



## Pinellas County Attorney Ethics Guide

TO: New Hires to Pinellas County Government

FROM: Jewel White, County Attorney 

SUBJECT: Ethics Guide for Employees of Pinellas County

DATE: August 30, 2017

As County Attorney for Pinellas County, Florida, I want to take this opportunity to welcome you to employment in County Government. Additionally, as the chief legal advisor for the Board of County Commissioners, I want to take this opportunity to brief you concerning some of the ethics laws and rules that govern your performance of public duties with the County.

Our performance of County duties is governed principally by two different ethical regulations. These include:

- **The Florida Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees**, located at Chapter 112 of the Florida Statutes; and
- **The Pinellas County Statement of Ethics**, a violation of which is cause for discipline under Unified Personnel System rules.

Keep in mind employee behavior may also be governed by the Unified Personnel System rules, and Appointing Authorities may have additional rules in their respective jurisdictions.

What I am going to do next is briefly outline for you some requirements, restrictions and prohibitions that the above-listed sources place upon County employees:

**1. Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts.** Public officers and employees are prohibited from soliciting or accepting anything of value, such as a gift, loan, reward, promise of future employment, favor or service, which is based on an understanding that their official action or judgment would be influenced by such a gift. Additionally, the County's personnel rules prohibit acceptance of a gift if it could be construed as a means of receiving a favor or obtaining better treatment than that accorded other persons, either presently or in the future. However, the Pinellas County Statement of Ethics states that County employees will not accept any gifts or gratuities from those with whom they do business. (Note: If you happen to be an employee who is required to file a financial disclosure form annually, some special rules regarding gifts apply to you. Please contact Carole Sanzeri in our office at 464-3354 if you have any questions regarding these rules.)

**2. Unauthorized Compensation.** County employees and their spouses and minor children are prohibited from accepting any compensation, payment or any other item of value when they know, or with the exercise of reasonable care should know, that it is given to influence their official action.

**3. Misuse of Public Position.** County employees are prohibited from corruptly using or attempting to use their official positions to obtain a special privilege for themselves or others.

**4. Disclosure or Use of Certain Information.** County employees are prohibited from disclosing or using information not available to the general public and obtained by reason of their public positions for the personal benefit of themselves or others.

**5. Doing Business with One's Agency.** County employees, acting in a private capacity, are prohibited from renting, leasing or selling any realty, goods or services to the County or any of its agencies. For those County employees who have purchasing authority, they may not purchase, rent or lease any realty, goods or services for the County from any business in which they, their spouse, or child hold a material interest, which means they own more than 5%.

**6. Conflicting Employment or Contractual Relationship.** County employees may not hold any employment or contractual relationship with any business or agency that is regulated by or doing business with their public agency. They also may not hold an employment or contractual relationship that will pose a frequently recurring conflict between their public duties and private interests, or which will impede the full and faithful discharge of their public duties.

**7. Employees Holding Office.** A County employee may not be a member of the governing body which serves as his employer while also continuing as an employee of that body.

**8. Nepotism.** County officials may not seek any appointment, employment, promotion or advancement for a relative in the agency in which they are serving or over which they exercise jurisdiction or control.

**9. Misappropriation of County Property.** County employees may not appropriate County property or County funds for their personal use, except for authorized wages or reimbursement, or illegally dispose of County property.

Should you have any questions concerning the ethical issues discussed above and your County employment, feel free to contact my office at 464-3354.



## Pinellas County Statement of Ethics

We, the employees of Pinellas County, as providers of public service; and, in order to inspire confidence and trust, are committed to the highest standards of personal integrity, honesty and competence.

### To This End We Will

- Provide open and accessible government, giving courteous, responsive service to all citizens equally.
- Accept only authorized compensation for the performance of our duties and respectfully decline any offers of gifts or gratuities from those with whom we do business.
- Disclose or report any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the County and impartially apply them to everyone.
- Neither apply nor accept improper influences, favoritism and personal bias.
- Use County funds and resources efficiently, including materials, equipment and our time.
- Respect and protect the privileged information to which we have access in the course of our duties, never using it to stir controversy, to harm others or for private gain.

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Recognizing that government must serve the best interests of all citizens, we stand as representatives of responsible government, acting at all times to merit public confidence in ourselves and Pinellas County.