

ETHICS AT A GLANCE

SUNY and CUNY - Can I accept free textbooks from publishers?



Specific gift rules apply to CUNY
and SUNY educators



Overview

Section 73(5) of the Public Officers Law prohibits State employees from accepting any gift having more than a nominal value, regardless of the form of that gift, when one can reasonably infer that the gift was offered in **an attempt to influence**— or would have that effect on—someone in the performance of their official duties.

A complimentary copy of a textbook provided to a state educator does not constitute a prohibited gift, so long as the following conditions are met:

- The textbook's subject matter is **directly related** to the recipient's duties or field of study;
- The textbook is used solely in connection with the recipient's official duties;
- The recipient **does not resell or trade the textbook** for money or anything else of value;
- The recipient does not **request or receive multiple copies** of the same textbook; and
- The recipient does not ask a publisher for copies of textbooks for **personal interests, or for the personal or professional interest of others.**

A complimentary textbook that does not meet these conditions could be a prohibited gift. If in doubt, please contact your agency's Ethics Officer or COELIG for guidance.

[More information on gift restrictions for state officers and employees is available on COELIG's website.](#)

Questions?

Contact us by calling 1-800-87-ETHICS (3-8442) or by e-mail at GUIDANCE@ETHICS.NY.GOV.

All guidance communications with COELIG are confidential.

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