



## State of Tennessee - Code of Conduct

### About the Code of Conduct:

Employees have a responsibility to the citizens of the State of Tennessee to act with integrity and to treat the people we serve, our colleagues, and other parties with dignity and respect. Employees should strive to maintain an ethical and professional environment that will enhance the name, service and general impression of the State in the eyes of the general public. Employees shall also uphold the ethical rules governing their professions as well as comply with departmental and State ethics policies. This Code of Conduct provides general guidelines of employee expectations based on fundamental and ethical principles. No Code of Conduct can provide the absolute last word to address every circumstance. Therefore, employees are expected to use sound judgment in all of their conduct and ask for help when needed.

Each employee has an obligation to perform his or her job in a manner that is consistent with the Code of Conduct. Adherence to the Code of Conduct is mandatory for all employees and officials within the Executive Branch of the State of Tennessee. Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct and any other policies, which may be specific to the employee's organizational unit, may subject the employee to disciplinary action in accordance with the Department of Human Resources Rules and Regulations.

This Code of Conduct provides general guidelines to help employees understand how business is expected to be conducted. All employees are required to read and sign this Code of Conduct before assuming their job responsibilities and review annually. If you have questions about the Code of Conduct, you are encouraged to discuss them with your supervisor, your human resources representative, or the State Department of Human Resources Office of General Counsel.

### Standard 1 - Ethical Decision-Making

***We shall act with honesty and integrity, and avoid situations that involve conflicts of interests.*** A conflict of interest is a situation where your personal interests or activities could influence your judgement or decisions, and therefore, your ability to act in the best interests of the State of Tennessee. Employees should strive to provide impartial quality service to those with whom they interact, including customers and fellow employees, and avoid preferential treatment to any individual or organization. Employees shall not be involved in dishonesty,

fraud or misrepresentation. No false statements or entries may be knowingly made in any type of communication, including telephone or electronic communication.

State employees may not use public employment or access to non-public State information for private gain. State employees may not engage in outside employment activities that conflict with their official State duties and responsibilities. Such outside employment shall not adversely affect the employee's performance with the State, create a conflict of interest between such additional employment, or conflict with the regular employment schedule of the employee. In addition, employees must take appropriate action to identify, disclose, and avoid potential conflicts of interest with the performance of their official duties.

Employees shall comply with their agency's code of ethics, if any, as well as Governor Lee's Executive Order No. 2 concerning ethics and disclosures. Any employee having knowledge that a theft, forgery, credit card fraud, or any other act of unlawful or unauthorized taking, or abuse of, public money, property, or services, or other shortages of public funds has occurred shall report the information immediately to his or her supervisor or the agency's auditor.

### **Standard 2 - Safe and Professional Work Environment**

***We are committed to maintaining a safe and professional working environment for all employees and ensuring that all employees are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.*** Employees shall conduct themselves in a manner that creates and maintains respect for their work sites, fellow employees and customers, their respective agencies or departments and the State of Tennessee. All employees are expected to treat others with respect, courtesy and dignity and conduct themselves in a professional manner. Violence, threats or intimidation against others is prohibited. Employees shall comply with the Department of Human Resources policy on Violence in the Workplace (Policy 12-060) and Abusive Conduct in the Workplace (Policy 17-001), and any applicable agency policies.

Employees shall help maintain a healthy, safe and productive work environment which is free from discrimination and harassment, whether based on race, color, national origin, age (40 and over), sex, pregnancy, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status or any other factors protected under state and/or federal civil rights law. Inappropriate romantic or sexual relationships between supervisors and subordinate staff as well as inappropriate use of supervisory position or influence, are prohibited. This prohibition extends to relationships at any level within the chain of command. Employees shall refer to the Department of Human Resources policy on Workplace Discrimination and Harassment (Policy 12-008) and any applicable agency policies.

