



King County

The King County Code of Ethics

Helping Employees Make Ethical Decisions

- It's the fourth annual Ethics Survey Quiz!
- Take the challenge to test your ethics knowledge and tell us what you think about ethics in King County.
- 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.

For your answers to be included in the final report, please complete your survey-quiz by Friday, October 26, 2007.

THANK YOU!

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

Good luck!

1. You are a project manager and have lunch with the consultant from time to time. You have a friendly relationship with him and you take turns buying each other lunch. Is there any harm in that?

- Yes. Other vendors may observe this exchange and assume this consultant will receive special treatment.
- No. The consultant regularly buys meals for customers and he should always buy your lunch out of gratitude for the contract.
- No. The lunches generally cost the same and the amount evens out over time.

a. Yes. Other vendors may observe your close relationship and assume this consultant will receive special treatment.

Explanation: It is important to maintain professional standards when working with consultants, vendors and customers. This is a business relationship and each of you should pay for your own meal. This way of doing business also demonstrates to citizens and other consultants that our contracting process cannot be affected by acceptance of meals or other things of value. [KCC 3.04.030]

2. Carole plans to volunteer her time for a candidate for county elective office. She knows that two agency employees who report to her also support this candidate. May she ask them to work on his campaign on weekends and evenings?

- Yes. The candidate needs all the help he can get.

- b. Yes. Since the work would be on their own time, the two employees can do whatever they want.
- c. No. These employees work for Carole and might feel uncomfortable saying 'no'.

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Explanation: Everyone is encouraged to participate in the political process on their own time using their own resources, so the assistants could independently make their own decision to volunteer. But since Carole is their supervisor, they might feel coerced to volunteer and employees and citizens alike are protected from employees using the power of their office to gain something for themselves or others. (KCC 3.04.020)

3. I support a great non-profit organization that doesn't participate in county-sanctioned events. I want to hold a bake sale to raise money for its annual fundraiser in a county conference room. It's such a good cause! The room isn't being used and it's on my lunch hour. Is this okay?

- a. Yes, if it is a really good cause.
- b. No, since it isn't official county business and the room isn't available to the general public in the same way.
- c. Yes, since other employees have been holding fund raisers in the conference room.

b. No, since it isn't official county business and the room isn't available to the general public in the same way.

Explanation: It's important to remember that county resources may only be used for official county business or if the use is available to the general public. When we talk about 'county resources' we include vehicles, equipment, materials or property or expenditure of government funds. Citizens want to be assured that their tax dollars are only being used for county business. Events such as the charitable campaign or the heart walk are allowed to use county resources because they have been sanctioned by the executive or county council and are therefore official county business. Before holding your bake sale, talk to your supervisor or call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586. (KCC 3.04.020)

4. It is the holiday season and a vendor has brought a fruit basket to you and your co-workers. What should you do with it?

- a. Yum! Chow down!
- b. Send the vendor a polite thank you note in hopes that they send more.
- c. Donate it to a local charity.
- d. Return it to the vendor.
- e. Both c. and d. are acceptable.

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Explanation: All citizens and customers receive the same great service from King County employees without having to give gifts or things of value to county employees. Gifts received from vendors should be donated to local charities, or returned. In addition, a department representative should let the vendor know county policies on gifts and that any gifts are strongly discouraged. Contact the ethics office for a handy brochure for vendors on these and other related policies at 296-1586. (KCC 3.04.030)

5. For some time now, Ramona has noticed that two co-workers are using a county vehicle to run personal errands, take coffee breaks, or go out for lunch for an hour or two. Something tells her that this isn't a good use of the county car. What should she do?

- a. Ignore it. It's none of her business.
- b. Talk the matter over with her supervisor.
- c. Contact the ethics office for advice.
- d. Both b. and c. are acceptable.

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Explanation: We all have the power to create a work environment we are proud of and maintaining high ethical standards makes our workplace stronger. If you observe unethical practices, speak up! Let your supervisor know or contact the Ethics Help Line for advice and guidance at 296-1586. Be a leader in ethics! (KCC 3.04.020)

6. As a county employee, Jerry works with a firm doing business with his agency. The firm loves Jerry's work and wants to talk with him about leaving the county and coming to work for them. What should Jerry do?

- a. Notify his supervisor of this potential conflict of interest.
- b. Tell the firm that you can't discuss this opportunity while you are working with them on county business.
- c. Meet with them over drinks after work – what you do on your own time is your business.
- d. a. and b. are both required.

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Explanation: While this may be a great opportunity for Jerry, if he discusses employment with a vendor he has responsibilities for, his decision-making could be biased. At the very least, it could create the appearance of conflict for Jerry and place the agency's reputation at risk. To ensure transparency with this vendor and the project, he must notify his supervisor in writing of the contact and the supervisor is required under the ethics code to respond to Jerry in writing how they will resolve the situation. If Jerry wants to pursue the job, the supervisor must replace him with another employee, or he must wait until he no longer has any job responsibilities related to the vendor. (KCC 3.04.030) (KC 3.04.037)

7. The right place to file an ethics complaint is with the Board of Ethics.

True False

False

Explanation: The Board of Ethics and its office are authorized to provide information, education, advice, and guidance on ethics matters. Call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586 or visit the web site at www.kingcounty.gov/ethics. It is the Office of Citizen Complaints – Ombudsman that may accept complaints on violations of the Code of Ethics. For more information about the OCC – Ombudsman and the services it provides, please visit its web site at www.kingcounty.gov/ombudsman. (KCC 3.04.055)

8. Michelle manages a community service program and before coming to work at the county had a small consulting firm doing similar work. She learned through her job that another county agency needed a vendor to provide related training. She applied for the work but the reviewer questioned whether Michelle would have a conflict of interest. What do you think?

- a. Michelle has an unfair advantage since she heard about the job through her work at the county, and since she knows through her employment those who will make the decision.
- b. Michelle works hard both for the county and her own business and she should be allowed to bid for the consulting job.
- c. Michelle is just using good business sense and is aggressively seeking new opportunities.

a. Michelle has an unfair advantage since she heard about the job through her work at the county, and since she knows through her employment those who will make the decision.

Explanation: Michelle has at least two overlapping relationships between her personal and financial interests and her work performed for the county. First, she used 'inside information' to learn of the job in the first place. Second, she hoped to use her relationships at the county to leverage the consulting position. Any secondary employment must be unrelated to the

employee's scope of official work, without using proprietary information, and conducted on their own time using their own resources. (KCC 3.04.030)

9. Within the past year, have you observed an ethics violation?

Yes No

10. If yes, did you report it?

Yes No

11. If you did report the violation, were you satisfied with management's actions to resolve it?

- Strongly agree
- Agree somewhat
- No opinion
- Disagree somewhat
- Strongly disagree

12. If you didn't report the violation you observed, why didn't you?

- Your identity wouldn't be kept confidential.
- Your supervisor wouldn't take action.
- Your co-workers would find out and disapprove.
- You wouldn't want to be known as a 'snitch'.
- Other
- Chose all that apply

Your department

Selection box

Do you supervise others?

Yes

No

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

Ethics Help Line at 296-1586

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

~End~