65.003 Codes of ethics for city, county, charter county, urban-county government, and consolidated local government officials and employees -- Codes of ethics for boards, officers, and employees of special purpose governmental entities -- Interlocal agreements -- Delegation of council's subpoena power to investigate code of ethics violations -- Group responsible for enforcement in consolidated local government -- Procurement of attorney services.

(1) (a) The governing body of each city, county, urban-county, consolidated local government, and charter county, shall adopt, by ordinance, a code of ethics which shall apply to all elected officials of the city, county, urban-county, consolidated local government, or charter county, and to appointed officials and employees of the city, county, urban-county, consolidated local government, or charter county government, or agencies created jointly, as specified in the code of ethics. The elected officials of a city, county, or consolidated local government to which a code of ethics shall apply include the mayor, county judge/executive, members of the governing body, county clerk, county attorney, sheriff, jailer, coroner, surveyor, and constable but do not include members of any school board. Agencies created jointly may include planning or administrative commissions or boards. Candidates for the local government elective offices specified in this subsection shall comply with the annual financial disclosure statement filing requirements contained in the code of ethics.

(b) The boards, officers, and employees of special purpose governmental entities shall be subject to a code of ethics as provided in KRS 65A.070. As used in this section, special purpose governmental entity has the same meaning as in KRS 65A.010.

(2) Any city, county, or consolidated local government may enter into a memorandum of agreement or an interlocal agreement with one (1) or more other cities, counties, or consolidated local governments for joint adoption of a code of ethics which shall apply to all elected officials of the cities, counties, or consolidated local governments, and to appointed officials and employees as specified by each of the cities, counties, or consolidated local governments which enters into the agreement. Interlocal agreements shall be executed pursuant to the Interlocal Cooperation Act in KRS 65.210 to 65.300. The interlocal agreement or memorandum of agreement may provide for but shall not be limited to:

(a) The provision of administrative services relating to the implementation of a code of ethics;

(b) The creation of a regional ethics board which serves independently to provide advice to member governments and their officials and provides for the enforcement of locally adopted codes of ethics; and

(c) Contracting by a memorandum of agreement with an area development district for the provision of administrative services relating to the implementation of a code of ethics.

Candidates for the city, county, or consolidated local government elective offices specified in this subsection shall comply with the annual financial disclosure statement filing requirements contained in the code of ethics.

(3) Each code of ethics adopted as provided by subsection (1) or (2) of this section, or amended as provided by subsection (4) of this section, shall include but not be limited to provisions which set forth:

(a) Standards of conduct for elected and appointed officials and employees;

(b) Requirements for creation of financial disclosure statements, which shall be filed annually by all candidates for the city, county, or consolidated local government elective offices specified in subsection (1) of this section, elected officials of each city, county, or consolidated local government, and other officials or employees of the city, county, or consolidated local government, as specified in the code of ethics, and which shall be filed with the person or group responsible for enforcement of the code of ethics;

(c) A policy on the employment of members of the families of officials or employees of the city, county, or consolidated local government, as specified in the code of ethics; and

(d) The designation of a person or group who shall be responsible for enforcement of the code of ethics, including maintenance of financial disclosure statements, all of which shall be available for public inspection, receipt of complaints alleging possible violations of the code of ethics, issuance of opinions in response to inquiries relating to the code of ethics, investigation of possible violations of the code of ethics, and imposition of penalties provided in the code of ethics.

(4) The code of ethics ordinance adopted by a city, county, or consolidated local government may be amended but shall not be repealed.

(5) (a) Within twenty-one (21) days of the adoption of the code of ethics required by this section, each city, county, or consolidated local government shall deliver a copy of the ordinance by which the code was adopted and proof of publication in accordance with KRS Chapter 424 to the Department for Local Government. The Department for Local Government shall maintain the ordinances as public records and shall maintain a list of city, county, or consolidated local governments which have adopted a code of ethics and a list of those which have not adopted a code of ethics.

(b) Within twenty-one (21) days of the amendment of a code of ethics required by this section, each city, county, or consolidated local government shall:

1. Deliver a copy of the ordinance by which the code was amended and proof of publication in accordance with KRS Chapter 424 to the Department for Local Government, which shall maintain the amendment with the ordinance by which the code was adopted; and

2. Deliver a copy of the ordinance by which the code was amended to the governing body of each special purpose governmental entity that follows that establishing entity's code of ethics pursuant to KRS 65A.070.

