



Defense Information Systems Agency

Employees' Guide to the Standards of Conduct^{*}

**Office of General Counsel
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Whom to Call for Advice

The **DISA General Counsel** is the Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) for DISA employees, both civilian and military.

Please direct your ethics and standards of conduct questions to:

Office of General Counsel

P.O. Box 4502

Arlington, VA 22204-4502

Fax: (703) 607-4344

E-mail: generalcounseldisa@ncr.disa.mil

Web Site: www.disa.mil/main/gc.html

Telephone

(703) 607-6091

DSN 327-6091

Different Ethics Counselors may service employees outside the Washington DC metropolitan area. For example:

DISA – Scott Air Force Base

GIG Field Activities

DITCO Legal Counsel,

DISA Computing Services-Denver Legal Counsel

William Mayers

Jerry Brasel

Tel: (618) 229-9379

Tel: (303) 676-1707

DSN 779-9379

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Fax: (618) 229-9755

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E-Mail: MayersW@disa.scott.mil

E-Mail: BraselJ@den.disa.mil

Some DISA activities receive ethics guidance and training from local servicing JAG and other legal offices. If you are unsure who to contact for an answer to an ethics question, contact the DISA DAEO for further information.














IMPORTANT ADVICE

If you are not positive that what you are about to do is appropriate, ask your ethics counselor.

In fact, disciplinary action for violating the standards of conduct will **not** be taken against you if you act in good faith reliance upon the advice of your ethics counselor, if you have made full disclosure of the relevant circumstances.

This Handbook provides a general summary of the rules. It does **not** include every exception, every requirement, or all the factors that must be considered in making certain decisions. If you are unsure of your actions, call your ethics counselor before you act.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC SERVICE

| <u>Do's</u> | <u>Don'ts</u> |
|--|--|
|  Place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain |  Don't use nonpublic information to benefit yourself or anyone else |
|  Act impartially to all groups, persons, and organizations |  Don't solicit or accept gifts from persons or parties that do business with or seek official action from DISA (unless permitted by an exception) |
|  Give an honest effort in the performance of your duties |  Don't make unauthorized commitments or promises that bind the Government |
|  Protect and conserve Federal property |  Don't use Federal property for unauthorized purposes |
|  Disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities |  Don't take jobs or hold financial interests that conflict with your Government responsibilities |
|  Fulfill in good faith your obligations as a citizen, and pay your Federal, State, and local taxes |  Don't take actions that give the appearance that they are illegal or unethical |
|  Comply with all laws providing equal opportunity to all persons, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap | |

Remember: Violating ethics principles may result in disciplinary or corrective action, including criminal prosecution. Protect yourself from disciplinary action by seeking the advice of your agency ethics counselor.

GIFTS

Gifts From Outside Sources

Rule: You may not accept a gift given:

- Because of your **official position**, or
- By a **prohibited source**

Regardless of any exceptions that allow accepting gifts, it is **always impermissible** to:

- Accept a gift in return for being influenced in the performance of an official act. This is a bribe!
- Solicit or coerce the offering of a gift from a prohibited source or a gift that is given because of the employee's official position
- Accept gifts from the same or different sources so frequently that a reasonable person would think you are using your office for private gain
- Accept a gift in violation of a statute

Patty, a DISA employee, meets informally every week with representatives of defense contractors, who customarily treat her to a small breakfast. Although an exception might permit acceptance of these small breakfasts, Patty's recurring practice of accepting them is improper.

What's a Prohibited Source?

A prohibited source is any person who is:

- Seeking official action by DISA
- Doing or seeking to do business with DISA
- Regulated by DISA, or
- Substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of your official duties

Note: A prohibited source is also an organization a majority of whose members are "prohibited sources" as described above (e.g., AFCEA).

What's a Gift?

Anything of monetary value.

Joe, a Computer.Com representative, is seeking to do business with DoD. He invites members of the acquisition department to a golf tournament, which his company will pay for. DISA acquisitions personnel cannot accept the gift of free golf greens fees unless an exception to the gift rule applies, because Computer.Com, by seeking to do business with DISA, is a prohibited source.

What's Not a Gift?

Here are examples of items that are not defined as "gifts":

- Modest items of food and refreshments (like coffee and donuts) when not served as a meal
- Prizes in contests open to the public
- Greeting cards and items with little intrinsic value, such as plaques, certificates, and trophies, intended only for presentation
- Commercial discounts available to the public or to all Government civilian or military personnel
- Anything the Government acquires by contract or otherwise legally accepts
- Anything for which you pay market value

Gifts That You May Keep

Remember, you do not have to accept a gift. It may be smart, depending on the circumstances, to decline a gift, even when it is allowed by the exceptions below.

