



**COBB COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD
DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD**

Page 1 of 6

Policy # 4089	Standards of Conduct & Ethics
Origination Date: January 1998	
Revision Date: June 2004; April 2006; January 3, 2008; February 5, 2009, August 2, 2010, March 7, 2012, May 9, 2013, October 23, 2013. April 28, 2016, May 5, 2016	
Reviewed Date: June 2005; June 14, 2007; February 4, 2010,	
Approved:  _____ Bryan G. Stephens, Interim Executive Director	

- REFERENCES:**
1. O.C.G.A.: 45-2-1 et seq.; 45-10-1; 45-10-20 et seq; and 45-10-40
 2. Rules of the Georgia Department of Administrative Services, Human Resources Administration

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Cobb County Community Services Board and the Douglas County Community Services Board (CSB) to maintain a code and standards of ethical conduct that support the mission and values of the agency. All employees of the agency are expected to maintain and exercise at all times the highest moral and ethical standards in carrying out their responsibilities and functions. Employees must conduct themselves in a manner that prevents all forms of impropriety, placement of self-interest above public interest, partiality, prejudice, threats, favoritism, and undue influence.

APPLICABILITY

The provisions of this policy apply to all employees regardless of status. Employees, students, volunteers, independent contractors, and anyone who acts as a representative of the CSB in any way are affected by this policy.

PROCEDURE:

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Guidelines

- a. Employees are required to observe high moral and ethical standards in official relationships and conduct while on the job in compliance with Rules of the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Human Resources Administration, and other agency policies.
- b. Written guidelines, which are explicit in covering all phases of an employee's conduct, are not possible. This policy provides general guidance and some specific examples, which establish a framework of principles to assist employees in performing their job in a professional manner.
- c. The CSB reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary action, to decline to appoint or promote an applicant/employee, and to reassign an employee in order to avoid or eliminate the appearance of conflict of interest based employee/employer or employee/client relationships. Any violations of these standards will be handled according the Disciplinary Actions for Classified Employees and Disciplinary Actions for Unclassified Employees, and also the Client Rights policies if applicable.

If an investigation is deemed necessary, the Executive Director or designee may direct that an investigation be conducted.

- d. Any employee should report violations of ethical standards to the respective supervisor, department director, or Human Resources Director. Such reports will then be discussed with the Executive Director who will determine if an investigation is warranted. Results of investigations with appropriate recommendations will be submitted to the Executive Director.

2. Non-Work Time

In general, the CSB is not concerned as an employer with the non-work time of employees. Off-duty conduct becomes a legitimate concern, however, when it affects departmental operations or reflects unfavorably on the CSB. Such off-duty conduct may result in appropriate disciplinary actions against the employee concerned.

Employees are required to notify their supervisor or Human Resources Director of any arrests and/or convictions within five calendar days of the date of arrest or conviction. A determination of appropriate action will be made on a case-by-case basis.

3. Conditions of Employment

Employees must comply with the conditions of employment specified in policies, rules, and laws, which are applicable to all employees. Examples include but are not limited to:

- a. Appropriate dress (See Dress Code Policy #4018).
- b. Professional relationships with co-workers and supervisors. Seeking, accepting and completing assignments within deadlines. Maintaining a courteous, professional demeanor in the presence of clients, the general public, and other employees. Giving clear and accurate information in a professional manner. Using appropriate telephone courtesy.
- c. Punctuality in reporting to work. Observing appropriate call-in procedures for late arrival and/or absence. Observing provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Observing policies on break and lunch periods. Using work time for work related activity.
- d. Appropriate use of leave including timely requests and provision of documentation for use of leave when required.
- e. Observance of established policies on health, safety, security and sanitation. Notification to supervisors of circumstances or situations that present potential health hazards.
- f. Maintaining the necessary training for their position, and being able to demonstrate the skills taught in training.
- g. Observance of rules and policies that are prescribed within these standards of conduct and others specifically related to job responsibilities.

