



LEON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

People Focused. Performance Driven.

THE CODE OF ETHICS GUIDE

An Ethics “Field Manual” for Employees

► **Setting the Standard in Ethics & Public Service**

Vision

A community that is safe, healthy and vibrant.

Mission

To efficiently provide public services which serve and strengthen our community.



ADMINISTRATOR'S LETTER



Vincent S. Long

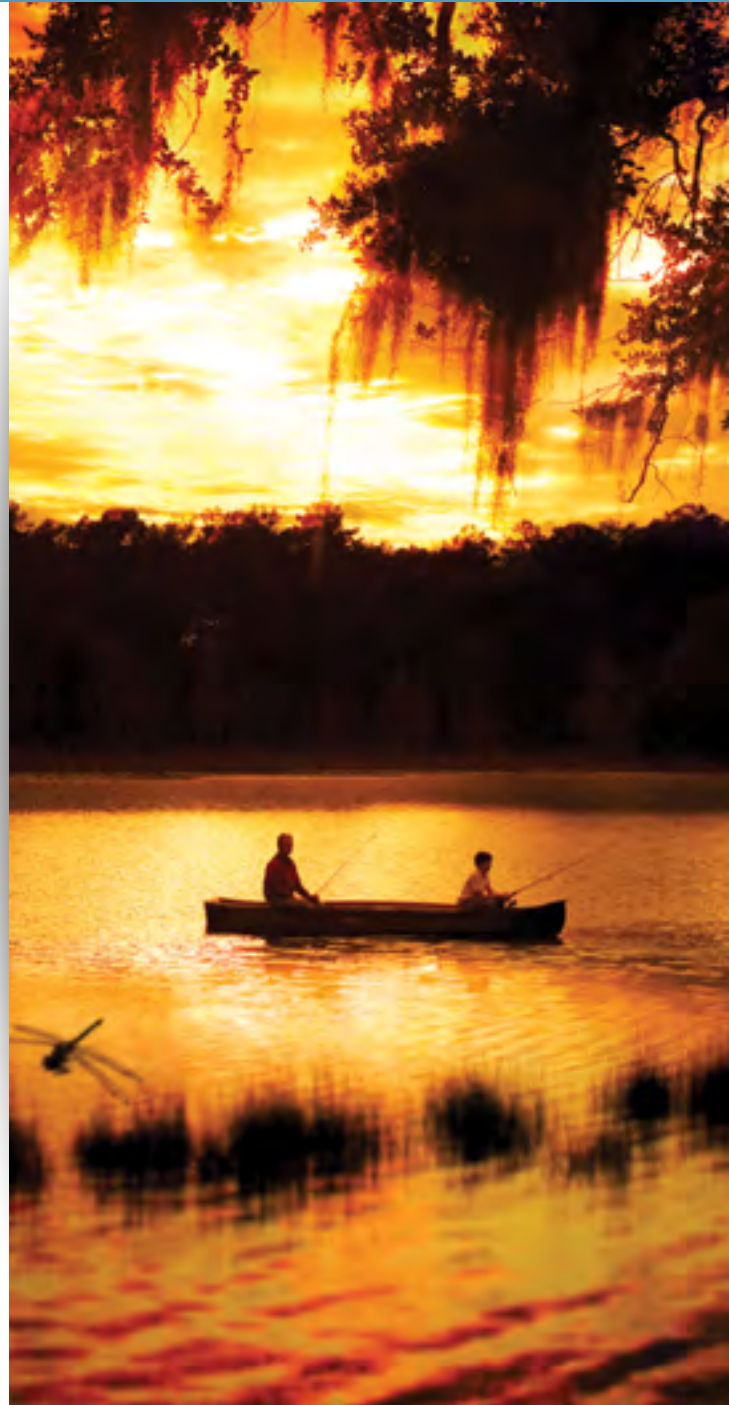
In every way that Leon County employees touch the lives of our citizens we serve, we consistently strive to set the standard in public service and to uphold the public trust.

Ethics are a core practice in Leon County Government and standards of ethical behavior are detailed in both our "Ethics Code" policy and our "Employee Standards of Conduct" contained in the Human Resources manual. While both of these documents are thorough and complete, the guide you are now holding is intended to be a user-friendly "field manual" for reference, reminders and reinforcement related to the high standards of ethical behavior required to be a Leon County employee.