The consumption of illegal drugs or narcotics or the abuse of any drug or narcotic is strictly prohibited at all times. Use of alcoholic beverages or being under the influence of alcohol while on duty or immediately prior to reporting for duty is strictly prohibited. Employees shall comply with their agency's drug free workplace and drug testing policies, if any.

Illegal activities on the part of any employee, in addition to being unlawful, reflect on the integrity of the State and betray the trust and confidence placed in state employees by the

public. It is expected that employees shall comply with all federal and state laws, rules and other regulations. Should an employee be charged with, arrested for, or convicted of any felony or misdemeanor, the employee shall follow his or her agency's policies and procedures regarding reporting, if any.

### **Standard 3 – Efficient and Effective Government**

***Each of us is responsible for ensuring our own compliance with applicable laws and regulations.*** Employees should strive to be efficient in the performance of duties. Employees shall accurately report work time and attendance. Employees shall not habitually arrive late or fail to complete duties in a timely manner, or have lack of consideration for the time of others. Employees shall not refuse to accept reasonable assignments or intentionally fail to follow lawful instructions. Employees shall conserve and protect State property and equipment and not use it for unauthorized purposes. Employees shall comply with the State's Acceptable Use Policy governing use of computers, email and network resources.

Employees will provide customers with accurate, timely, fair and understandable information and provide the highest level of customer service possible. Employees shall not provide inappropriate responses to customer care needs.

While employees are encouraged to participate actively in the public affairs of their communities, clear distinctions must be made between comments, statements or actions made as a private individual and as a representative of the State. Employees shall not speak on behalf of their department or agency without prior authorization to do so. Employees shall not make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the department or agency.

### **Standard 4 – Confidential Information**

***We have many obligations when handling information in the workplace.*** Employees shall respect and protect confidential information and abide by all laws governing the possession and use of such information. Confidential information should only be released when it is legally permitted or required. Employees shall not use confidential work information for personal gain.

Reasonable steps to safeguard confidential information include keeping confidential data in a secured location in your office or work area, and not disclosing confidential information with co-workers in public areas such as break rooms or elevators. Each of us must safeguard confidential information at all times and should not release or discuss confidential information with non-employees.

### **Standard 5 – Records Management Policies**

***Each of us must ensure that all business records are retained in accordance with agency records management policies.*** All business records must be retained in accordance with the law and/or document retention policies. This includes paper records, electronic information

such as computer files or electronic mail, or information stored on any other medium. No employee may tamper with business records, or remove or destroy business records in a manner that is contrary to the agency's record management policies. The destruction of records that are part of any ongoing investigation or legal proceeding is expressly prohibited, even if the records disposition authorization would normally have those records destroyed. Questions concerning the retention of a particular type of record or document should be referred to your agency's general counsel.

### **Reporting Violations of the Code of Conduct**

If you believe that a violation of the Code of Conduct has been committed, you must report that information. Employees who make complaints under the Code of Conduct will be protected against retaliation.

Employees may report concerns and allegations of retaliation directly to their supervisor, their agency's human resources director, the appointing authority, or any individual designated by the agency to receive such reports. Under no circumstances is the individual alleging a violation of the Code of Conduct required to file a complaint with the alleged violator.

If an employee feels he or she cannot file a complaint with his or her agency, that person should contact the Department of Human Resources, Office of General Counsel at 615-741-4841.



## State of Tennessee - Code of Conduct Employee Acknowledgement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (*print name*), have read and understand the principles that comprise the State of Tennessee's Code of Conduct.

I understand that the State of Tennessee's integrity and reputation rests in the hands of employees.

I understand that my communications and dealings with fellow employees, customers, and the general public can directly affect the State of Tennessee's reputation and credibility.

I understand that my activities, both on and off the job, can affect the reputation, interests, and relationships of the State of Tennessee.

I commit to abide by the principles outlined in this Code of Conduct. I understand that failure to abide by these principles may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Signature\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*By acknowledging this policy via the Edison system, I agree that my acknowledgement is the equivalent to my handwritten signature.