

SECTION 6.0: ETHICS OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

- A. The purpose of this Section is to provide rules of ethical conduct for all employees so they may carry out their duties in a manner which is compatible with the best interests of the citizens and government of Hamilton County.

Proper operation of Hamilton County requires that:

1. Actions of public employees be fair and impartial;
2. Government decisions and practices adhere to the policies and procedures outlined herein;
3. Public office not be used for personal gain; and
4. The public have confidence in the integrity of its government.

- B. Ethics of Public Employment set the following goals:

1. To guide employees in protecting and preserving the public trust;
2. To ensure impartiality of services and to avoid disparate treatment of any citizen;
3. To avoid real or apparent conflicts between public duties and private concerns; and
4. To promote government integrity.

C. HAMILTON COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION

The County Administrator shall appoint five members to serve as the Hamilton County Ethics Commission (HCEC). One member shall be designated as chair, another as vice-chair. Those appointed shall each serve until replaced by the County Administrator. The HCEC shall act as an advisory body, relative to the County's Code of Ethics, to assist appointing authorities with interpretations of the Code. The HCEC shall monitor the Code of Ethics and recommend changes as the need arises. The HCEC shall establish its own operating procedures and meet as necessary to reply to inquiries and requests for advisory opinions. Any employee may seek an advisory opinion from the Hamilton County Ethics Commission. All opinions, decisions or recommendations of the Ethics Commission shall be reported to the County Administrator or his designee.

Three members shall constitute a quorum of the Hamilton County Ethics Commission. Any member of the Hamilton County Ethics Commission who has other than a neutral interest in any matter before said Commission shall be disqualified from any discussion or disposition of said matter.

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D. TOP MANAGEMENT

Top Management employees (as defined at Section 3.6 of this manual) are restricted from engaging in partisan political activities concerning the office of the Board of County Commissioners. Specifically, Top Management may not participate in the campaign or election of any candidate for, or incumbent on the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners. Top Management must refrain from financial participation, donation of time or services to campaigns, attendance at fund raising functions, wearing campaign buttons, distributing campaign literature, affixing signs or stickers to personal, private, or public property, or making public endorsements for any candidate for election to the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners. This does not prohibit exercising the right to vote or from participating in other partisan political activities which do not impair performance as a professional administrator or otherwise violate restrictions on political activity in Ohio Revised Code Section 124.57. Department Heads shall ensure that every applicant or candidate for any top management position is aware of this provision and given a copy of this policy.

E. ETHICAL CONDUCT

Employees must adhere to the following conduct:

1. All employees are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with A and B above.
2. Employees shall not use their County positions either directly or indirectly, for personal gain, (e.g., engaging in any business or transaction, having a financial, sexual, personal, exploitative, or other interest, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of their duties).
3. Employees shall not, without proper legal authorization, disclose confidential information or documentation that is protected by law from public disclosure that concerns the property or affairs of the County, to which they have access through their employment with the County; nor shall they use such information to advance the financial or other private interests of themselves or others.
4. Employees shall not accept any gratuity (other than occasional plaques or other symbols of appreciation or honor), whether in the form of service, loan, gift, favor, honorarium, or item, directly or indirectly, in business dealings with the County; nor shall they accept anything of value or the promise or offer of anything of value that is of such a character as to manifest a substantial and improper influence upon said employees in the discharge of their duties. Employees who are offered such gratuity by any individual, firm, association, group, partnership, or corporation seeking County employment or contract(s) must inform their supervisor of the gratuitous offer.

