



King County

The King County Code of Ethics

Helping Employees Make Ethical Decisions

- It's the Annual Ethics Quiz!
- Take the challenge and test your ethics knowledge.
- Everyone who completes all 9 questions is eligible to win a prize from a random drawing!
 - ❖ \$20 certificate at Nordstrom
 - ❖ \$15 certificate at University Bookstore
 - ❖ \$6 certificate at Tully's Coffee
- Your participation helps the Board of Ethics better serve you. Questions? Call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586.

To be eligible for the drawing, complete your quiz by Friday, October 23, 2009.

THANK YOU!

Your personal responses are confidential, but group results will be made available at a later date.

Good luck!

The quiz consists of 9 ethics scenarios based on actual situations encountered by county employees, followed by 7 survey questions. Apply the basic principles of public service and your knowledge of the King County Code of Ethics to each situation. In each case there is one best response or approach that will resolve the ethical dilemma. Correct responses and explanation appear once you have submitted your answers.

1. You use a county car to conduct an inspection of a local restaurant. On the way back to the office, you want to stop by the cleaners to pick up your work shirts. The store is on your exact route. What's the right thing to do? (Use of county vehicles)

- a. Take care of the errand on your own time using your own car.
- b. Park a block from the dry cleaners so no one will know you used a county car.
- c. Use the county car to do your personal errand on your lunch hour.
- d. It's so close – there is no harm in stopping off.

a. Take care of the errand on your own time using your own car.

Explanation: Use of county vehicles is a taxpayer expense and they should not be used for employees' personal errands. Also, when citizens see employees using county vehicles for their personal convenience, they lose trust in our ability to use resources wisely. Employees do the right thing when they use this public-owned property only for official county business. (K.C.C. 3.04.020) Questions? Check with your supervisor or call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586.

2. We are hard-working employees and are doing our best to continue important county initiatives with fewer resources. Each year, our department holds an annual event that is central to our mission. We have always provided refreshments and paid for them out of our budget. This year, we'd like to ask local businesses to help us out with free snacks and coffee. May we solicit these businesses? (Solicitation of businesses)

Yes
No

No. County employees may not solicit goods and services from local businesses to support a county initiative.

Explanation: The Code of Ethics prohibits unauthorized solicitation by county employees so that no person or business in King County feels implicitly coerced to provide aid for government sponsored events. The broad scope of power and authority of King County agencies may make the businesses that are solicited feel they must contribute. This is most obvious in areas where agencies have direct authority over persons being solicited. Employees and agencies may either use approved county funds to purchase the refreshments, or ask for official authorization from the King County Council to solicit for specific events. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

3. Fran has access to confidential records. She also serves on the board of directors of a non-profit organization that could benefit from the information contained in these records. What should Fran do? (Conflict of interest with outside activity)

- a. Fran should not use or provide the confidential information to the non-profit organization.
- b. Fran may provide the information to the organization since she is not a paid member of the board and the organization is non-profit.
- c. Fran should notify her supervisor right away of the potential conflict of interest.
- d. Both a and c.

d. Both a. and c.

Explanation: Fran is in a position of responsibility serving the county and its citizens. She may not use her 'insider' information to benefit another person or organization or herself. Fran now has a potential conflict of interest and has a legal duty to notify her supervisor of the situation. Her supervisor has an equal legal responsibility to resolve the dilemma and respond to Fran in writing. (K.C.C. 3.04.030) Want to check whether your particular situation is a potential conflict? Contact the Ethics Help Line for information at 296-1586.

4. Ken supervises a crew of county employees that paves public streets. At the end of the day, Ken asks crew members to stop by his house to finish paving his new driveway. The house is on the way back to the agency. As Ken's co-worker, how would you advise him? (Values; Use of power or authority for gain)

- a. The crew can do the job because they finished their assigned work early.
- b. It's okay as long as Ken pays them for the work.
- c. Using the crew to pave Ken's private driveway is an abuse of his authority.
- d. As a supervisor, Ken is in charge and can tell the crew to do anything he wants.

c. Using the crew to pave Ken's private driveway is an abuse of his authority.

Explanation: King County believes that public confidence in government is essential. To ensure that trust, we may not use county resources for our own personal convenience. In addition, we may not use the power or authority of our position to gain gifts, compensation or other things of value – such as a new driveway – for ourselves or others, unless specifically authorized by law. (K.C.C. 3.04.015 and K.C.C. 3.04.020)

5. You have a co-worker who has a small thriving business selling cosmetics outside of her work for the county. You notice that she sometimes uses her work computer during

the lunch hour and after work to prepare invoices and reply to cosmetics orders. Are her activities an ethics violation? (Use of county resources for profit)

- a. No. It doesn't matter what people do on their own time.
- b. Yes. She is using county resources for profit and should conduct her private business outside of the office, using her own resources.
- c. No. She has two children and should be commended for being so hard-working!
- d. Yes. But she's not hurting anyone so what's the problem?

b. Yes. She is using county resources for profit and should conduct her private business completely outside of the office and using her own resources.

