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State of Ohio - a State of Integrity

Enforcement of the Code is initiated by a complaint, filed by the Ethics Enforcement Officer or any member of the public. In most cases, a complaint by the Ethics Enforcement Officer is preceded by a confidential staff evaluation.

A two-stage process follows:

1. Confidential investigation and confidential probable cause hearing; and
2. If probable cause is found, a public hearing to determine if a violation has occurred.

At any stage of this process, the OSE and the Respondent may negotiate a settlement.

After a finding or admission of a violation, the CEAB can order the Respondent to comply with the Ethics Code in the future, file any required report or statement, and/or pay a civil penalty.

For failure to file a report, statement, or other information required by the Ethics Code, the CEAB can, after a single hearing, impose a civil penalty of up to \$10 per day, for which the aggregate penalty for any one violation may not exceed \$10,000.

The OSE may refer matters to the Chief State's Attorney for criminal prosecution. An intentional violation of the Ethics Code is a misdemeanor for the first violation, unless the individual has derived a financial benefit of at least \$1,000. In that case, the violation is a class D felony.

The Attorney General may sue for up to three times the economic gain received through knowingly committing or knowingly profiting from a violation of the Ethics Code.

Public officials are encouraged to review the "[Citizen's Guide to Filing a Complaint](#)," available on the OSE website, for a detailed overview of the complaint process and associated confidentiality provisions.