



[NJDOE News](#)

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:

**Tom Rosenthal
Richard Vespucci
Jon Zlock
609-292-1126**

For Release: November 6, 2002

State Board of Education Adopts [Changes to Ethics Regulations](#); New Rules will Expedite Review of Complaints and Clarify Burden of Proof

The State Board of Education today adopted amendments to the regulations that are designed to expedite complaints against school officials under the Code of Ethics for School Board Members. In addition, the amendments place the burden of proving that a violation of the Code of Ethics has occurred on the person filing the complaint. The changes bring the regulations in line with changes made by the State Legislature to the School Ethics Act in July 2001.

"Last year, the Legislature increased the powers of the New Jersey School Ethics Commission to enforce a Code of Ethics, which prohibits conduct that the School Ethics Act previously did not reach," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "The amendments to our regulations set forth a way to implement the law and resolve school ethics cases as expeditiously as possible."

"The School Ethics Commission plays an important role in promoting a higher standard of conduct for board members," said State Board of Education President Maud Dahme. "The amendments to the ethics code will guide the School Ethics Commission's handling of complaints and provide complainants with notice that they have the burden of proof in such complaints."

The School Ethics Commission is a nine-member body that reviews, investigates and renders decisions on complaints against school officials alleging violations of the School Ethics Act only. If the Commission finds a violation, it is authorized to recommend to the Commissioner of Education that the school official receive a reprimand, censure, suspension or removal from office. The Commission also issues advisory opinions to school officials seeking guidance on their conduct.

The office oversees the process for the filing of financial and personal disclosure statements by all school officials. In addition, it enforces the statutory requirement that all new school board members attend new board member orientation within the first year of their first term on the board.

By adding the Code of Ethics to the original School Ethics Act, the Legislature expanded the commission's review to other types of conduct, such as revealing information received in executive session meetings ([See attached Code of Ethics](#)).

The new regulations adopted today add a new complaint form for complaints alleging only a violation of the Code of Ethics. They also establish procedures to expedite the processing of complaints to allow the School Ethics Commission to decide whether a violation exists within the 90 days prescribed by the new law.

More information about the School Ethics Commission is available from the Department of Education's Web site. To review frequently asked questions, click on the following link:

http://www.state.nj.us/njded/genfo/overview/faq_ethics.htm