

Government Oversight Structure

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Issue

Provide an overview of Connecticut's government oversight structure, specifically as it relates to audits, investigations, enforcement, ethics, and accountability. Identify the state entities responsible for each function and explain their jurisdiction and authority.

Summary

Connecticut has a variety of oversight mechanisms, including state agencies, councils, boards, and legislative committees. These include oversight over state administrative functions, accounting and finance, ethics, government whistleblowers, fraud, and judicial and police misconduct, among other things. Below are descriptions of Connecticut's various oversight structures and authorities. Agencies' internal oversight controls and processes are not included, as this report focuses on a secondary level of oversight beyond an agency's internal processes.

Attorney General's Office

Among its many roles, the Government Fraud Section of the [Attorney General's Office](#) seeks to protect tax dollars from fraud, waste, abuse, and corruption. The section also investigates cases under the Connecticut False Claims Act (which prohibits filing false or fraudulent claims for government payment or approval) and whistleblower complaints against state government departments.

Auditors of Public Accounts

The [Auditors of Public Accounts](#) (APA) is an independent watchdog of all state and quasi-public agencies. The APA provides opinions and recommendations to the legislature on the operations of

state government and its effectiveness in safeguarding resources. The APA determines whether agencies are following laws, regulations, policies and best practices through audits and program reviews. Audits occur approximately every two years for state and quasi-public agencies and annually for the state comptroller and treasurer. The APA also conducts an annual federal single audit in accordance with federal requirements to receive federal financial assistance.

Freedom of Information Commission

The [Freedom of Information Commission](#) (FOIC) administers and enforces the provisions of the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and ensures citizen access to the records and meetings of public agencies in Connecticut. FOIC conducts hearings based on FOIA complaints and may find public agencies in violation of FOIA. FOIC can order disclosure of public records or impose other appropriate relief.

Judicial Review Council

The [Judicial Review Council](#) (part of the Office of Governmental Accountability (OGA)) investigates and acts on allegations of misconduct, disability, or substance abuse of state judges, family support magistrates, and workers' compensation commissioners and has the authority to discipline them.

Legislative Committees

Legislative committees may hold hearings and look into the actions of agencies and other state government entities that are within their jurisdiction. Two committees in particular have broader oversight roles.

Government Oversight Committee

The [Government Oversight Committee](#) has cognizance related to the administrative functions of the OGA, FOIC, Office of State Ethics (OSE), Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board (CEAB), State Elections Enforcement Commission, APA, and state real property conveyances.

Legislative Regulation Review Committee

The [Legislative Regulation Review Committee](#) (LRRC) approves regulations of state agencies and other state entities before they can be implemented. The LRRC states that its purpose is to ensure that state agencies issue required regulations promptly and deter agency attempts to circumvent legislative intent or issue regulations on topics the General Assembly has refused to enact into law. The LRRC is a bipartisan committee made up of 14 members (six senators and eight representatives, divided equally by party).

Office of the Child Advocate

The [Office of the Child Advocate](#) (OCA) seeks to ensure that publicly funded agencies that serve children are accountable to the citizens and families of Connecticut. Among its duties, OCA evaluates state agencies who provide services to children, reviews and investigates complaints regarding services provided to children, reviews child fatalities, and oversees the review of facilities or institutions where juveniles are placed by any government entity.

For additional information on oversight of services for children, see [Statutory Charges of Children's Health Oversight Boards](#).

Office of Correction Ombudsman

The [Office of Correction Ombudsman](#) is an independent office that investigates complaints from incarcerated individuals, ensures operational transparency within the Department of Correction (DOC), monitors conditions in DOC facilities, and provides recommendations to the governor, legislature, and DOC.

Office of the Inspector General

The [Office of the Inspector General](#) (OIG) (part of the Department of Criminal Justice) (1) determines whether law enforcement use of deadly force was justifiable, (2) investigates when a person dies in the physical custody of law enforcement and determines whether physical force was used and justifiable, and (3) investigates law enforcement's failure to timely notify the next of kin of a deceased person. The OIG prosecutes cases where the inspector general determines use of force was not justified or there was a failure to intervene.

Office of Policy and Management

The [Office of Policy and Management](#) (OPM) functions as the governor's staff agency and provides information and analysis used for public policy. Among many other duties, OPM conducts financial oversight and works with agencies to ensure appropriate spending.

Municipal Accountability Review Board

The [Municipal Accountability Review Board](#) (MARB) provides technical, financial, and other assistance and oversight to municipalities experiencing fiscal distress. It is composed of state officials and members with business, labor, and municipal government expertise appointed by the governor or legislative leaders. Generally, and depending on a municipality's level of fiscal distress, MARB may (1) require monthly status reports and monitor compliance with financial plans and

budgets; (2) review and comment on budgets and approve revenue assumptions; (3) review and comment on, or approve, debt obligations; (4) recommend efficiency measures and hire consultants or a financial manager; and (5) set an interim budget.

Municipal Finance Advisory Commission

The [Municipal Finance Advisory Commission](#) (MFAC) oversees designated municipalities which (1) must work with MFAC to improve their financial condition, (2) must prepare a five-year financial plan for MFAC's approval, and (3) can access certain funding tools to issue bonds.

Office of State Ethics

The [Office of State Ethics](#) (OSE) seeks to promote ethical standards and accountability in state government by providing education and legal advice, ensuring disclosure, and enforcing the Codes of Ethics. OSE has broad authority over statewide elected officials, members of the General Assembly, officials and employees in all three branches of state government (except judges), registered lobbyists, and state contractors.

Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board

The [Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board](#) (CEAB) administers the Codes of Ethics (for public officials and lobbyists), adjudicates enforcement matters, makes findings of violations, and issues advisory opinions interpreting the Codes as applied to specific circumstances. CEAB may order filing of documents required by the Codes of Ethics, impose penalties, and issue cease and desist orders.

Office of the State Comptroller

The [Office of the State Comptroller](#) provides accounting and financial services; administers employee and retiree benefits; develops accounting policy and exercises accounting oversight; and prepares financial reports for state, federal, and municipal governments and the public.

Police Officer Standards and Training Council

The [Police Officer Standards and Training Council](#) (part of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection), among other things, (1) develops, adopts, and revises a comprehensive standards program including the accreditation, and decertification, of local law enforcement units and (2) certifies law enforcement officers and may cancel, revoke, or refuse to renew their certification.

State Contracting Standards Board

The [State Contracting Standards Board](#) (part of OGA) generally oversees state procurement and contracting ethics and fairness. It monitors state agency contract compliance, provides guidance and training to state agencies, reviews contested contractor solicitations and disqualifications, reviews requests to privatize state services, and supports improvements to state contracting policies and practices.

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