

## **Section 13**

### **Code of Ethics**

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#### **Section 13.1**

##### **General Statement**

The Code of Ethics is intended to promote confidence in the Court System and to ensure that employees avoid situations in which a conflict of interest exists or is likely to occur. Proper conduct by court employees inspires trust and confidence in the courts and conveys the values of impartiality, equity, and fairness that bring integrity to the courts' work. To advance these values, the ethical principles referenced in this section are to govern employee conduct.

Since a code of conduct cannot anticipate every ethical dilemma that may arise in the execution of day-to-day professional responsibility, personal discretion in the interpretation of them is both necessary and desirable. Employees are expected to cultivate within themselves the ethical sensibilities that will inform and enliven their consciences and make them true servants of justice.

#### **Section 13.2**

##### **Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest exists when an employee or the employee's immediate family or business derives personal gain as a result of his/her position within the Court System or when the employee's ability objectively to perform the duties of and/or discharge the responsibilities of his/her position is affected.

## **Section 13.3**

### **Activities That Are Prohibited**

#### **Section 13.3.1**

##### **Solicitation/Acceptance of Gifts**

No employee shall solicit, accept, or agree to accept anything of value under any circumstances that reasonably could be interpreted as influencing the manner in which the employee performs work or makes decisions. Examples of behaviors prohibited under this section include: seeking any favor, soliciting any gift, or actually receiving any gift or the promise of one, whether it be money, services, travel, food, entertainment, or hospitality that could be construed as a reward for past or future services; improperly intervening to expedite administrative processes; or accepting private employment in conflict with the proper discharge of official court duties. In addition, any mode of conduct that casts doubt upon the integrity and impartiality of the legal system is prohibited.

#### **Section 13.3.2**

##### **Representation of Private Interests**

No employee shall represent or act as an agent for any private interests, whether for compensation or otherwise, in any transaction in which the Court System has a direct interest and which reasonably could be interpreted as influencing the manner in which the employee performs work or makes decisions.

#### **Section 13.3.3**

##### **Release of Confidential Information**

No employee shall use confidential information for personal purposes or divulge or release any confidential information that is not, by statute, Supreme Court Rule, or policy established by the Director, available to members of the general public. However, no retaliatory disciplinary action may be taken against an employee for the disclosure of information that the employee reasonably believes evidences a violation of statute, Supreme Court Rule, or policy established by the Director.

### **Section 13.3.4**

#### **Use of Property**

No employee shall use state time and/or property (including court funds, facilities, equipment, or supplies) for personal gain. Information retained in electronic files should be treated like any other official court document. Great care should be taken in the transmission of electronic communication that it not embarrass the court or the sender if read by an unintended recipient. Employees should read Administrative Bulletin 00-05 for additional information governing the use of Wisconsin Court System computer systems. The bulletin can be found on the [Court System Intranet](#).

### **Section 13.3.5**

#### **Fees and Honorariums**

No employee shall accept an honorarium for talks, demonstrations, or appearances when such activity is part of the duties and responsibilities of his/her position.

### **Section 13.3.6**

#### **Dual Positions**

No employee in a full time position or capacity may hold any other position or be retained in any other capacity with another state agency or authority from which he/she receives, directly or indirectly, more than twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000.00) as compensation for his/her services during the same year.

## **Section 13.4**

### **Notification**

Prior to accepting anything of value or engaging in any activity that may create or reasonably may be interpreted to create a conflict of interest, the employee must submit a written statement identifying the situation to his/her supervisor for review.

The supervisor shall then determine if a conflict of interest exists. The supervisor shall send a written statement to the Human Resources Office affirming or denying that a conflict of interest exists.

The Human Resources Office shall review the supervisor's statement and forward all pertinent information to the Director for final determination.

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