



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

OCT 1 2004

MEMORANDUM TO HEADS OF OPERATING AND STAFF DIVISIONS

SUBJECT: Departmental Ethics Program

Each of you promotes ethical conduct and integrity on the part of your employees through your example. I know also that many of you speak about core values of public service in your appearances and in your communications with your staff. It is critically important to reaffirm, at every opportunity, our commitment to ensuring public confidence in the integrity and impartiality with which we, as public servants, administer the nation's laws.

As part of that commitment, the Department has authorized a significant increase in the resources and responsibilities of the Office of the General Counsel, Ethics Division, which is headed by Associate General Counsel Ed Swindell, who also serves as our chief ethics officer. Under the Ethics in Government Act, each executive branch agency is required to implement a comprehensive ethics program headed by a Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) who reports directly to the agency head for that function. Your help is also crucial in ensuring that the ethics program conducted throughout the Department is first rate in every way.

Because of the size of the Department and the variety of its operations, the ethics program historically has been implemented, in significant part, through the cooperative efforts of a network of Deputy Ethics Counselors (DECs) in each operating and staff division. These DECs administer the financial disclosure systems, training programs, and employee counseling and advice functions for your respective components. Each component's program is subject not only to oversight by the DAEO, but also to periodic audits by the Office of Government Ethics.

I want to emphasize the importance of maintaining and improving the Department's ethics program, including those portions administered by your components. Therefore, I ask each of you likewise to emphasize, within your own components, the importance of running a sound and effective ethics program. To that end, you should ensure that your DECs are adequately supported, empowered, and accountable. Employees and supervisors alike should take seriously their respective obligations to attend training sessions and to file, review, and certify timely the financial disclosure reports and other forms that play an integral role in preventing inadvertent conflicts of interest. Finally, I ask that you and your staffs give the DAEO your assistance as he seeks to coordinate and manage the overall ethics program for the Department.

Tommy G. Thompson