Understanding that this guide may not answer every question you have now or in the future, I've designated Wanda Hunter, Assistant County Administrator to be your initial point of contact. She is just a phone call or e-mail away should you have a question or concern, require clarification or if you just need a little advice or guidance.

Leon County employees perform many different jobs and fulfill a broad range of responsibilities, but the one thing we must all do every day is practice ethics with great clarity and unwavering consistency. Thank you for all you do to make our community and our organization even better.

Vince



**Just a call
or email
away ...**

Wanda Hunter
Assistant County Administrator
(850) 606-5380
HunterW@LeonCountyFL.gov



With almost 30 years of public service, Wanda Hunter has spent her career dedicated to integrity, honesty and accountability. Beginning her career in Leon County with the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, Wanda has since worked throughout the County in different roles and levels, giving her vast experience and a unique perspective to help you and address issues of ethics and compliance in coordination with Human Resources and the County Attorney's Office.

A PUBLIC TRUST



Leon County employees fully embrace and live by our core practices, and enhance our people focused, performance driven organizational culture; demonstrate pride in their work and their community; always strive to improve levels of service and performance; and are empowered to help the people they serve. To promote the public interest and maintain the public's trust, Leon County employees are committed to the following Core Practices:

- **Demonstrating Highest Standards of Public Service.** Employees adhere to the highest standards of ethical behavior, avoid circumstances that create even an appearance of impropriety and carry out the public's business in a manner which upholds the public trust. Citizens know that we are on their side.
- **Delivering the "Wow" factor in Customer Service.** Employees deliver exemplary service with pride, passion and determination; anticipating and solving problems in "real time" and exceeding customer expectations. Customers know that they are the reason we are here.
- **Connecting with Citizens.** Employees go beyond customer service to community relevance, engaging citizens as stakeholders in the community's success. Citizens know that they are part of the bigger cause.
- **Accepting Accountability.** Employees are individually and collectively accountable for their performance, adapt to changing conditions and relentlessly pursue excellence beyond the current standard, while maintaining our core values.
- **Exhibiting Respect.** Employees exercise respect for citizens, community partners and each other.
- **Employing Team Approach.** Employees work together to produce bigger and better ideas to seize the opportunities and to address the problems which face our community.
- **Exercising Responsible Stewardship of the Community's Resources.** Employees engage in the continuous effort to create and sustain a place which attracts talent, fosters economic opportunity and offers an unmatched quality of life, demonstrating performance, value and results for our citizenry.
- **Living our "People Focused, Performance Driven" Culture.** Employees have a structure in place to live all of this as our organizational culture and are empowered to help the people they serve.



MISUSE OF POSITION

It is prohibited for any County employee to use or attempt to use his/her position, or any property or resource, that may be within the employee's trust, or perform his/her official duties, to secure a special privilege, benefit, or exemption for himself, herself or others.

Employees shall not be permitted to use County facilities, meeting rooms, or conference rooms, or County equipment for other than County business, unless such facilities or equipment are available in accordance with established policy on a regular basis to the general public in which instance the use of such shall be on the same conditions as for the general public.

Perception is reality



Employees should avoid the appearance of inappropriate use of the County's equipment, supplies, facilities, and other resources for their own benefit.



Q&A


- Q:** I have an outside business providing lawn care service, am I able to share my County business card with possible new clients?
- A:** No. Using your County business card, emailing County contacts and any misuse of County resources is prohibited.



UNAUTHORIZED COMPENSATION

No employee or employee's spouse or minor child shall, at any time, accept any compensation, payment, or thing of value when the employee knows, or with the exercise of reasonable care should know that it was given to influence an employee's official actions.

Delivering the WOW!

 *Often our citizens want to express appreciation for work done well. If you have a citizen offer you a gift or money, politely say no. You can suggest they offer appreciation by contacting your supervisor.*



Q&A

- Q:** May I take a part-time job from a contractor who currently does work with the County and whose contract I oversee?
- A:** No, you may not take the part time job even if the contractor has no intention of trying to influence how you manage their contract. Taking the job creates an appearance that you are being influenced.

Developed with financial assistance provided by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection through the Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program.

GIVING AND RECEIVING GIFTS

The law prohibits the solicitation or acceptance by any County employee of any gift, loan, favor, or service that would cause a reasonably prudent person to be influenced in the discharge of official duties, or should have known, that it was given to influence an employee's official actions.

