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Tips and Complaints

The New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics investigates potential violations of the state's ethics laws (Public Officers Law §§73, 73-a, and 74), the "Little Hatch Act" (Civil Service Law §107), and the Lobbying Act (Legislative Law article 1-a) as they apply to state legislators, candidates for the Legislature and legislative employees, as well as the four statewide elected officials, candidates for those offices, executive branch state employees, certain political party chairs, and lobbyists and their clients.

Investigations may be commenced by:

- The Commission's own initiative, which may occur through information or allegations obtained by the Commission, tips from the public, media coverage, or any other method in which information indicating a potential violation may be obtained.
- A sworn complaint, which may be filed in written form by any person and must allege facts constituting a violation of the laws under the Commission's jurisdiction, and must be sworn to under oath before an attesting officer (i.e., a notary public).
- A formal referral from a government entity containing information or allegations that may constitute a violation of the laws under the Commission's jurisdiction.



Before filing a tip or complaint with the Joint Commission on Public Ethics, please be aware the Commission's jurisdiction is limited as described above. If your matter does not include potential violations of laws under the Commission's jurisdiction, you may consider contacting one of the agencies listed at the bottom of this page.

What happens after a complaint is filed?

Once the Commission has received a written sworn complaint that has been determined to conform to the Commission's complaint procedures and allege a violation of law under the Commission's jurisdiction, pursuant to Executive Law §94, the subject of a complaint (Respondent) will be notified that a complaint alleging certain violations has been received by the Commission and will be afforded 15 days to respond to the complaint. This letter does not serve to commence a full investigation. The statute provides that the Commission must vote before a full investigation of the matter can be commenced to determine whether a substantial basis exists to conclude that a violation of law has occurred. As a matter of law, such Commission proceedings are confidential and thus, complainants may not be notified of any Commission action regarding their complaint unless and until there is final action that can be publicly disclosed pursuant to Executive Law §94.

Does the Joint Commission on Public Ethics offer legal advice?

The Commission does issue advisory opinions interpreting state ethics laws, the Little Hatch Act and the Lobbying Act upon written request by any person subject to the Commission's jurisdiction. Please see our Advisory Opinions page. However, the Commission does not offer legal advice or representation for individuals. If you believe you may have an individual legal claim you may wish to consult with a private attorney.

Who do I contact for other types of complaints?

Local crime - [State](#) or local police, or the local [District Attorney](#)

Ethics complaints against New York City officers, employees and officials - [NYC Department of Investigations](#)

Ethics complaints against county or local government officers, employees and officials - Contact the county or local government ethics board or municipal attorney regarding enforcement of local ethics laws.

Matters regarding election fraud or campaign finance - [New York State Board of Elections](#)

Matters regarding prison conditions - [Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Inspector General](#)

Complaints related to matters other than ethics involving executive branch state officers and employees - [New York State Inspector General](#)

Complaints regarding Judges - [New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct](#)

Complaints regarding attorneys - [Attorney Grievance Committees](#)

Matters regarding retirement benefits - [Office of the New York State Comptroller](#)

Matters regarding tax discrepancies - [Department of Taxation and Finance](#)

Matters regarding Child Support payments - [Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Division of Child Support Enforcement](#)

Matters regarding state electric, gas, steam, telecommunications, and water utilities - [New York State Public Service Commission](#)

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