(c) For ordinances adopting or amending a code of ethics under this section, cities of the first class and consolidated local governments shall comply with the publication requirements of KRS 83A.060(9), notwithstanding the exception

contained in that statute.

(6) If a city, county, or consolidated local government fails to comply with the requirements of this section, the Department for Local Government shall notify all state agencies, including area development districts, which deliver services or payments of money from the Commonwealth to the city, county, or consolidated local government. Those agencies shall suspend delivery of all services or payments to the city, county, or consolidated local government which fails to comply with the requirements of this section. The Department for Local Government shall immediately notify those same agencies when the city, county, or consolidated local government is in compliance with the requirements of this section, and those agencies shall reinstate the delivery of services or payments to the city, county, or consolidated local government. This subsection shall not be interpreted or construed to permit the state to withhold any nondiscretionary payments that are due to the city, county, or consolidated local government for the provision of services by the city, county, or consolidated local government to the state or any of its agencies, including for the use of utility services.

(7) Notwithstanding KRS 67C.103(14)(e), a simple majority of the legislative council of a consolidated local government may delegate its authority to issue administrative subpoenas for the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of documents relevant to possible violations of the code of ethics to the person or a majority of the group responsible for enforcement of a code of ethics. Subpoenas shall be served in the same manner as subpoenas for witnesses in civil cases. Compliance with the subpoenas shall be enforceable by the Circuit Court. Any failure to obey an order of the court may be punished by the court as contempt thereof.

(8) (a) In a consolidated local government, the group responsible for the enforcement of the code of ethics shall consist of seven (7) members chosen as follows:

1. Three (3) members appointed by the mayor of the consolidated local government; and
2. Four (4) members appointed by the legislative council of the consolidated local government with two (2) being appointed by each of the largest two (2) political caucuses of the legislative council.

(b) No more than three (3) members of the group responsible for the enforcement of the code of ethics shall be members of the same political party. A member of the group responsible for the enforcement of the code of ethics shall have been a member of the political party he or she is registered with for the purposes of balance set out in this section for at least four (4) years immediately prior to selection. The terms of the members shall be for four (4) years.

(c) If the group responsible for the enforcement of the code of ethics wishes to procure the services of an attorney, it shall either use attorneys employed by the county attorney's office of the county in which the consolidated local government is contained, or it shall engage the county attorney to procure attorneys not employed by the county attorney's office. The county attorney shall follow the provisions of KRS 424.260 or, if the local model procurement

code is in effect for the consolidated local government, the provisions of KRS 45A.380.

Effective: July 15, 2026

History: Amended 2026 Ky. Acts ch. 165, sec. 1, effective July 15, 2026. -- Amended 2025 Ky. Acts ch. 153, sec. 2, effective June 27, 2025. -- Amended 2017 Ky. Acts ch. 150, sec. 7, effective June 29, 2017. -- Amended 2015 Ky. Acts ch. 17, sec. 4, effective June 24, 2015. -- Amended 2013 Ky. Acts ch. 40, sec. 10, effective March 21, 2013. -- Amended 2010 Ky. Acts ch. 117, sec. 46, effective July 15, 2010. -- Amended 2007 Ky. Acts ch. 47, sec. 40, effective June 26, 2007. -- Amended 2002 Ky. Acts ch. 291, sec. 1, effective July 15, 2002; and ch. 346, sec. 22, effective July 15, 2002. -- Amended 1998 Ky. Acts ch. 69, sec. 29, effective July 15, 1998. -- Amended 1996 Ky. Acts ch. 214, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1996. -- Created 1994 Ky. Acts ch. 16, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1994.

Legislative Research Commission Note (7/15/2026). 2026 Ky. Acts ch. 165, sec. 8, provides: "The terms of the ethics commission members currently serving in a consolidated local government shall end on December 31, 2026. In making new appointments as set forth in subsection (8) of [KRS 65.003], the mayor shall appoint one member for a four year term, and two members for a two year term, and the two largest political caucuses shall each appoint one member for a four year term and one member for a two year term."

Legislative Research Commission Note (3/21/2013). Under the authority of KRS 7.136, the Reviser of Statutes has corrected a manifest clerical or technical error in this statute. In subsection (1)(b), the word "have" has been changed to read "has."