Are there gifts I can receive?



T-shirts, pencils, raffles, shopping bags and all other “trinkets” are okay to take, as long as it is a County-sponsored or -approved activity and as long as everyone attending the event is offered the same items.



TIP ►

County employees are eligible for discounts from vendors as long as the same discount is available to all employees.



Q&A

Q: Am I able to accept a dinner that is being offered free at an upcoming office-related event?

A: Accepting of food and/or drinks offered at activities where your attendance is associated with your official County duties is okay.

MISUSE OF INFORMATION



n employee may not disclose or use information not available to the general public for his/her personal gain or for the gain of any other person or business entity.

You have a duty to assure confidential information remains confidential. County employees may have possession of citizen's social security, medical, or even individual financial information. It is our job to always be on guard to strictly protect the confidentiality of this information.

Q&A



Q: *I'm aware of an upcoming County bid that a friend of mine might be qualified to bid on. In order to help my friend prepare the lowest bid, can I let her know the timing of the bid and let her know what type of contractor the County wants?*

A: *No. As a County employee, you cannot use your job to benefit another business or person. Giving your friend this information provides them an unfair advantage over other possible contractors that may also want to bid.*



POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

- E**very employee will have the right to express his or her views as a citizen, to cast his or her vote as he or she chooses, to hold membership in and to support a political party, or maintain political neutrality. Employees may also attend political meetings and take an active part in political campaigns during off duty hours. However, every employee is prohibited from:
- Using his/her official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office.
 - Directly or indirectly coercing, attempting to coerce, commanding, or advising a County employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency, or person for political purposes.
 - Participating in political activities during scheduled work time.
 - Participating as a candidate for public elective office in a partisan primary, general, or special election, will prohibit a person from being principally employed in a federally funded program.
 - Using Leon County resources, including but not limited to material goods and the use of office staff and/or County personnel, for either political campaign purposes or other personal matters.

TIP ▶ *Social media requires care when using*



Using your own social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to provide political opinions is okay – as long as it is on your own time. When acting on behalf of the County, including using the County’s social media, refrain from expressing your own personal political views.



Q&A

- Q:** I’ve been asked by a neighbor to collect signatures on a petition opposing a neighborhood re-zoning issue. Can I help out and collect signatures?
- A:** Yes, you can address issues that are important to you and as a citizen are permitted. Remember that you must do this on your own time and must not give even the appearance that you are representing the County. And as always, do not provide any confidential information in support of your position.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT



Employees shall not engage in any employment activity or enterprise, which has been or may be determined to be inconsistent, incompatible, or in conflict with the duties, functions, or responsibilities of their County employment.

Employees may not transact business on behalf of the County with any agency in which either the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family has a "material interest."

Employees may not hold any employment or contractual relationship with any business entity or any agency, which is subject to the regulation of, or is doing business with, Leon County Government.



TIP ►

Accepting work outside of the County is acceptable as long as it doesn't conflict with your County job hours and shifts. Remember, your County job comes first.

Complete an Outside Employment Form



Employees who desire to accept outside employment in addition to their regular County position must complete an outside employment form and submit it to their respective Department/ Division Director for a determination of whether such employment conflicts with the duties and responsibilities of the employee.



Q&A

Q: I'm interested in getting a part time job a couple nights a week. Can I?

A: You may get a part-time job with the following conditions: you've completed the County's outside employment form and received the necessary approvals; your County job comes first and the new job's hours do not conflict; and you cannot use any County equipment, supplies, space, etc. when working at your part time job.

NEPOTISM

A relative of any County employee with supervisory responsibility shall not be eligible for employment in or advancement to any position which reports directly to the supervisory employee.

Likewise, a County employee shall not be eligible for advancement to any position with direct supervisory responsibility over a position in which a relative is employed.

TIP ▶ **“Relative” is a relative term...**



Leon County’s definition of “relative” includes not only father, mother, son, and daughter, but also brother, sister, uncle, and aunt as well as others – when in doubt, reach out to Human Resources for a complete list.



Q&A

- Q:** Can my daughter apply for a job with the County?
- A:** Your daughter may apply for and be considered for a job at the County, IF, when hired you are not directly responsible for their supervision.

SOLICITATION AND FUNDRAISING



No employee or other person may solicit or be solicited during working hours or in work areas.

No employee may distribute literature in his/her work area or during work hours.

