



OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION
William Green Building
30 West Spring Street, L3
Columbus, Ohio 43215-2256
Telephone: (614) 466-7090
Fax: (614) 466-8368

www.ethics.ohio.gov

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 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.

Table of Contents

A Quick Summary of the Ohio Ethics Law.....	2
Statutory Responsibilities of the Ohio Ethics Commission	3
Advice	3
Training/Education	3
Financial Disclosure	4
Investigations	4
Issues Outside the Ethics Commission's Authority	5

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