
A Reminder that Mandatory Ethics Training for School Officials is Coming

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Starting January 1, 2025, officials in school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools must complete ethics training at least once every two years. Assembly Bill (AB) 2158, signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom in September 2022 amends California’s Government Code to mandate ethics training for relevant educational officials, in alignment with the existing “AB 1234 Training” requirement in place since 2006 for officials in cities, counties, and special districts. Expanding required ethics training to school officials reinforces the importance of ethical governance in California’s educational system and promotes transparency and integrity in the decision-making process.

Background

In October 2005, the Governor signed AB 1234, requiring local agency officials to receive training in ethics. Previously, members of school district governing boards, county boards of education and governing bodies for charter schools were exempt from the AB 1234 ethics trainings requirement.

The purpose of AB 2158 is to expand the definition of “local agency officials” to expressly include the governing board and members of school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools. Since these public officials make a plethora of important decisions that may carry ethical implications, the State Legislature has determined that they should receive ethics training to the same extent as other local agency officials.

Changes to the Government Code

Specifically, AB 2158:

1) Adds the following to the definition of a “local agency official” for purposes of the ethics training requirement:

A member of the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school, whether or not that member receives any type of compensation, salary, or stipend or reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of official duties.

- 2) Requires each local agency official who, as of January 1, 2025, is a member of the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school, except for officials whose term of office ends before January 1, 2026, to receive training in ethics before January 1, 2026.
- 3) After the initial year of ethics training, requires each local agency official who is a member of the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school to receive the training at least once every two years.

AB 2158 training courses familiarize officials with general ethics principles and laws relating to conflicts of interest, transparency, fair processes, and prerequisites of office, among other issues. Upon completion of their training, officials receive a certificate of completion and are responsible for maintaining records confirming satisfaction of these requirements.

Takeaways

AB 2158 represents a significant step in promoting ethics and accountability in California's educational institutions. By bringing school board members into line with the existing "AB 1234 Training" requirement, the law ensures that all local agency officials receive ethics training every two years, regardless of compensation or reimbursement status.

Ethics training courses that satisfy both AB 1234 and AB 2158, cover a range of essential ethics principles and legal aspects, including conflicts of interest, transparency, fair processes, and prerequisites of office. The requirement for officials to maintain training records underscores the commitment to ethical conduct and accountability in the educational sector.

If you have any questions regarding AB 2158 and its implementation, or are interested in receiving ethics training that fulfills these new requirements, please contact the authors of this Client News Brief or an attorney at one of our [eight offices](#) located statewide. You can also subscribe to our [podcasts](#) follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) or download our [mobile app](#).

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