5. Employees shall not grant any consideration, treatment, advantage, favor, service or item in the discharge of their duties beyond that which it is the general practice to grant or make available to all citizens.
6. Employees shall not represent private interests in any action or proceedings against the County in any matter in which the County is a party.
7. Employees shall not engage in or accept private employment or render services for private interests when such employment or service is incompatible with the proper discharge of their official County duties or would tend to impair their independent judgment or action in the performance of their official County duties.
8. Employees shall not use their position to unduly influence the County business concerns of a relative, friend, neighbor, or acquaintance; or to unduly influence a coworker who has responsibility for those concerns. Employees who experience such influence shall notify their supervisor immediately.
9. Employees who apply for and/or receive any County services or otherwise involved with any County agency shall not receive special consideration or treatment.
10. Employees shall not have an unlawful interest in a public contract. Nor shall employees directly or indirectly represent that they have any ability to influence the outcome of any County bid, proposal, contract or the administration or application of any policy by any County employee.
11. Employees who retire from County employment under any retirement system shall not be rehired by the County in any employment status unless specifically authorized by the Board of County Commissioners. (Please refer to Section 5.6 Paragraph P. for additional information pertaining to re-employment of retirees.)
12. The hiring of employees into the same work unit of immediate family members is prohibited. Supervisors or managers shall not hire or employ any member of their immediate family to work under their direct supervision. Employees shall not use their positions to influence hiring or altering the employment status of a family member.
13. Employees who serve on any committees, commissions, boards, or hold elected office, or serve in any capacity with any other organized entity, whether public or private, shall excuse themselves from any discussions, abstain from voting, or otherwise participating in any matter related to County programs, operations, or business concerns. Service on any committees, commissions, boards, elected office or with other organized

entities, whether public or private, shall not conflict with the performance of official County duties.

14. Employees shall not abuse, neglect, waste, or misappropriate County property. All employees are responsible for the proper care of any tools, materials, equipment or vehicles assigned for the performance of their jobs. No tools, equipment or materials shall be taken from the work site for any purpose unless specifically authorized by the employees' supervisors. No County tools, equipment, materials or vehicles shall be used for any purpose other than authorized work-related activities.
15. All employees must provide service to the County at all times while in attendance at work in a paid status. All employees shall give undivided attention to the duties of their jobs during working hours.
16. Employees shall request and take only the amount of the leave and reimbursement which they are due and entitled pursuant to the policies contained in this Manual.
17. Employees shall not endorse any commercial product or service as a representative, agent, official, or employee of Hamilton County.
18. Situations involving former County employees, who, within one year after leaving County employment, accept other employment directly related in any way to their former employment with the County, are subject to review by the Hamilton County Ethics Commission for a determination of a possible conflict of interest.

F. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Each member of the Top Management staff shall file a Financial Disclosure Statement with the Hamilton County Ethics Commission when hired by the Board of County Commissioners and annually thereafter. All other employees must submit an Ethics Statement when hired by the Board and annually thereafter. The form and content for the Financial Disclosure Statement and the Ethics Disclosure Statement shall be prescribed by the HCEC and approved by the County Administrator. Human Resources shall maintain the Disclosure Statements and keep on file for three years.

Every employee who is required to maintain a license, registration, or certification as a condition of County employment must verify the active status in good standing of said license, registration, or certification when hired by the Board and

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annually thereafter. It is the immediate supervisor's responsibility to annually inspect and verify the active status of the required license before signing the Verification of License, Registration or Certification form. If, for any reason, the subject's license, registration, or certification lapses, or becomes inactive, suspended or revoked, employees must notify their supervisors immediately.

G. INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

The Ohio Ethics Laws as defined in Chapter 102 of the Ohio Revised Code are incorporated by reference herein as they pertain to County employees. The Offenses Against Justice and Public Administration as defined in Chapter 2921 of the Ohio Revised Code are incorporated by reference herein as they pertain to County employees.

H. SANCTIONS

Employees who have any concerns or questions regarding possible violations of ethical standards set forth herein shall consult with their supervisors prior to engaging in any questionable activity. Ethics violations, apparent or real, shall be reported to the County Administrator or his designee, with a recommendation for appropriate corrective action. Departmental decisions on ethics violations may be appealed to the County Administrator or his designee through the grievance process.

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