

THE VOICE OF ETHICS

A Publication of the Ohio Ethics Commission

2019 Quarter 3



Action indeed is the sole medium
of expression for ethics.

- Jane Addams

What is Nepotism?

Under the Ohio Ethics Law, nepotism is when a public official or employee authorizes a family member's employment or uses his/her position in any way to obtain a public job for a family member.

It may seem obvious that directly hiring a family member is illegal, but the Ethics Law also prohibits public officials and employees from indirectly influencing the hiring process for a family member.

Even if that family member is qualified for the job, public officials and employees cannot be involved!

Examples of such indirect – but equally illegal – influences could include:



Recommending
a family member
for a job

Requesting
an interview for
a family member

Discussing
a family member's
application



Nepotism comprises almost **one-third** of the Ohio Ethics Commission's investigations

Hiring a Family Member is a Fourth Degree Felony

It's not illegal for your family member to pursue or get a government job at your agency; it's illegal if you involve yourself in any aspect of the hiring process. And remember, recusal must continue even if your relative legally gets the public job without your involvement. Direct supervision, annual evaluations, or participation in discussions of promotions or raises would also be prohibited.

You must recuse yourself from **all** aspects of the hiring process.



Nepotism is unfair to the public

All Ohio citizens have the right to expect that government jobs will be awarded to the most qualified candidate, not the most family-connected candidate.

On the Ohio Ethics Commission's web site www.ethics.ohio.gov you will find fact sheets, advisory opinions, and even an e-course regarding nepotism. Please contact us at (614) 466-7090 if we can assist you in any way in understanding and complying with nepotism restrictions and the entire Ohio Ethics Law.



[Fact Sheets](#)



[Advisory Opinions](#)



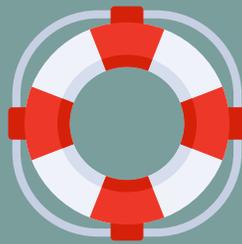
[E-Course](#)

The Ohio Ethics Law E-Course

There is real common-sense reasoning in the Ohio Ethics Law. We crafted our e-course with ease of information in mind, using everyday language, relatable scenarios, and illuminating questions. Our goal isn't to just tell you how to obey the law; we want you to be as invested in protecting Ohioans as we are!



Convenient



Helpful



Insightful

Our e-course is ideal whether you are curious to learn more about how the law safeguards against conflicts of interest or just need a refresher. It's updated yearly, engages you with interactive content, and offers Closed Captioning and screen reader compatibility to ensure all users have access to effective training resources. It fulfills the Executive Order training requirement for state employees and officials and has been approved for one hour of general Continuing Legal Education credit.



Flexible



Self-Paced



Accessible

Click [here](#) for more information on the Ohio Ethics Law E-Course.

A conversation with Ohio Ethics Commission Education and Communications Specialist Nick Rohrbaugh

The Ohio Ethics Commission provides educational opportunities on the Ohio Ethics Law as one of its primary responsibilities. We strive to make these training sessions convenient, informative, and even a little fun! Our training schedule for 2019 includes both on-site and electronic training opportunities. We sat down to chat with Education and Communications Specialist Nick Rohrbaugh, who spearheads the Commission's online educational efforts and the Ohio Ethics Law E-Course.



The Ohio Ethics Commission recently rolled out a new e-course on the Ohio Ethics Law. Why might someone choose that to fulfill their training requirement?

The Ethics Commission works hard to offer training opportunities suitable for all types of learners. A lot of people need that face-to-face interaction of those live classroom style sessions, they want to ask questions, they benefit from having an expert there in person. Some folks choose the webinars, they like having a real person “on the line” and more of that live, spontaneous feel, without, you know, having to leave their desk. I gravitate toward more hands-on experiences. Something I can approach at my own pace and dig around in, get my hands dirty. I want the information to be a tool I'm using to learn. That's what the e-course is.

“I want the information to be a tool I'm using to learn.”



How can it be hands on? Doesn't the computer create a barrier between you and the content?