B. Specific Provisions

1. Use of Privileged Information or Confidential Information

- a. Financial or Other Advantage: Many employees are exposed to privileged or confidential information through their knowledge of official plans and programs which are of significant interest to the public. Privileged or confidential information cannot be used by employees to gain advantage for themselves or for their relatives, friends, or acquaintances.
- b. Release of Information: Privileged or confidential information (e.g., contract bids, certain financial, personnel, or client information, etc.) is to be released only by authorized CSB persons. The release of any privileged or confidential information, financial or otherwise, is not authorized to any person who does not have a legitimate need to know.

- c. Use of Computer Information: Use of computers to obtain information about clients, other employees, or third parties for non-work related reasons is strictly prohibited. (See Confidentiality/Technology Agreement Sanction Policy #5017)

2. Use of CSB Property

- a. Employees are responsible for reporting suspected criminal or administrative misconduct including fraud, waste, and abuse relating to any CSB program or operation. Negligent use and/or destruction of CSB property is prohibited. (See Ethics and Compliance Policy #6007)
- b. Employees are not to use or permit the use of CSB property for other than official activities. Any form of communication (e.g., voice mail, e-mail, or fax transmittals) should convey only professional, business-like messages. CSB property includes but is not limited to:
 - Telephones (including agency cell phones), and other communications devices
NOTE: Local telephone calls of infrequent, short duration are permitted; However, this is a privilege and not an employee right. If abused, this Privilege may be withdrawn.
 - Automobiles and other agency or state-owned vehicles
 - Office equipment (including computers)
 - Supplies of all kinds

3. Personal Appearance during Work Hours (Also see Dress Code Policy #4018)

- a. As representatives of the CSB, employees should present a business-like professional image. In certain types of jobs, employees may be asked to meet specific dress code standards or required to wear uniforms. Policies may be developed by individual programs as necessary or appropriate. Such policies are subject to approval by the Executive Director prior to implementation. Designation of a periodic casual dress day in CSB program is permitted. Dress on a casual day may be less formal but should always be neat, clean and suitable for the work place. If lettered or illustrated attire is worn, it should not promote a particular political, moral, religious, personal, or other opinion. Attire, which is obscene, vulgar, offensive, or inflammatory, will not be allowed. Employees will be required to change inappropriate dress or not to wear the same or similar dress in the future.

4. Activities and Conduct during Working Hours

- a. Employees are expected to maintain a professional and business like relationship with fellow employees. The CSB will not tolerate acts or threatened acts of violence in the work place. Reports of threats or acts of violence will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated by management. Examples of prohibited behavior are:
 1. Threatening, abusive, or profane language or written material;
 2. Argumentative behavior, whether directed toward a supervisor, client, co-worker, or any other party while on duty or while acting under color of office;
 3. Fighting; and
 4. Unprofessional behavior such as sexual-related conversations, inappropriate touching of another employee (e.g., kissing, hugging, massaging, sitting on laps), racial or ethnic jokes and slurs, and other verbal or physical conduct of an offensive nature;
 5. Intimate relationships between managers or supervisors and their subordinate staff members, through any line of authority, based on the significant potential for such relationships to present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Employees who enter into such relationships are expected to notify higher management of the

need for one or both of the employees in the relationship to be reassigned, so that a line relationship no longer exists between the employees.

NOTE: Intimate relationships between co-workers are prohibited when the relationship has a demonstrated negative effect on the performance of either co-worker or the effective, efficient functioning of the work unit.

