
- December 13, 2022 - webcast with live Q&A

For dates and registration information  
click [here](#) for our CLE Seminars webpage

You will receive electronic handouts prior to the CLE classes. If you register for either of the virtual classes, you will also receive instructions prior to the session on how to log-in for the CLE webinar.

If you do not already receive our electronic notifications regarding CLE classes and would like your email to be included in that list, please visit [this page](#) of our website and enter your email address there.

Questions? Email [susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov](mailto:susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov) or call (614) 466-7090.