I can see why you'd think that, but e-learning has come a long way. It can put you right in the driver's seat, get you thinking about the Ethics Law from all angles, from the perspective of a public servant or a taxpayer. We've built something that isn't just a lecture your computer gives. We give you control, encouraging you to discover the info that you find meaningful. You're going to have to put in some legwork. Learning is a journey and the course is your GPS.

“Learning is a journey and the course is your GPS.”



How do you approach making the course?

Well, I don't have a law degree so I had to make something I could understand (laughs.) The first time I looked over the Ohio Ethics Law it was so overwhelming, but it's such an important law and easy to appreciate when you think about it in terms of "As a taxpayer, would I want my public servants doing this?" It just kind of clicks into place.

"It just kind of clicks into place."



How do you ensure the Ohio Ethics Law is relatable?

I love examples. I can tell you the law, and why the law is important, but when you read a Twitter post about an public servant inspecting her sister's nail salon it gets visceral; you can FEEL why the law is important. We try to make the most out of the digital learning format. It really gives you the opportunity to "show, don't tell." Videos and social media posts are a lot easier to relate to than legal citations.

"Videos and social media posts are a lot easier to relate to than legal citations."



Why does the Ethics Commission invest the amount of time and effort that goes into the e-course?

I know as public employees, we take a lot of training. What's worse than an hour long training you have to take every year? An hour long training you have to take every year that is the SAME every year. You're not going to learn anything from that. Our course has to be a good use of your time, engaging and informative. We reassess it every year, build on our wins and present something new. Collect feedback, get new people involved, new ideas. Always taking new ideas, always need actors (laughs.) Give me a shout if you can help with either!

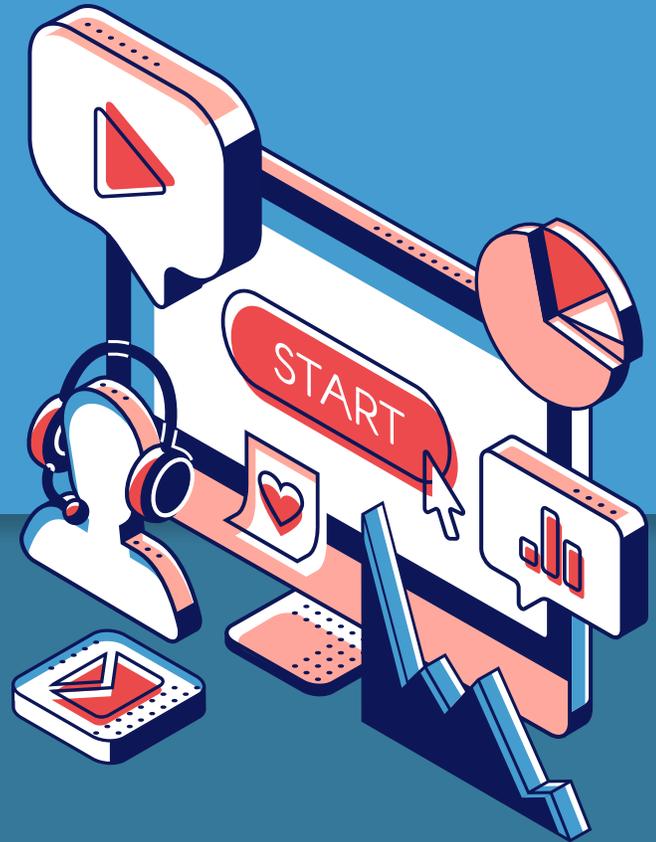
"Our course has to be a good use of your time, engaging and informative."



Click [here](#) for more information on the Ohio Ethics Law E-Course.

WEBINAR

Did you know that the Ohio Ethics Commission conducts eleven live webinars each year? These free one-hour webinars provide an overview of the Ohio Ethics Law, meet the Ethics Law training requirement for state employees, and – as a bonus for our public practice attorneys – **provide one free general CLE hour!**



There are still five webinars left this year:

August 15, 2019	10 AM
September 13, 2019	10 AM
October 15, 2019	1 PM
November 14, 2019	10 AM
December 11, 2019	10 AM

Click [here](#) for webinar registration information!



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