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**OLR BACKGROUNDER: STATE AND MUNICIPAL LAWS ON NEPOTISM
IN HIRING**

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This report discusses state and municipal laws regarding nepotism in hiring practices.

STATE ETHICS LAW

The Connecticut State Code of Ethics prescribes a standard of conduct for state officials and employees designed to prevent them from using their public positions and authority for personal gain. Although the code does not explicitly prohibit nepotism, it does ban state officials and employees from using their positions to obtain financial gain for themselves, their spouses, children, children's spouses, parents, brothers or sisters, or business with which they are associated (CGS § [1-84\(c\)](#)).

MUNICIPAL ETHICS LAWS

No single code of ethics applies to all Connecticut municipalities. By law, each municipality can adopt its own ethics code and establish a board or agency to investigate allegations of unethical conduct (CGS §§ [7-148\(c\)\(10\)\(B\)](#) and [7-148h](#)). Most, but not all, municipalities have

exercised this authority by either establishing their own codes or adopting the model municipal ethics code created by the State Ethics Commission in 1995. Like the state code, the model code does not explicitly ban nepotism, but does prohibit municipal officials and employees from using their positions to financially benefit their immediate family members. For further information on municipal ethics codes see OLR Reports [2003-R-0947](#) and [2008-R-0353](#).

A review of several municipalities' ordinances and ethics codes indicates that they follow the pattern set by the state and model codes, i.e. nepotism is not explicitly banned but could fall under the umbrella of an otherwise proscribed behavior. For example, Naugatuck, Southington, and Waterbury ban officials and employees from granting anyone special treatment that would not otherwise be available to all other citizens (Ordinances of the Borough of Naugatuck § 2-114(c); Code of Ordinances, Town of Southington § 2-206(c); Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for the City of Waterbury § 40.30). Section 2-206(a) of the Southington ordinances also prohibits town officials and their immediate family members from accepting any gift of financial interest which would not have otherwise been offered. The Municipal Code of Hartford defines a conflict of interest as any act that advances a city official's or employee's personal and private financial interests over the interests of the general public (§ 2-900(c)(2)).

Civil Service Exams

In addition to codes of ethics, hiring practices for the state and larger municipalities typically include some form of examination to help ensure that only qualified individuals are considered for employment. According to the Department of Administrative Services, most jobs in Connecticut state service require an examination to measure qualifications. Those that pass the exam have their names placed on a candidate list which is then referred to the hiring agencies as vacancies occur. Once the list of eligible candidates has been given to an agency, the agency decides who to hire from among the candidates and often uses personal interviews to make the decision. Larger municipalities, such as Hartford and Waterbury, often use a similar procedure and sometimes limit potential hires to only the top few on an eligible candidate list.

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