

ATLANTA ETHICS

IN ACTION



ETHICS DIVISION LAUNCHES NEW ETHICS TRAINING FOR ALL CITY EMPLOYEES!

Starting in January 2022, the Ethics Division launched a new online ethics training program for all City of Atlanta employees. Based on the City's revised Code of Conduct (Section 2-825 of the Atlanta Municipal Code), ethics training is now an annual requirement for all city employees.

The focus of the training program is to educate and inform employees of the city's ethical standards, the importance of transparency, how to report unethical behavior, and the responsibilities of each employee in supporting the City's efforts to maintain and improve its ethical culture.

The deadline for employees to complete their training was May 2, 2022.

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By May 5, 2022, we were pleased to report that the number of employees who completed or were in the process of completing their ethics training was 6,130 out of a total of 8,022. That represents a 76% completion rate of all employees. We found that the remaining 24% consisted mostly of the City's blue-collar workforce and discovered that these employees had unique training needs that we needed to address.

The primary challenge we saw surrounded the use of technology. At some city facilities, there was limited technology available for employees to access the Oracle site to complete the training. Additionally, we learned that, due to many of these locations being away from City Hall, there was a perception of disconnect and feeling “out of touch” with what is happening within the walls of City Hall.

The Ethics Division wanted to find a way to provide support for departments with a primary or large number of employees working in the field to complete their ethics training. A plan was developed to provide in-person training sessions at the main facility locations for the departments. The departments were able to sign up for ethics training that we made available over the course of three months, from July to September 2022.

The departments who participated in the sessions included the Atlanta Department of Transportation (ADOT), the Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Department of Watershed Management (DWM).



A total number of 338 field employees received their annual ethics training. A breakdown of the numbers is below:

- Department of Transportation: 68**
- Department of Public Works: 199**
- Department of Watershed Management: 71**

With the schedule in place, and additional employees completing the training online, the number of employees who completed their ethics training increased to 6,618 by September 22, 2022. That brought the completion rate to 85% for all city employees.

As part of our ongoing efforts to have all city employees complete their ethics training timely, we will continue to engage support from senior management within these departments.

LIFE AS A BOARD MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

Currently, I am the longest-standing board member on the city of Atlanta Governing Board of the Office of the Inspector General. It has been such a journey from when I was asked to serve on the board to the present day. At the time, I had been living in the city for approximately two and a half years and was asked to look at the City of Atlanta's list of citizen boards and pick a few that I would be interested to be part of. To be honest, the Ethics Board was not on the list, and after turning in my wish list it was heavily stressed that I consider the Ethics Board, which some might say I was "Voluntold!" Regardless of how I started the process, once I got the appointment letter it was both welcoming and exciting to know that I would be an active participant in my new home city.

During my first year or so, it was calm, not too many code violations and the meetings went by quickly. However, that was a short-lived experience. The first case that I participated in involved an employee receiving tickets to a sports game from a city vendor. For that case the board ruled in favor of the defendant, and it was a great eye-opener to hear and see all sides and to understand the interpretation and perception of the ethics code.

Since then, we have encountered some remarkably interesting and public cases.

Some of them were more contentious than others, such as the Invest Atlanta and James Beard cases.

As this journey continued, I was honored to be elected as the Chairwoman of the Board. I was duly elected in January 2020 just months before the pandemic and only a month before the new legislation and city charter were changed to include the Office of the Inspector General. For a fun fact, our last in-person meeting until recently was in February 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the board members and I spent most of that year conducting an executive search for the first City of Atlanta Inspector General. This task was not easy but rewarding.

Being a member of the Governing Board of the Office of the Inspector General has some down points, for example having people misjudge you randomly for a case you ruled over. But there are also some very great high points especially as the board continues to work on moving the city forward and ensuring integrity, accountability, and transparency.

I am honored to serve the City of Atlanta.

Chairwoman,
Nichola R. Hines



Ethics Challenge: Test Your Knowledge!!!

How To Play:

The first 20 people to email the correct answers to ethicstraining@atlantaga.gov by **November 7, 2022** will win **ETHICS SWAG!!!**

2.

A Fleet Services employee talks to his supervisor about transmission problems with his pick-up truck. The supervisor tells him to bring the truck to the city shop the next evening because her son works as an auto mechanic and can fix it free of charge.

What should the employee do?
Choose the best answer.