No person may distribute literature to an employee in that employee's work area or during that employee's working hours.

Charitable solicitations may be permitted upon approval of the County Administrator and subject to the following:

- Solicitation may take place only for charitable purposes and not for private gain, and only on behalf of generally recognized and reputable charitable organizations.
- The specific activities to be utilized in the charitable solicitation must be communicated to and approved by the County Administrator prior to any activity taking place.

TIP ▶



As a member of a professional organization you may be subject to their specific code of ethics. As a County employee, the Leon County Code of Ethics sets a benchmark for you. If your professional organization has a more stringent code of ethics, reach out to the Assistant County Administrator to discuss which code you should follow.



REPORTING ETHICS CONCERNS

a.

You are encouraged to report suspected ethics or compliance concerns, waste or abuse of County resources to your supervisor, or the Assistant County Administrator or both, depending on the circumstances.

- b.** The Assistant County Administrator is ready and able to discuss any ethics or compliance concerns or issues of waste or abuse of County resources and will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of the employee.
- c.** Employees making a report in good faith, or cooperating in an investigation, shall not suffer any form of retaliation.
- d.** Any suspicion of fraud should be reported directly to the fraud, waste, and abuse hotline, toll-free at 850-606-5304. Or, by mail to: Leon County Fraud, Waste, Abuse & Misconduct Hotline, 301 South Monroe Street, 5th Floor Leon County Courthouse, Tallahassee, Florida 32301. Reports may be made anonymously.

Additional information can be found at:
www.LeonCountyFL.gov/Fraud

- e.** Any ethics and compliance concerns should be directed to 850-606-5380.

“

“Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.”

—Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart



AUTHORITY AND ENFORCEMENT



Leon County Policy No. 03-05 “Code of Ethics” applies to the members of the Board of County Commissioners and its employees, as well as to all members of appointed boards and committees that have been created by the Board of County Commissioners.

- b. In addition to the “Code of Ethics”, Leon County’s Human Resources Manual, Section II contains standards for “Employee Conduct”.
- c. The Code of Ethics for public officers and employees as set forth in Part III of Chapter 112, Florida Statutes, applies to all employees and sets forth a baseline of requirements. Where the County Code of Ethics has stricter requirements, employees must adhere to this code. Additionally, County employees may have professional association or licensing ethics requirements, which may impose requirements beyond the County Code of Ethics.
- d. Questions regarding compliance with the Code of Ethics are handled by the Assistant County Administrator, in consultation with the County Attorney and Human Resources as needed. In most cases, violations of the Code of Ethics will be addressed by the department director with assistance from the Assistant County Administrator and Human Resources. Where a violation has been found, discipline can range from corrective counseling to termination.



“The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it.”

—General H. Norman Schwarzkopf



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



In our continuous efforts to be an employer of choice, Leon County Government seeks to attract and retain high performing, healthy and happy employees. This is not only good for our employees, but key to our success in setting the standard in public service. In addition to assisting our employees in navigating potential ethical situations, we have put in place policies and programs which have garnered national attention for employee well-being, domestic violence and employee assistance. Like the ethics guide, the resources below are intended to serve and support our employees and sustain a workplace where our people can thrive.

Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence and Stalking in the Workplace (Policy 13-2): Leon County will not tolerate acts of Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, or Stalking in its Workplace, or the use of Leon County resources by Employees to perpetrate such acts. Leon County instituted this Policy as part of its commitment to a healthy, safe organizational climate and to the prevention and reduction of the incidences and effects of Domestic Violence, Sexual violence, and Stalking which Leon County recognizes as workplace issues that impact the workplace, even if the incidents occur elsewhere.



Violence Prevention and Intervention (Policy 03-12): Violence in the workplace can have a devastating effect on the productivity of organizations and the quality of life of employees. Recognizing this problem, Leon County has developed procedures to identify, report, intervene, and prevent workplace violence.

Employee Assistance Program (Policy 16-2): The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has been established to assist employees, who develop alcohol, drug, behavioral or stress related problems that result in or contribute to substandard job performance, by providing confidential consultation, treatment and rehabilitation.

Leon County Wellness Program (Policy 12-4): The primary purpose of the Leon County Wellness Program shall be to offer programs and services to assist employees in making voluntary behavior changes that improve employee health and enhance individual productivity and well-being or maintaining a healthy lifestyle.





People Focused. Performance Driven.