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The King County Code of Ethics
Helping Employees Make Ethical Decisions

- Challenge your ethics knowledge with this short survey-quiz.
- It's free! It's fun! It only takes 10 minutes! And it's confidential.
- Your participation will help the Board of Ethics to better serve you. Questions? Call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586.

Please complete your survey-quiz by October 28, 2005.

THANK YOU!

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

Good luck!

1. A local deli gives you a \$50 gift certificate in appreciation for the amount of business your agency has brought to the deli during off-site training sessions this year. What do you do with the certificate? (RECEIPT OF GIFTS OR MEALS)

- a. Thank the deli manager for the offer, but tell him you really can't accept the certificate.
- b. Invite four close friends from the agency to lunch so you won't be the only one who benefits.
- c. Use the \$50 to cover refreshments for the next training session.

a. Thank the deli manager for the offer, but tell him you really can't accept the certificate.

Explanation: To avoid the appearance of conflict with our county jobs, employees must decline gifts, meals, and things of value from those seeking to do business with the county. By following these ethics values, we help to ensure the public's trust in government. (K.C.C. 3.04.030 & K.C.C. 3.04.015)

2. You are a manager and you learn that one of your staff has gone to the ethics office with some kind of complaint. What do you do? (ETHICS POLICIES)

- a. Call a general meeting and demand to know who went and why.
- b. Inform everyone that they must first notify their supervisor before calling the ethics office.
- c. Let employees know that you encourage ethics questions, and that you are available if anyone has any suggestions or concerns.

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Explanation: Ethics dilemmas occur every day! Encourage employees to talk about ethics issues and help staff to resolve problems effectively. When employees are encouraged to openly communicate about ethics issues that arise in the normal course of business, the county creates an environment in which ethics is a customary part of the workplace. Every county agency must inform its employees about the ethics code and enforce its requirements. (K.C.C. 3.04.015)

3. While at work, a fellow employee invites you to take a look at their computer screen to view a product they are selling on e-bay. What is the best course of action? (USE OF COUNTY RESOURCES)

- a. Quickly place a bid for the used dinette set on your own computer.
- b. Tell the employee that you think this is improper use of county resources.
- c. Inform your supervisor.

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Explanation: We use taxpayer dollars wisely, so county resources may only be used for official county business. Helping a colleague who may be unaware of this rule is a good thing to do. If the behavior continues, let your supervisor know so the activity can be stopped. We all have the power to create the kind of ethical environment we work in. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

4. I think I might have a conflict of interest between my county job and my personal interests. Are there any county procedures to handle this problem? (DUTY TO NOTIFY SUPERVISOR)

- a. Disclose the matter in writing to your supervisor right away.
- b. Insist that your supervisor resolve the issue and respond to you in writing.
- c. Make sure that your supervisor keeps a copy of that resolution in his or her file.
- d. All of the above are required to help prevent conflicts of interest.

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Explanation: Experience shows that when ethical dilemmas are identified and resolved promptly and routinely, ensuing problems are minimized. These three steps for both staff and supervisor are required by law and – when followed – safeguard the reputation and integrity of employees, agencies and the county. (K.C.C. 3.04.037)

5. You are on stage at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the completion of a new county building. To mark the occasion, the developer presents you with a plaque. May you keep it? (GIFTS)

- () a. No
- () b. Yes

b. Yes

Explanation: Employees cannot accept gifts for doing their work, but may receive 1) informational materials exclusively for office use; 2) memorials, trophies and plaques of no commercial value; or 3) gifts costing twenty dollars or less for bona fide, non-recurring, ceremonial occasions. If you receive a gift from someone doing business or seeking to do business with the county, return it to the person or donate it to a charity. (K.C.C. 3.04.017, K.C.C. 3.04.020, & K.C.C. 3.04.030)

6. Your supervisor hints that if you contribute to the candidacy of a local office, you might just receive a merit raise. How should you respond? (POLITICAL ACTIVITIES & USE OF POSITION)

- a. Make a campaign contribution that day.
- b. Refuse to contribute.
- c. Contact your human resources representative or call the ethics office for assistance.

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Explanation: We are all encouraged to take part in the election process, but only on our own time, using our own resources. And, no one may use the power or authority of their county position to coerce someone into an action, or to gain an advantage for themselves or others. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

7. I work in the field all day. May I stop for lunch using my county vehicle? (USE OF COUNTY RESOURCES)

- a. Yes, as long as you park in back of the restaurant.
- b. No. Who said you could stop for lunch?
- c. Of course!

c. Of course!

Explanation: While county resources may only be used for official county business, you may stop for lunch since you are out in the field all day, and as long as the restaurant is nearby. You may not however take care of personal errands using the vehicle. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

8. You enforce business license requirements. You discover that a local business, with which you have a private dispute, is two months overdue on its licensing fees. What actions should you take? (CONFLICT OF INTEREST)

- a. Call the business and tell them if they drop their suit you will update their licensing fee records.
- b. Initiate proceedings to revoke their business license.
- c. Ask your supervisor to remove you from this account.

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Explanation: County employees have a potential conflict of interest if they have a personal or financial interest in any matter in which they officially participate or have job responsibilities. If you think you have a potential conflict, you must immediately notify your supervisor in writing; your supervisor is required to resolve the situation by removing you from the conflict, and record and keep a written record of the disposition on file. (K.C.C. 3.04.030 & K.C.C. 3.04.037)

9. You are enjoying retirement, but receive a great job offer from a consultant who does work with the county. What information do you want to know before accepting the work? (POST EMPLOYMENT)

- a. Does the work I will perform have anything to do with matters I worked on at the county?
- b. Do I have any existing financial or beneficial interests related to the job?
- c. Will I be performing work for someone who might be prohibited from doing the work themselves?
- d. All of the above.

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Explanation: Even though you have left county government, former employees must maintain high ethical standards through contracting or subcontracting with the county, and may not enjoy a competitive edge over others because of inside information or contacts. Consultants who violate this provision may be barred from doing business with the county. (K.C.C. 3.04.035)

10. 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. 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)

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

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Explanation: King County supports charitable giving by establishing specific giving opportunities, whether they are annual events such as the Employee Charitable Campaign or unforeseen disaster relief. These initiatives are created by County Council 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)

11. Have you ever contacted the ethics office for information on an ethics matter?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

12. If yes, thinking of your most recent contact with the ethics office, did the information: (answer all those that apply)

- a. Meet my needs completely
- b. Helped me make my decision
- c. Raised issues but didn't resolve the problem
- d. Didn't really help

13. If you have contacted the ethics office for information on an ethics matter, how would you describe the quality of your experience, including timeliness and courtesy? Were you:

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- d. Dissatisfied
- e. Very dissatisfied

Your department _____

Do you supervise others? () Yes () No

Comments? Questions?

I would like the ethics staff to contact me. Here is how I may be reached.