- Gifts valued at \$20 or less, **but**
 - not cash or investment interests
 - not more than \$50 in total from one source in a year
- Gifts motivated by personal relationships
- Certain discounts and similar benefits offered
 - by professional organizations
 - to groups unrelated to Government employment (such as AARP)
 - to groups in which membership is related to Government employment, if the same benefits are available to other, similar organizations (e.g. discounted loans to Government credit union members).
 - by a *non*-prohibited source to any group as long as not discriminatory on basis of rank, type of responsibility, or pay.

You may accept cups of coffee offered by a contractor at no charge.

If you enter your business card in a drawing sponsored by a DoD contractor that is open to the public, you may keep the prize.

On each of his quarterly visits, a sales representative of Overpriced Computers Inc. gave Bonnie, a DISA employee, a company T-shirt, valued at \$10 each. During that period, Bonnie's brother Steve, who also works for Overpriced Computers Inc., purchased for her a birthday present valued at \$60. Bonnie may keep all of the gifts given to her. The T-shirts do not exceed the \$50 annual limit from one source, and the gift from her brother Steve is the result of a personal, not business, relationship.

Tom was offered two tickets valued at \$30 a piece to a baseball game from an employee of a defense contractor. Since the price of each ticket exceeds the \$20 limit, Tom may only accept the tickets if he pays the contractor \$60, the full market value of the tickets. (Paying only \$40 is not permissible.)

- Gifts resulting from your or your spouse’s outside business activities if clearly not offered or enhanced because of your official position
- Free attendance provided by a state, local government, or tax exempt civic organization when there is a community relations interest
- Gifts accepted under specific statutory authority, such as certain gifts from a foreign government
- Certain educational scholarships and grants (consult a DISA ethics counselor)
- Free attendance, food, and entertainment (not travel) *when provided by a sponsor*:
 - of an event on the day that you are speaking or presenting information, **or**
 - of a widely attended gathering, provided that your supervisor determines that your attendance is in the agency’s interest. (If the sponsor has interests that may be affected by you, an additional conflict of interest determination is required.)
- Free attendance, food, and entertainment (not travel) *provided by a person other than the sponsor* of a widely attended gathering, if:
 - the market value of the gift of free attendance is \$285 or less and more than 100 persons are expected to attend, **and**
 - your supervisor determines that your attendance is in the agency’s interest. (If the person has interests that may be affected by the employee, an additional conflict of interest determination is required.)
- Meals, lodging, transportation, and other benefits in connection with employment discussions
- Awards for meritorious public service or achievement, and honorary degrees – see your ethics counselor
- Travel benefits and free attendance from political organizations in connection with certain political activities

- Food and entertainment

On account of his DISA position, Jared, a DISA officer, is invited by an arms trade association to an industry-wide, one-day seminar sponsored by the association and valued at \$200. He is also invited to dinner, which costs \$100, at a restaurant after the seminar with several industry executives. Jared may accept the seminar invitation, provided that his supervisor determines that his attendance furthers DISA’s interests. Jared may not accept the free dinner invitation, which is not part of the seminar and is closed to other interested participants.

(not travel and lodging), at social events, if: (1) the invitation is not from a prohibited source, **and** (2) the event is free to all attendees.

An annual dinner, which is held by a veterans’ service organization, costs \$125 per person. Representatives from veterans’ groups, Congress, and the media will attend. Big Guns, Inc. gives several DISA employees free tickets. At the dinner, a veteran will be honored. Since it is a widely attended gathering, DISA employees may be able to accept the free tickets if his or her ethics counselor determines more than 100 persons are expected to attend the event, and there is an agency interest in the DISA employee’s attendance.

- Gifts of food and entertainment (not to exceed the per diem rate) at meetings or events attended in an official capacity in foreign areas, when (1) *not* provided by a foreign government **and** (2) non-U.S. citizens participate in the meeting or event

Foreign Gifts

Rule: Federal employees may accept gifts from foreign governments if the gift is below the “minimal value” (\$285 as of publication of this guide, October 2004). Check with your ethics counselor about appraising the gift or what the current threshold is.

Disposition of Improper Gifts

Rule: If you are offered a gift that you cannot accept, you should:

- Decline the gift
- Return the gift, **or**
- Pay the donor the gift’s market value

Subsequent reciprocity is not a solution

Gifts Between Employees

Rule: You may not accept a gift from an employee who earns less than you (unless you have a personal relationship with the employee, and you are not in the chain of command)

Rule: You may not give, make a donation toward, or solicit a gift for someone superior to you in the chain of command.

