

YOUR ETHICAL SHIELD:

A strategy for avoiding conflicts and precluding allegations

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will strengthen the ethical resolve of local government officers and employees by providing them with an ethical “defense system” that helps them to avoid conflicts of interest, preclude allegations and respond to false complaints by exhibiting the highest standards of ethical conduct. The Instructor will present the Foundation and Pillars of Government Ethics and lead class participants through five strategies including a review of the provisions of ethical standards in the New Jersey Local Government Ethics Law (N.J.S.A. 40:9-22.1 et seq.). The class attendees will also be guided through a review and renewal of their ethics “pledges.”

The Instructor will define the ethical culture and ethical climate of organizations and explain how one person with conviction can make a significant positive and permeating impact in their workplace. *“What-would-you-do?”* scenarios will test the students’ ethical senses and raise awareness of the most common lapses of judgment in government employment. ***YOU BE THE JUDGE*** challenges drawn from actual complaint case histories will present a variety of ethical “situations” faced by local government officers and employees.

INSTRUCTOR: Dave Nenno | 2010 to present - Ethics training and professional development seminars (CEUnion). 1976-2010 NJ State Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services, Local Finance Board (retired). Ethics complaint investigator. Daily guidance to local governments in matters pertaining to the jurisdiction and application of the Local Government Ethics Law, the establishment of local ethics boards and the statutory filing requirements of the Annual Financial Disclosure Statement.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Attendees will:

- 1) Learn to strengthen their ethical resolve by developing an ethical “defense system” that helps them avoid conflicts of interest, preclude allegations and respond to false complaints;
- 2) Cultivate attitudes that foster an ethical culture in their organization;
- 3) Make behavioral changes that enhance the ethical climate in their individual workplace units;
- 4) Nurture a greater desire to exemplify ethical decision-making in their professions by internalizing the foundation and pillars of government ethics;
- 5) Review and renew their ethical “Pledges” as public servants;
- 6) Formulate a conviction to be that one contagious person who makes a significant positive and permeating impact in their organization and spheres of influence;
- 7) Commit to taking positive corrective actions where questionable behavior and misconduct is observed or perceived.

As time permits, there will be a group-participation test at the end of the class to reinforce learning and emphasize the key principles provided during the presentation.

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COURSE TIMED AGENDA

INTRODUCTION - Your Ethical Defense System - 9:00AM to 9:10AM

STRATEGY #1 Laying the Foundation - 9:10AM to 9:45AM

INTEGRITY: An unimpaired condition: soundness; the quality or state of being complete or undivided.

Ethical Climate: The collective personality of a specific workplace or unit as expressed in the prevailing attitudes, perceptions, standards, and environmental conditions.

Ethical Culture: The beliefs and behaviors of an organization that issue from personal convictions regarding what is considered excellent and acceptable.

Men and Woman of our word!

STRATEGY # 2 Building on the Foundation (The Pillars) - 9:45AM to 10:30AM

Pillar #1 (9:20 to 10:00)

TRUST: Firm reliance upon the integrity, character and ability of another.

"When a man assumes a public trust, he should consider himself as public property."

Thomas Jefferson

My Pledge #1: I receive the Trust conferred upon me by the citizenry through the powers that be and will live up to this calling.

Pillar #2 (10:00 to 10:40)

HONOR: A distinguished reputation for truth, fairness, humility and courage in one's beliefs and actions.

"The greatest way to live with honor in this world is to be what we pretend to be." Socrates

My Pledge #2: I will sacrificially represent the best interests of both supporters and detractors and graciously accept the reproach that will naturally be directed toward me as a public servant.

Pillar #3 (10:40 to 11:20)

DUTY: A moral commitment that compels one to serve others and complete the tasks associated with the responsibilities of his office.

"One thing I know. The only ones among you who will be really happy are those will who have sought and found how to serve. - Albert Schweitzer

Pledge #3: I choose now to make future decisions that are in the best interest of the community and to complete the tasks associated with the responsibilities of my government office or position.

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Pillar #4 (11:20 to 12:00 Noon)

RESPECT: Esteeming others better than myself and assessing a higher regard to their interests than to my own interests.

Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood

Habit #5 (Seven Habits of Highly Effective People) Stephen R. Covey

Pledge #4: I will treat all others with dignity and respect regardless of how I am treated believing that, at the end of the day, my conduct will benefit everyone.

Pillar #5 (12:00 Noon to 12:40)

TRANSPARENCY: A public servant's candor regarding his financial and personal interests and involvements as well as those of his immediate family members.

"Sunlight is the best disinfectant." Supreme Court Justice, Louis D. Brandeis 1916 to 1939

Pledge #5: I will conduct government business as though my behavior is under constant public scrutiny and will at all times facilitate public awareness of the government decision-making process.

STRATEGY # 3 Choosing Your Convictions...NOW! - 10:30AM to 11:15AM

- The power of Conviction
- The impact of Reputation
- The Road Less Traveled
- Responding to gadflies and trolls
- Making the choice now!

STRATEGY # 4 Using Your Resources - 11:15AM to 12:15PM

- Remember the Oath of Office?
- Just Ask! (The importance of Advisory Opinions)
- Full Disclosure
- Cautions with social media

STRATEGY # 5 Your Shield: Don't Leave Home Without it - 12:15AM to 12:50PM

- Annual Financial Disclosure Update
- Ethics Case History Review and recent developments
- Course Content Review and group participation test (as time permits)

CONCLUSIONS - 12:50PM to 1:00PM

Q and A