



United States
Office of Government Ethics
1201 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3917

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DO-98-031

MEMORANDUM

TO: Designated Agency Ethics Officials

FROM: Stephen D. Potts
Director

SUBJECT: Results of the Survey of Agency Field Office Ethics Officials

Recently the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) conducted a survey of agency field office ethics officials to learn more about their experiences, opinions, and needs regarding various facets of their field office's ethics programs. I am pleased to report the results of the survey to you and to discuss OGE's continuing efforts to provide leadership and assistance in the executive branch ethics community. An executive summary and the report are attached.

We were gratified at the phenomenal response from field office ethics officials (90 percent of the 523 offices surveyed) and to learn that most were satisfied that they are successfully meeting the requirements of the ethics program and are receiving adequate program support from management at their agency. However, although generally satisfied, many indicated the need for additional program support and assistance from both OGE and their agency management in order to improve their ethics program's effectiveness.

Primary among the areas of assistance needed from OGE was regional ethics training courses for ethics officials on a variety of topics that are critical to providing ethics-related advice or making program decisions. OGE has been working toward meeting this need through expanding its ethics training course offerings for ethics officials. For 1999, in addition to continuing to offer introductory level modules for new ethics officials, we plan to introduce intermediate level modules on individual topics such as conflicting financial interests and post-employment rules. Courses offered at regional locations will continue at the increased levels of 1998.

Also, OGE plans to continue our very successful regional development program. During 1997 and 1998, as part of the development program we conducted a series of seminars with regional ethics officials in New York City and Atlanta and offered them selected training sessions that were originally presented at OGE's annual ethics conference. During 1999, we plan to continue the program in Denver and San Francisco.

In addition to providing training opportunities for ethics officials, OGE continues to develop diversified training materials for agencies to use in meeting annual ethics training requirements for employees. To date, OGE has produced pamphlets, videotapes, and computer-based modules on a variety of topics including the post-employment rules, the 18 U.S.C. § 208 (conflicting financial interests) waiver regulations, and gift acceptance. Currently under development are a pamphlet on employee misuse of position, a videotape on the principles of ethical conduct, and computer-based training modules on gift acceptance and misuse of position rules. Details on current OGE training materials, regional training opportunities, and other important program information are available on OGE's Web site at WWW.USOGE.GOV . We encourage you to refer your field office ethics staff to our Web site as a method of ensuring that key ethics information and materials are disseminated.

As you know, in response to ethics officials' concerns that the annual ethics training requirement for all covered employees was preventing the ethics officials from dedicating resources to other desirable program goals, last year OGE implemented an interim rule amending our training regulation (subpart G of 5 C.F.R. part 2638). The interim rule amendments permit the distribution of a written ethics briefing (rather than a verbal briefing, as previously required) to covered employees, other than public financial disclosure report filers, for up to two out of every three calendar years. Our survey results indicated that about half of the field ethics officials who responded to the survey have taken advantage or will soon take advantage of the flexibility offered by the interim amendments; however, many others reported that they did not know if the change would be implemented. Therefore, we would like to remind you to again consider taking advantage of the flexibility offered by the rule to help reduce the ethics program work load.

While OGE continues to take the steps outlined above to assist ethics officials, we also want to encourage you to continue your support for the program through your attention and active participation. High-level program visibility, the need for which was indicated by respondents to our survey, is a necessary ingredient in order for the program to succeed. Also, sufficient program resources are essential to the operation of a successful ethics program. As such, we plan to continue to monitor the impact of budget reductions on agency ethics programs, especially those programs administered in personnel offices, which appear to have been hardest hit as part of agency reorganizations and downsizing.

I want to thank you for your continuing commitment to building and maintaining a strong ethics program. Also, I want to thank your field office staff for their high level of participation in this survey. A copy of the executive summary is being sent to agency heads and a copy of the survey report is being sent to the field office ethics officials who participated in the survey. If you have any questions, please contact Jack Covaleski at 202-208-8000, extension 1120, or Phyllis Hoffer at extension 1184.

[Attachments](#)