



King County

The King County Code of Ethics

Helping Employees Make Ethical Decisions

- It's the fifth annual Ethics Quiz!
- Take the challenge and test your ethics knowledge.
- Everyone who completes all questions is eligible to win a prize from a random drawing!
 - ❖ \$20 certificate at Macy's department store
 - ❖ \$15 certificate at Barnes and Noble
 - ❖ \$6 certificate for coffee at Starbucks
- 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 24, 2008.

THANK YOU!

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

Good luck!

1. My co-worker and I love politics and we're very excited about the November elections. She's been coming to my desk a lot lately to talk about her candidate's upcoming fundraising breakfast, but I don't think we can spend time this way. What should I tell her? (Campaign activities)

- a. Keep your voice down.
- b. Forget it. Your candidate is going to lose.
- c. Let's talk this over during lunch at the local coffee shop.

c. Let's talk this over during lunch at the local coffee shop.

Explanation: Everyone is encouraged to participate in the political process and political discussions are a part of that. However, political activities must be conducted on your own time using your own resources. If political activities in your office are causing you concern, talk it over with your supervisor or call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586 (KCC 3.04.020)

2. Which of the following topics are NOT included in the King County Code of Ethics? (Knowledge of the code)

- a. Use of county resources
- b. Second jobs and post-employment
- c. Harassment from co-worker or boss
- d. Acceptance of gifts and meals
- e. Use of official position for gain
- f. Political activities in the workplace

- g. Unfair disciplinary action
- h. Conflicts of interest

c. Harassment from co-worker or boss; g. Unfair disciplinary action

Explanation: The Code of Ethics covers a number of topics that strengthen the public's trust in King County government. However, you won't find issues of (c) workplace harassment and (g) disciplinary action in the Code. These issues are best handled by contacting your supervisor or Human Resources personnel within your agency. (K.C.C. 3.04)

3. Laurie and her co-workers have a great relationship with several vendors they work with. Sometimes they brain-storm about county projects together after work at a local restaurant and take turns picking up the check to make it even and fair. Any problems with this arrangement? (Acceptance of meals)

- Yes
- No

Yes, there is a problem with this arrangement.

Explanation: When we conduct business outside of a professional environment, a reasonable person might believe that our business practices are just that – unprofessional. When we accept meals from those doing business or seeking to do business with the county, that same reasonable person might believe that our judgment could be biased in favor of that business. Even if our decisions might not be affected by receipt of something of value, the appearance of conflict remains and could affect what the county values most: the public's trust in government. Laurie, hold your meetings during regular work hours, in a conference room provided for that purpose, and pay your own way. (K.C.C. 3.04.030)

4. Laurie not only has good working relationships with her agency's vendors, but they love her work. As a matter of fact, they talked with her about coming to work for them when the current project is successfully completed. May Laurie talk about this exciting new offer? (Post employment; duty to notify supervisor)

- a. Yes, if she meets with the company on her own time.
- b. No, not until the job is completed.
- c. No, not until the job is completed, and she should notify her supervisor.

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Laurie's personal interests are about to collide with her job responsibilities. She wants to talk about a great new job for herself, but she must be impartial when working on the project with the same vendor. She cannot reasonably do both. (K.C.C. 3.04.030) In addition, she now has a potential conflict even if she tells the vendor she can't discuss the matter. She must notify her supervisor right away to ensure that the process is kept open and transparent and free from conflict. (K.C.C. 3.04.037)

5. June and Oscar are working hard to produce an event for their department. The event is the official kick-off for the department's Clean Air, Water and Earth Day. Since they also want to be cost-conscious, June and Oscar are planning to solicit local businesses for coffee, snacks and prizes. Is it allowable for June and Oscar solicit these prizes?

(Solicitation)

- Yes
- No

No, June and Oscar must find another way.

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. June and Oscar may either use approved county funds to

purchase the items for the event, or ask for official authorization from the King County Council to solicit for specific events. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

6. I'm a new manager and want ethics to be a part of everyday work life for my employees. What are some of the activities that I can employ to inspire and inform my staff? (Ethics policies)

- a. Lead by example by following the rule and spirit of the law
- b. Encourage discussion of ethical issues by taking questions and complaints seriously
- c. Take immediate action to address and resolve ethics issues
- d. All of the above.

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Explanation: In the 2006 ethics quiz, the ethics office asked employees what advice they would give to county management to help strengthen ethical conduct. Their responses included a, b, and c, but they also suggested that managers: publicize positive role models within the agency; include ethics discussions in management and staff meetings; ensure all employees receive required ethics training; communicate ethics policies and practices orally and in writing; include an ethics question in promotions and hiring and in manager evaluations; and fairly enforce high standards.

7. You've been approved to work from home for the next six months, a savings for you and the county. You have been issued a county computer and it includes access to the Internet. After a long day, you take a moment to check your stocks and make a couple of trades on the county computer. Is there an ethics issue here? (Use of county resources)

- a. No, you've worked hard all day and now this is on your own time.
- b. Yes, you are using a county resource for profit which is prohibited.
- c. No, the use is 'brief and infrequent' so there shouldn't be a problem.

b. Yes, you are using a county resource for profit which is prohibited.

Explanation: Even though the use doesn't take much time and is after work hours, you are still using a county resource for a profit motive. Taxpayers want to know that county property is being used for the public's benefit and not for employees' personal financial benefit. You should use your own computer for this kind of activity and, if you have questions, contact your supervisor or call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

8. I think I might have a conflict of interest between my county job and my personal interests. What steps should I take to address the situation? (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)

9. I have attended the following ethics trainings at King County within the last three years. (Check all that apply)

- New Employee Orientation
- A presentation at a staff meeting
- An agency-wide training
- A half-day seminar for supervisors
- Other
- I have NOT attended ethics training at King County (skip to #13)

10. The session included information on the county's commitment to ethics in the workplace.

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

11. The session covered practical examples of real-life situations that individuals may encounter on the job.

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

12. The session provided me with enough information so that I know how to resolve an ethical dilemma or situation.

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

13. The training I received helped me resolve an ethical dilemma in my workplace.

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

14. Are there any additional tools or information that you would like to be a part of a future ethics training or education session?

(Open ended response)

15. I think my agency would benefit from an ethics presentation.

- Yes
- No

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~