Explanation: Even though your co-worker is not officially on county time during her lunch hour or after hours, she still is using a county computer in a county office building for her private business. These public resources may not be used for private gain or personal profit. (K.C.C. 3.04.020) Some departments may have more stringent rules related to use of county resources depending upon the type of work they do. Check with your supervisor to see what policies are in place in your agency or call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586.

6. You are a manager and just hired Alicia, who completes your team of engineering specialists. The team members will approve and make recommendations on designs created by Fitzwater Engineering Services, a consultant with your agency. Somehow you didn't notice that Alicia had just left Fitzwater's employment before coming to the county. Are there ethics provisions that cover this kind of situation? (Conflict of interest with past employment)

- Yes
No

Yes. The code of ethics says that this situation is a conflict of interest.

Explanation: When a new county employee is assigned to work on matters related to his or her former employer, their decision-making could be biased – either for or against that company. There could be at least the appearance of a conflict. So, within one year of entering county employment, new employees in responsible positions may not award a county contract to their former employer and may only participate in other matters related to that company if their appointing authority authorizes that work in a memo that is filed with the Board of Ethics. This helps ensure that there shall be no personal or financial conflict with our public transactions and decisions. (K.C.C. 3.04.030)

7. You are secretary to a division manager. A supervisor from another department stops by your desk and asks you to fax some documents for her. She says that she's in a hurry and could you do it right away? After you've faxed the documents, you notice they are for stock purchases and you know the fax machine should not be used for that purpose. What do you do? (Power of office; use of county resources; duty to notify)

- a. Pull the plug on the fax machine now!
- b. Send an email to your supervisor right away explaining the situation and asking for resolution.
- c. Don't tell anyone since you might get into trouble.
- d. Make a stock buy of your own based on the documents.

b. Send an email to your supervisor right away explaining the situation and asking for resolution.

Explanation: The supervisor has misused her authority and has placed you in a tough situation. You may feel you have to comply or are uncomfortable challenging her authority. Even if you can address the matter directly with the supervisor, notify your manager in writing of what has occurred. The Code of Ethics requires anyone who feels they may have a conflict of interest to notify their supervisor in writing AND the supervisor is required to resolve the situation and

respond back to you. This is a protection for employees and for the reputation of the agency. (K.C.C. 3.04.020 & K.C.C. 3.04.037)

8. Just about every week, there is an email from co-workers to donate to one charity or another – Girls Scout cookies, food banks, clothing drives, or bake sales. When I go into the break room, there are more requests for donations! I believe in giving to charity, but sometimes I feel overwhelmed by it all. What does the ethics code say about all of this solicitation? (Use of county resources; solicitation for charitable organization)

- a. Find a charity of your own and email everyone in the division.
- b. Eat the cookies, but don't pay for them.
- c. Donate so your co-workers will like you.
- d. Charitable solicitation at work is allowed only if it is considered official county business – like the Charitable Campaign or the Heart Walk.

d. Charitable solicitation at work is allowed if it is considered official county business – like the Employee Giving Program or the Heart Walk.

Explanation: King County supports charitable giving by establishing specific giving opportunities, whether they are annual events such as the Employee Giving Program or the Heart Walk. These initiatives are made official county business through County Council motion or ordinance or executive action. Since we may not use county resources for personal convenience or profit, other charitable solicitation should be conducted on our own time using our own resources. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

9. Your division director is a vocal supporter of a county incumbent running for office. As you leave the building one day, your director is right in front of you distributing campaign leaflets for her candidate. Although she is standing on a public sidewalk on the lunch hour, what are the ethics issues here? (Campaign activities)

- a. There are no ethics issues here – she's on her own time on a public sidewalk.
- b. Everyone has a right to support the candidate of his or her choice.
- c. Using the power or authority to influence or coerce another person to provide someone with a thing of value (e.g. vote) is a violation of the ethics code.
- d. The ethics code only talks about signing petitions.

c. Using the power or authority of your office or position to influence or coerce another person to provide them or another person with a thing of value (e.g. vote) is a violation of the ethics code.

Explanation: Supervisors or elected officials may exert influence and power over those who report to them. They should use this authority wisely and appropriately and never in order to gain something of value for themselves or another. If you have concerns, report such incidents to another supervisor or your human resources personnel or contact the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

10. King County's Board of Ethics Web site is helpful in identifying and dealing with ethical issues relating to my job.

- Agree strongly
- Agree somewhat
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree somewhat
- Disagree strongly

11. I believe the Ethics Office/Board of Ethics is a useful source of advice on ethical issues.

- Agree strongly
- Agree somewhat
- Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly

12. I believe the Ethics Office/Board of Ethics would honor my request for confidentiality.

Agree strongly
Agree somewhat
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly

13. I believe the Ethics Office/Board of Ethics would help me successfully resolve an ethical issue.

Agree strongly
Agree somewhat
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly

14. I know about the Ethics Help Line that I can call to discuss concerns or report unethical conduct.

Agree strongly
Agree somewhat
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly
I haven't encountered any appropriate situations

Your department

Selection box

Do you supervise others?

Yes
No

If you have a question about any ethics issues in this quiz or in your workplace, call the

Ethics Help Line at 296-1586

Calls may be anonymous or confidential. We are here to help!

~End~