

INFORMING EMPLOYEES ABOUT THEIR RESOURCES

Employees who face an ethics-related crisis often feel isolated, with nowhere to turn. A sense of isolation, in fact, is a primary reason why employees don't speak up at all. It is thus of vital importance that, during ethics training, employees learn that they are not alone. Whether employees turn to an ethics commission, an ethics officer, an executive inspector general, or elsewhere, the important thing is that they know that they can and should tell someone. If employees come out of ethics training with an understanding that help is available, half the battle is won.

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Regardless of our individual jobs, State employees have the common desire to do the right thing. Ethics training turns like-minded State employees into a community of common intent dedicated to serving the public good rather than private interests. It gives employees the knowledge to go about their jobs in the right way and the support to do so, even when it involves making difficult choices.

Adapted from
"Why Do We Have Ethics Training, Anyway?"
Copyright 2005 SCCE
Reprinted with permission.

THIS PUBLICATION IS FOR
INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES
ONLY AND IS NOT INTENDED
TO CONSTITUTE AN OPINION.



EXECUTIVE ETHICS COMMISSION

State of Illinois
401 S. Spring Street
403 William Stratton Building
Springfield, IL 62706
Phone: (217) 558-1393
Fax: (217) 558-1399
Chad Fornoff, Executive Director

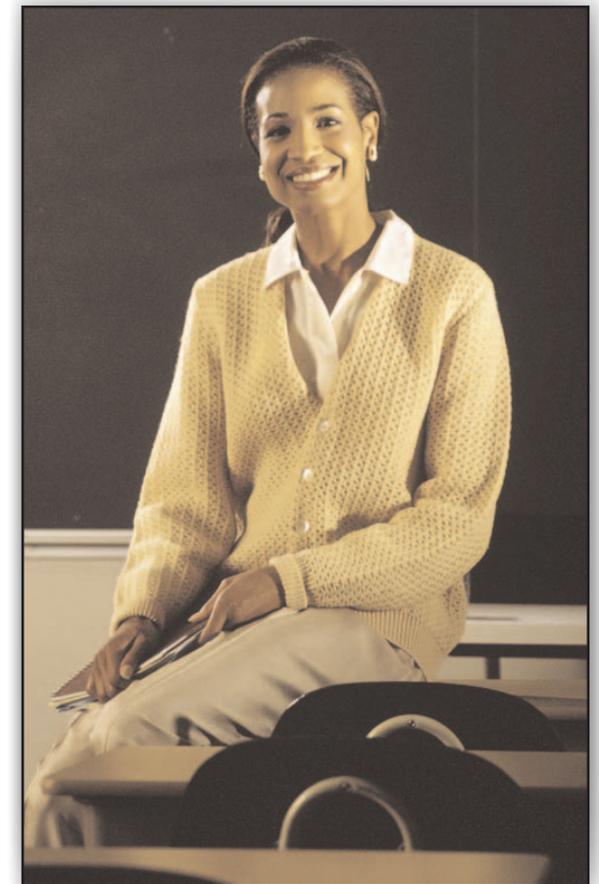
*For more information, see the
Executive Ethics Commission's web site,
www.eec.illinois.gov
or contact your agency's Ethics Officer.*

Printed by Authority State of Illinois
6/27/06 - 25,000



EXECUTIVE ETHICS COMMISSION

WHY ETHICS TRAINING?



WHY ETHICS TRAINING?

I would never take a bribe or rig bids or cheat on my time sheets. Weren't we supposed to learn this stuff in kindergarten?

Have you heard other employees say similar things? Have you thought them yourself? It is true that we are supposed to learn right from wrong before joining the workforce. But ethics training is not about teaching employees what it means to be a good person. What, then, is it about?

POSTING THE SPEED LIMIT

Just because we learned right from wrong as children, that does not mean that as adults we automatically know the speed limit everywhere we drive. We still need speed limit signs. Similarly, the fact that an employee is a good person does not mean she intuitively knows the laws that apply to her work. She needs and deserves to hear what those laws are. It's a matter of fairness: just as it would be unfair for a town to reduce a speed limit from 45 to 15 m.p.h. without posting a sign, so it would be unfair not to let employees know the ethical standards to which they will be held.



SPEED
LIMIT
45

MAKING THE LAW COME ALIVE

The text of the Ethics Act sets forth our obligations. But it may seem at times to be overly abstract and confusing. It is written in “legalese” and interpreted by lawyers. Furthermore, simply reading the Ethics Act won't turn an unethical employee into an ethical employee any more than reading an exercise book would turn a couch potato into an athlete. Without effective ethics training, the Ethics Act is a piece of paper—nothing more.



Good ethics training brings life to the paper document that is the Ethics Act. It cuts through the legalese and shows employees how to live those standards in real, concrete workplace situations. By offering examples and case studies, good ethics training helps employees internalize and live the goal of the Ethics Act, which is to improve the ethical climate in the State of Illinois.

SHOWING THAT THE STATE MEANS WHAT IT SAYS

Knowledge of ethics rules is meaningless unless employees believe that the State really wants them to follow these rules. The pressure in the workplace to conform to a boss's or coworkers' expectations can lead to a certain cynicism about the seemingly abstract messages contained in the Ethics Act.

The Ethics Act tells employees what they should do in challenging situations. Questionable practices often persist as a matter of habit, not a conscious intention to break the rules. New employees—and even not-so-new employees—may wonder whether the State tacitly approves of “the way things are done.” Ethics training makes it clear that the resounding answer is, “No,” and gives employees a reason to insist on more appropriate conduct.

Effective ethics training helps reinforce the message that the State does not approve of ethics violations in any workplace. It allows the ethics commissions, ethics officers and inspectors general to show that they are serious about enforcing the Ethics Act. Such training is thus a critical element in creating and maintaining an ethical culture.

Employees who learn of activity that makes them uncomfortable are often relieved to find, through training, that what is happening in their area is unacceptable—they're not crazy after all! Such persons frequently find the courage, after training, to report what is going on, and to help fix the problem before it grows too large.