Exceptions to the Rule

1. On an occasional basis, such as holidays or birthdays, you may give to a superior or receive from a subordinate:
 - Items, other than cash, with an aggregate market value of \$10 or less per occasion,

Under certain circumstances, perishable items may be:

- **donated to charity**
- **destroyed**
- **shared within the office**

(check with your ethics counselor)

Bill asks each of his 4 coworkers to pitch in \$20 to purchase a \$100 golf putter for Doreen, their boss, for Christmas. Doreen invites the office to a New Year’s party, serving meals valued at \$25. Bill brings a \$20 bottle of wine.

- **Bill may not solicit, and he and his coworkers may not give, their boss a group gift or individual gifts at Christmas that exceed \$10.**
- **The dinner and the wine are both appropriate.**

- Non-monetary gifts of up to \$10
 - Personal hospitality provided at a residence (or an appropriate host/hostess gift),
 - Food or refreshments shared in the office
2. On special, infrequent occasions,
- of personal significance, such as marriage, illness, or birth or adoption of a child
 - that terminate the chain of command, such as retirement, resignation, or transfer

you may

- solicit voluntary contributions up to \$10/person for a group gift
- give an appropriate gift to a superior
- accept appropriate gifts and group gifts that do not exceed \$300 from subordinates (See your ethics counselor for exceptions.)

If you think you may have a conflicting financial interest, consult your DISA ethics counselor immediately to determine the appropriate

Doreen decides to retire. Bill, who works for Doreen, gives her a \$20 book and again solicits for a going-away gift. He would like to get her a golf-related desk set that costs about \$50.

- **Bill may give the \$20 book, as it is an appropriate gift**
- **Bill may also solicit for a gift and contribute toward the group gift**
- **Bill has learned his lesson and does not suggest an amount to contribute**

remedy.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Conflicting Financial Interests

Criminal Rule: You may not do government work on a particular matter that will affect the financial interest of:

- You
- Your spouse
- Your minor children
- Your general partner
- Organizations with which you are negotiating or have arrangements for future employment, **or**
- Any organization for which you serve as an employee, officer, director, trustee, or general partner

Bryan, a DISA procurement officer, is about to award a contract for new computers. His wife, Deanna, owns a computer sales business, which has bid on the contract. Bryan may not participate in the contract award decision, since the decision will affect his wife's financial interests.

Bribery and Graft

Rule: You may not seek or accept anything of value, other than your salary, for being influenced in your official duties.

Commercial Dealings Between DISA Employees

Rule: You may not knowingly solicit or make solicited sales to personnel who are junior in rank, grade, or position (or their families). This includes insurance, stocks, real estate, cosmetics, household supplies, and other such goods and services.

Sue operates a cosmetics sales business out of her home after hours. During the day she is a supervisor at DISA. She may not make solicited sales to her DISA subordinates at the job or after work by calling them at home.

Representation of Others in Matters Affecting Government

Rule: You generally may not represent anyone outside the Government before a Federal agency or court, or share in any compensation for such representations made by anybody else, if the Government is involved in the particular matter.

- There are limited exceptions.
- There are special exceptions for consultants.
- Check with your ethics counselor.

Supplementation of Federal Salary

Rule: You may not accept compensation from any source except the Government for your services as a Government employee.

This rule does not apply, if:

- you are a “special Government employee” – *i.e.*, a consultant, or
- you serve without compensation, or
- your supplementation is a result of a public service award

IMPARTIALITY IN PERFORMING OFFICIAL DUTIES

Rule: Maintain your impartiality. Do not participate in any particular DoD matter if:

- the matter is likely to affect the financial interest of a member of your household, or if a person with whom you have a “covered relationship” is involved in the matter, **and**
- a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts could question your impartiality.

Who may be in a “covered relationship”?

- A member of your household, including roommates, or a relative with whom you are close,
- Someone with whom you have or seek to have a business relationship, other than a routine consumer transaction,
- An organization (other than a political party) in which you actively participate,
- Someone with whom you had, within the last year, a close business relationship, such as in a partnership or employment context, **or**
- Someone with whom your spouse, parent, or dependent child has (or seeks to have) a close business relationship, such as in a partnership or employment context.

