

To cope with severe criticism from society regarding a series of scandals caused mainly by executive officials, the Ethics Act was established in Aug. 1999 and fully enforced in Apr. 2000 with the aim of ensuring people's trust in public service by preventing acts that cause public suspicion or distrust towards the fairness in the execution of duties.

In addition to general ethics principles concerning the duties that should be observed by officials, the Ethics Act stipulates the establishment of a Cabinet Order (the Ethics Code) specifying the necessary matters to maintain ethics in consideration of general ethical principles, various reporting systems (rules for reporting) to secure transparency in dealings between officials and business operators, the establishment of The National Public Service Ethics Board (hereinafter referred to as the "Ethics Board") which is an organization in charge of matters concerning the maintenance of ethics pertaining to the duties of officials, and establishment of ethics supervisory officers (Administrative Vice-Ministers of the Cabinet Office and each ministry, etc.) to administrative institutions.

Furthermore, along with the general standards of ethical conduct in consideration of the general ethics principles of the Ethics Act, the Ethics Code clearly sets the scope of the people who have interests in the duties of officials, including those seeking permission and authorization and those who obtain subsidies as interested parties, and stipulates "Code of Conduct" of prohibitions and restrictions on conduct, such as receiving gifts and accepting entertainment from interested parties that might cause public suspicion or distrust.

The Ethics Board was established within the NPA under the National Public Service Act and the Ethics Act. The Ethics Board is composed of a president and four board members, and under the purpose of the Ethics Act, which is to ensure citizen's trust in the public service, takes charge of business concerning the maintenance of ethics pertaining to the duties of officials, including the submission of opinions concerning the establishment, revision or abolition of the Ethics Code, inspection of various reports, implementation of investigation and disciplinary procedures in cases of suspected violation of the Ethics Act and the Ethics Code, and approval of disciplinary actions. Specifically, the Ethics Board ensures the proper operation of the Ethics Act and the Ethics Code. In addition, the board implements various measures to maintain ethics pertaining to the duties of officials highlighting the three main goals, i.e. "Cultivation of Employees' Ethics Awareness", "Creation of an Ethical Organization Environment" and "Strict and Expeditious Actions towards Violations of the Ethics Act." The Ethics Board has a secretariat to carry out its administrative affairs. The operations of the Ethics Board require its resolution. In FY2018, the Ethics Board held 24 meetings, and it has held a total of 481 meetings since its foundation.

Based on the Ethics Act, the Ethics Supervisory Officers are posted at each ministry and each agency engaged in administrative execution and are responsible for maintaining ethics pertaining to the duties of personnel in their organizations together with the heads of ministries and agencies, in cooperation with the Ethics Board.

Chapter 1. Cultivation of Employees' Ethics Awareness and Creation of Ethical Organization Climate

1. Cultivation of Employees' Ethics Awareness

It is essential to raise employees' awareness through training on a regular and continuous basis in order to cultivate their ethics awareness. Therefore, the Ethics Board encourages executive officials and personnel in charge of ethics administration of the Cabinet Office and each ministry to raise awareness of the employees in their organization. In addition, the Ethics Board supports planning and implementation of training/educational activities carried out by the Cabinet Office and each ministry and implements cross-ministerial training and educational activities. The Ethics Board implemented the following measures in FY2018.

- (1) Understanding of Current Conditions and Promotion of Measures by the Cabinet Office and Each Ministry
- (2) Support for Training Planned and Implemented by the Cabinet Office and Each Ministry
- (3) Implementation of Cross-ministerial Training and Educational Activities
 - i) Awareness-raising Activities in National Public Employees' Ethics Week
 - ii) Holding Public Service Ethics Seminars

2. Creation of Ethical Organization Climate

◎ Establishment of the Consultation and the Reporting System

Currently, the existing consultation and reporting system for public service ethics include the "Public Service Ethics Hotline" established within the Ethics Board and the hotline developed in the Cabinet Office and each ministry. The latter is made up of the hotline that the Cabinet Office and each ministry established within their organizations (for internal reporting) and the one established outside their organization, for instance, by utilizing law firms (for external reporting). The hotline for internal reporting has been provided in the bureau or department in charge of personnel management of all the ministries, but the hotline for external reporting is not yet complete in some ministries. The Secretariat of the Ethics Board provided the ministries that have not established the hotline for external reporting yet with explanation on the significance of the hotline and advice for establishing the system and requested individual ministries to develop it. As a result, two ministries launched the hotline for external reporting in FY2018, and the ministries with established systems totaled 45 among 48 ministries/agencies that have ethics supervisory officers.

3. Public Relations Activity and Opinion Hearing Concerning Public Service Ethics

It is a matter of course that employees themselves should straighten up on their own in relation to public service ethics. But raising awareness of business operators who work with employees facilitates operational management both of employees and business operators. Therefore, the Ethics Board has been conducting public relations activities targeting business operators.