



Ethics Office Monthly Report

ETHICS CONFERENCE PANELIST

44th Annual COGEL Conference

The Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL) is the preeminent organization of government ethics professionals.

Ethics Officer Abel Salinas and Assistant Ethics Officer Peter von Haam attended the 44th Annual COGEL Conference in Montreal from December 4–7.

Salinas was a panelist in the session titled *Beyond Ethics: Offices Empowered to Focus on Integrity and Culture*. Ethics officials from the City of Philadelphia, LA County Metro, and County of San Diego were also on the panel.

Salinas presented how the Ethics Office applied an anonymous employee survey to gauge organizational culture.

Metropolitan's Board subsequently commissioned an independent climate assessment that the Ethics Officer supervised in 2021.

Attendees at the conference requested additional information about this survey process for use by their own agencies.

EDUCATION

The Ethics Office distributed and published summaries of the new rules on receipt of gifts from contractors. In addition, the Office will restart providing in-person ethics orientations to new employees. The practice

was suspended during COVID.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staff members attended best practices training sessions presented by the California Civil Rights Department and Association of Workplace Investigators.

COMPLIANCE

State Gift Limit Update: The state's annual gift limit applicable is increasing from \$520 to \$590 for calendar years 2023 and 2024.

Form 700: Assisted employees with Assuming Office and Leaving Office Form 700 filings, including troubleshooting the electronic filing system and notifications of deadlines. Monitored the status of past due Assuming Office and Leaving Office Form 700 filings; sent notices to two current employees and two former employees and obtained compliance from two current employees.

ADVICE

Addressed nine advice matters involving: conflicts of interest, financial disclosure, gifts, and other ethics-related topics.

INVESTIGATIONS

Responded to complaints alleging:

- 1) Hostile work environment in retaliation for past EEO and ethics complaints;
- 2) Misuse of official authority for

personal gain;

- 3) Hostile work environment in retaliation for reporting potential workplace policy violations;
- 4) Prohibited supervision and special treatment of a relative;
- 5) Retaliation for reporting a concern to an external entity.

ADVICE AND INVESTIGATIVE DATA

Advice Matters	9
Compliance Assistance	17
Complaints Received	5
Investigations Opened	2
Pending Investigations	4

Referred EEO-related complaints to the EEO Office.

- 1) Retaliation for reporting workplace policy violations;
- 2) Improper use of Metropolitan's seal.