- (A) Politely decline the supervisor's offer.
- (B) Accept the offer but pay the fair market value for the repair.
- (C) Appreciate getting transmission work done free of charge.
- (D) Accept the offer

1.

An inspector went the 'extra mile' to ensure the timely inspection of a container of a hazardous chemical needed by a local deli. Later that week, she received a thank you note from the owner and a \$75 gift certificate to the deli.

What should she do?
Choose the best answer.

- (A) Since she went the 'extra mile' on this inspection, she should accept the gift.
- (B) Invite her co-workers from her department out for lunch and use the gift certificate to pay.
- (C) Return the gift certificate with a note thanking the owner for the certificate and explaining that you can't accept it.
- (D) Keep the certificate to buy refreshments for the upcoming office holiday party.

3.

A city vendor offers to pay travel expenses for three Watershed managers, which includes first class airfare, hotel, and meals, so the managers can have a firsthand view of the vendor's state-of-the-art equipment facility.

Can the managers accept the vendor's offer?

- (A) Yes, as long as they disclose the travel.
- (B) No, this is not travel that is allowed under the Ethics Code.
- (C) Yes, if the city pays for the registration fees.
- (D) No, unless the city pays the first class airfare.

4.

You are an administrative assistant for your office. A vendor comes into the office and gives you and another assistant a gym bag valued at \$20. The vendor's logo is printed on the side.

What do you do?

- (A) Accept the gym bag, but don't bring it to work.
- (B) Decline the gym bag because it doesn't match your gym clothes.
- (C) Accept the unsolicited promotional item.
- (D) Decline the gym bag because it is a gift from a vendor.



ETHICAL REMINDER

BAN ON TICKETS AND ACCESS TO SUITES

Section 2-816(a) of the Ethics Code prohibits city officials or employees from accepting a gift of free or reduced tickets to an entertainment or athletic event that is offered due to their position with the city, unless the official or employee is performing an official duty at the event. The “official duty exception is a narrow one limited to a specific duty at a specific event and is not intended to give an official or employee an on-going right of free entry.” The ban also includes free access to private suites at sporting or entertainment events.

Reporting Misconduct in the City of Atlanta

Observing and reporting employee misconduct while working remotely may not seem as obvious as it is while working onsite. After all, if people are not in the office, they should not be doing anything unethical, right? Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Ethical misconduct and fraud can happen even in a remote workplace, and the opportunity to do so, rationalizing why it happens, as well as the pressure to behave improperly, remain present.

If you notice anyone engaging in ethical misconduct or fraud, misusing a city position or city funds or resources, it is important that you call the **Integrity Hotline** at **1-800-884-0911**. The complaints are sent directly to the **Office of the Inspector General** and thoroughly reviewed by the **Ethics and Compliance Divisions**. If you are not comfortable providing your name, you can file an anonymous complaint and your call will be confidential. You can also visit www.atlantaga.ethicspoint.com to file a complaint online. The site is confidential and secure. We want to hear from you, and we take all complaints seriously.



INTEGRITY HOTLINE

Special Announcements

NEW STAFF MEMBER!

NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

- Joe Hines serves as the Administrative Assistant to the Program Manager for the Ethics Division. In his role with the Ethics Division, Mr. Hines composes educational and training documents that assist with programs and projects impacting the internal operations of the Ethics Division. Mr. Hines brings his experience in education to the work he does with the Ethics Division. We are very thrilled to have him as a part of the team!
- Join us in welcoming our newest Board member Cecily V.M. Welch! She is a licensed CPA in both Illinois and Georgia, and the owner of Welch Financial Advisors, specializing in tax preparation and financial planning for individuals with complex financial structures. Ms. Welch began her career as a national and international auditor and has provided accounting and financial expertise for over 25 years for both large and small CPA firms in the Atlanta metro area.
- We also welcome Rebecca F.M. Brubaker! She currently serves as Chief of Staff and Operations Officer for the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG), and is responsible for organization strategy, finance, operations, and board management. Ms. Brubaker has more than 30 years' experience working with organizations in Atlanta including the Atlanta Police Foundation and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.
- Last but not least we welcome Board member Terri Simmons. Ms. Simmons is an attorney with over twelve years teaching experience at the law school, graduate and undergraduate level. She currently serves as the Staff Attorney to the Honorable Asha F. Jackson of the DeKalb County Superior Court.

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Ethics in Action - The Ethics Division of the City of Atlanta
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