

Code of Ethics

County Commission for Stewart County, Georgia

Basic Responsibilities

- Understand and follow applicable legal and policy requirements.
- Adhere to high standards of conduct and personal ethics in your work.

Comment:

Living by the rules starts with knowing the rules. However, no set of policies or rules can address every situation. We sometimes face circumstances that do not have easy answers. In these cases, consider the commission's *Guiding Principles* and assess your options using the policies and standards of this *Code of Ethics*. If you are still unsure, seek guidance.

Reporting Misconduct and Seeking Guidance

- Report misconduct and seek guidance if you have questions.
- Adhere to the Commission's confidentiality and non-retaliation policies.

Comment:

If you become aware of misconduct, you must report it. You should also take reasonable steps whenever possible to prevent violations before they occur. If you are concerned that conduct may be unlawful or unethical but are not sure, seek guidance. Confidentiality and non-retaliation laws and policies apply for those who report misconduct or seek guidance in good faith.

Work Environment

- Help ensure a safe work environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment.
- Help ensure a work environment that is characterized by respect and open communication.

Comment:

We share responsibility for maintaining a workplace that is safe, respectful, and free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. Never engage in or tolerate sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination, such as basing an employment decision on race, sex, age, religion, handicap, or any other impermissible factor. Follow our workplace safety policies and procedures and look for ways we can improve. Abide by our drug-free workplace policy. Treat each other with respect, encourage open communication and appropriately resolve ethical concerns.

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Conflicts of Interest

- Avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts.

Comment:

A conflict of interest occurs when a personal interest of yours — such as a financial interest or family connection — could affect your ability to perform your job objectively and in the best interests of the County. Situations that can raise potential conflicts include: service as a director or employee of a private business; the provision of goods or services to the Commission by an entity that you have an interest in; accepting gifts from vendors; and helping family members or friends in matters concerning the Commission. If you face a situation that presents a potential conflict of interest, consult this *Code of Ethics* and, if necessary, contact an appropriate manager or the County Attorney.

Government Relations and Anticorruption

- Be above reproach in political involvement, in dealing with present or former government officials, and in seeking personal business from the Commission.

Comment:

We must strictly adhere to laws and regulations governing the political process and avoid even the appearance of impropriety in dealing with government officials. Political contributions, gifts, and hiring decisions involving government officials must be in accordance with applicable law and approved in accordance with Commission policies. Never make a false claim for payment from the Commission, and avoid making false or misleading statements to government officials.

Accurate and Timely Periodic Reports

- Prepare and maintain accurate and reliable financial records.
- Prepare accounts and records, such as expense accounts, vouchers, bills, payroll records and disclosure documents, honestly and with care.
- Assist our vigorous efforts to comply with generally accepted accounting principles.
- Maintain effective internal accounting and disclosure controls and procedures.
- Disclose full and accurate information in an orderly and timely manner.

Comment:

Business and Confidential Information

- Protect the integrity of Commission records.
- Do not improperly use or disclose confidential information.

Comment:

You are required to maintain accurate records in accordance with the Commission's records retention policy. Falsifying or improperly altering or destroying Commission documents, such as when they are subject to a discovery request or official government proceeding, is strictly prohibited.

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Business Conduct and Fair Dealing

- Conduct the Commission's business fairly and in good faith.
- Perform your duties in good faith and in the best interests of the Commission within the confines of sound and ethical practice and applicable law.
- Never give or accept bribes

Protection and Use of Company Property

- Protect Commission property and use it only for its intended purpose.

Commission property, from buildings to computer and telephone systems to paper clips, is valuable and intended for business use. It must be preserved, protected, and used for its intended purpose.

External Communications

- Do not speak on behalf of the Commission unless authorized to do so.
- Do not respond to requests for information on behalf of the Commission unless authorized to do so.

From time to time, we receive requests for information from other governments, the media, or the general public. In other cases, we wish to make our views on matters affecting our Commission business known to legislators, governmental agencies, the media, or the public at large. In order to ensure that such communications are complete, properly coordinated, and in accordance with law, and to protect the rights of those involved in the case of certain types of inquiries, such communications may only be made by authorized persons in accordance with guidelines set forth in the Code of Ethics.

This Code of Ethics, the County Personnel Policy, and notices of applicable workplace laws and regulations are available at the Commission office, on the County's shared drive, and on the County website, www.stewartcountyga.gov. If you need guidance on County policies or state and local laws and regulations, please contact the County Manager.