A senior VP from Blatz Corp. recently resigned from Blatz to become a senior official in DISA. Shortly after his arrival, the official’s office is tasked to decide whether or not to renew Blatz’s contract with DISA. Because the senior official was employed by Blatz within the last year, he may not make the decision

MISUSE OF POSITION

Rule: You may not use, or permit the use of, your Government position, title, or any authority associated with your office:

- To induce or coerce another person to provide any benefit to you or anyone with whom you are affiliated

The DISA Director has been asked by his college to serve on the Alumni Association. He may serve in his personal capacity, but may not allow his position as Director to be used on the college letterhead or other promotional literature. He may however list his service and rank.

- To imply that DISA or the Government endorses personal activities
- To endorse any product, service, or enterprise, except as provided by statute or regulation

USE OF GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Rule: Use Federal Government equipment and property, including communications systems, only for official purposes or authorized purposes as approved by your supervisor.

Rule: Use official time in an honest effort to perform official duties, and do not ask subordinates to perform tasks outside their official duties.

FUNDRAISING

Rule: You may raise funds for organizations in your personal capacity, but you may not use your official title, position, or authority to fundraise, nor may you solicit subordinates or prohibited sources.

Oscar, who is the deputy director of a DISA office, is in charge of raising funds for his son's Little League team. Oscar may not ask his subordinates to contribute.

TEACHING, SPEAKING, AND WRITING

Rule: You may accept payment for teaching, speaking, or writing that is unrelated to your official duties and that was not prepared on official time.

- If your employment by DISA is identified, you must make a disclaimer.

Stu, an ethics attorney at DISA, has been offered \$1500 to teach a 1-day course on Federal ethics to employees at Big Contractor, Inc. Because the topic relates to his official duties, he may not accept the compensation.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

Rule: If you file a financial disclosure report, you need your supervisor’s prior written approval before you engage in business activity or employment with a DISA “prohibited source” (see page 2). Presidential appointees and certain non-career employees have additional restrictions – consult your ethics counselor.

Rule: You may not have outside employment or activities that would materially impair your ability to perform your duties.

Jill, who tests new computers for the office, wants to work on weekends for the vendor of those computers. Since her outside employment would cause a conflict of interest with her Government duties, she should not accept the job.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Most Federal civilian employees may actively participate in political campaigns and other partisan activities. However, they may not engage in such activities on duty, or in any Federal workplace, vehicle, or while in uniform.

While the Hatch Act loosened restrictions on political activity for most Federal civilian employees, Federal laws still limit the political activities of military personnel, and law enforcement, national security, and career SES employees. Moreover, by policy within DoD, employees appointed by the President and employees appointed by the Secretary to non-career SES positions may not engage in any activity that could be interpreted as associating DoD with any partisan cause or issue.

If you plan to engage in any partisan political activity, you should consult your ethics counselor.

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Seeking Employment

Rule: If you are seeking non-Federal employment (e.g., sending resumes to select employers), you may not do Government work on a particular matter that will affect the financial interests of any of your prospective employers. You must give a written disqualification statement to your supervisor.

Janelle, a procurement specialist, is doing work as a Government employee on a contract worth \$500,000. She is offered an interview for a job by the contractor. Janelle must disqualify or recuse herself and inform her supervisor and ethics counselor.

Post-Government Employment

Rule: Always consult your ethics counselor before separating from the Government. He or she will advise you on the restrictions that will apply to your activities in the private sector in light of your specific duties and level of responsibility as a Government employee.

Your ethics counselor's written direction may protect you from any questions about the propriety of your post-federal employment.

OFFICIAL TRAVEL BENEFITS

You may keep promotional items, such as frequent flyer miles, that are awarded for official travel that is funded by the Government. If Government travel is funded by a non-Federal entity, you may keep promotional items that are awarded for that travel if the non-Federal entity does not object.

Travel funded by a non-Federal entity must be separately approved in advance. See your ethics counselor.

You may also keep promotional items given to compensate you for being voluntarily bumped from a flight. You may voluntarily surrender your seat **ONLY** if doing so does not adversely affect the performance of your official duties and does not result in additional cost to the Government.

You may not keep promotional items given to compensate you for being involuntarily bumped from a flight.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have further questions, consult an ethics counselor. In DISA, contact the Office of General Counsel, as described on page ii.

Additional information is available in:

1. Standards of Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch

The U.S. Office of Government Ethics has developed a comprehensive set of regulations to assist Federal employees with their ethics questions. This is a primary source of guidance on ethics and standards of conduct. It may be found on the Office of Government Ethics website:
www.usoge.gov.

2. DoD 5500.7-R, the Joint Ethics Regulation (“JER”)

The JER contains supplemental regulations for DoD employees.

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