



CRITICAL ISSUES BULLETIN

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

7 ELK STREET ♦ ALBANY, NY 12207- 1002

518/449-1063 ♦ FAX 518/426-2229

Ensuring Sound Financial Management BOARD MEMBER TRAINING

Frequently Asked Questions

A.6082-B/S.5050 - the Comptroller's five-point plan for school fiscal accountability was signed into law today. One of the new mandates is to require school board members to receive training in financial matters. This applies to all board members elected or appointed for terms beginning after July 1, 2005. The following FAQ outlines the specifics of the law. Additional questions may be directed to NYSCOSS.

Question: To whom does the law apply?

Answer: The new law, Education Law §2102-a, applies to every school district *and* BOCES board member elected or appointed to a term beginning on or after July 1, 2005. Therefore, any person elected or appointed for the 2005-06 school year is required to receive training. However, Board members who serve on boards but were not reelected or appointed this year, are not required to receive training until after they are reelected for another term.

Q: What does the new law require?

A: Education Law §2102-a mandates a minimum of six hours of training on the financial oversight, accountability and fiduciary responsibilities of school board members. Board members are only required to attend training *once*. They are not required to receive training after each reelection.

Q: Is anyone exempt from the training requirement?

A: YES. Members of BOCES boards or central high school boards will not be required to repeat training **IF** they already completed it as a member of a component school district board. However, the fact that a board member is, for example, a superintendent, business official or school attorney in another school district, does not exempt him/her from the training requirement. In addition, the New York City Chancellor may certify annually, that the district has a training program that meets or exceeds the requirements of the new law.

Q: When must training be completed?

A: Training must be completed within the first year of the newly elected board member's term.

Q: How is compliance demonstrated?

A: School board members, who complete training, must file a certificate of completion with the District Clerk.

Q: What if the training is not completed in the first year, or at all?

A: The law does not provide a formal sanction. However, it is expected that all board members will comply with the training requirement. If they don't, this fact could play out in the voting booth.

Q: What must training include?

A: **Curriculum** must be approved by the Commissioner. Courses should address financial oversight, accountability and fiduciary responsibilities of school board members. Financial training may be offered as part of a general course to educate board members on their powers and duties (although the new law does not formally require a full course of study.)

Q: Who is eligible to provide training?

A: The Commissioner must approve interested providers. In doing so, the Commissioner will consider a provider's understanding of the educational environment, the roles of board members, and the potential provider's experience in delivering this type of training. It is expected that the New York State School Boards' Association will be selected as a provider. Some BOCES have also expressed interest. Approval must only be received once not annually.

Q: Who pays for the training?

A: Each district is expected to be responsible for the cost of the training.

For more information, contact:

Robert Lowry, Deputy Director (bblowry@nyscoss.org)

Douglas Gerhardt, Assistant Director & Legislative Counsel (douglas@nyscoss.org)

(518) 449-1063