- b. Employees are required to cooperate and provide assistance, when appropriate, with any type of investigation regarding alleged criminal or administrative misconduct. This includes activities such as cooperating in interviews; answering questions related to the performance of official duties, producing requested documents, handwriting samples and polygraph examinations.
- d. Employees are not authorized to tape-record conversations at work unless work related and specifically approved by the manager of the program. Managers are not to tape-record conversations; meetings, etc. unless there is a specific work related reason for doing so. Managers should consult with the Human Resources Director prior to taping or authorizing the taping of conversations. Certain individuals, such as state investigators, due to the nature of their job, are authorized to tape-record conversations when necessary and appropriate.
- e. Employees are prohibited from falsifying records (i.e. time cards, sign in/out sheets, case management and/or client records) or any other documents prepared in the course of business.
- f. Employees are not authorized to carry weapons (e.g., knives, firearms, or explosive devices) while at work.
- g. Possession or consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs; and/or reporting to work or being on duty while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is prohibited.
- h. In order to minimize interference with normal operations and to avoid potential hazards and liability for the CSB, visitors (e.g., children, other relatives, friends or acquaintances of employees) in the work place during work hours are discouraged. If visitors (e.g., children, other relatives, friends or acquaintances of employees) are in the work place during working hours the time should be limited. Children are only allowed to be present during work hours with prior approval by the program director. These occurrences should only be in extreme emergencies and with no other options available to the employee. "Babysitting" of children by employees while on duty is prohibited. Children should have no to minimal access and interactions with clients. Work units may establish specific prohibitions in accordance with work-related needs.
- i. Offices, workstations, and office furniture are CSB property and are reserved for work-related activities. This does not preclude the occupant of an office or workstation from placing personal items in the office or workstation, consistent with a business environment and standards of reasonableness. Examples include family photographs, certificates, and diplomas; small, discreet decorative or inspirational items intended for the comfort and enjoyment of the occupant. Such items must not be offensive or inflammatory, or otherwise inconsistent with the work setting.
The CSB at all times reserves the right to require removal of a particular item or items from the office or workstation.

5. Activities and Relationships with Non-Employees

- a. Employees must be alert in conducting business with non-employees to avoid even the appearance of misconduct, personal or financial gain or conflict of interest.

- b. Employees must report ownership or partial ownership of a company if the company in which the employee is part owner is doing business, or seeks a business relationship with the CSB where the employee works.
- c. Employees are prohibited from accepting personal favors or benefits under circumstances which may be reasonably construed as influencing or giving the appearance of influencing the employee's official activities. Such favors and benefits may not be accepted by the employee on behalf of other individuals. For additional information, see Conflict of Interest Policy # 1030).
- d. Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a client/applicant/recipient of CSB services or financial assistance is a relative, or in-law. Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a client/applicant/recipient of the CSB services or financial assistance is a personal acquaintance when the relationship creates a conflict or perception of conflict of interest. Employees are required to report such circumstances to their supervisors to avoid the appearance of giving unjustified preference or conflict of interest. Employees are encouraged to discuss the above circumstances with their supervisors if there are any questions concerning relatives, in-laws, or acquaintances with regard to this policy.
- e. Employees must conduct themselves in a positive and courteous manner toward clients/staff. Mistreatment of clients in any form or engaging in other activities during work hours is a matter of concern to all supervisory levels and will not be tolerated. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:
 - Procuring alcohol or illegal drugs for or from clients;
 - Receiving gifts or favors from clients or from relatives, friends or acquaintances of clients;
 - Gambling, buying, selling, trading, borrowing or lending goods or money with clients;
 - Using relationship with, or clinical information obtained, on current or former clients to take unfair advantage of the client, their relatives, friends, or personal acquaintances; and
 - Engaging in sexual relationships, physical sexual conduct, or inappropriate verbal sexual conduct with clients, or otherwise taking sexual advantage of clients.
 - Abuse and/or neglect of clients will not be tolerated and is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
 - Personal fund raising,
 - Witnessing of personal documents of clients for example powers of attorney, guardianship, and advance directives.
 - Respect for and safeguarding the personal property of persons served, visitors, personnel and property owned by the organization
 - Conducting an outside business while on duty by any means of communication, such as operating fax or copier machines, telephones, etc.; and
 - Being on call for other employment.
- f. Employees are prohibited from membership on the Board of Directors of any private or private non-profit agency with which the CSB contracts.

6. Marketing and Advertising

With the approval of the Executive Director marketing and advertising activities efforts may be used to educate the public, provide information to the community, increase awareness of CSB services, and to recruit colleagues. Only truthful, fully informative, and non-deceptive

information will be used in marketing and advertising materials. All marketing materials will reflect services available and the level of licensure and certification. The inclusion of clients in marketing and advertising must be closely managed and limited to activities which respect the clients' rights to privacy by prohibiting their exploitation.