

# Washington State Executive Ethics Board

2425 Bristol Court SW, PO Box 40149, Olympia WA 98504-0149

## **Ethics in Public Service** **A Quick Guide for New Employees**

### **Welcome to State Service!**

As a state employee, you are expected to follow certain rules and regulations. Here are a few things you should know as you begin your new job.

### **Use of Public Resources**

You may not use the facilities of your agency for personal gain. That is, you may not use the computer, including e-mail, to conduct personal business or store personal documents. Personal use of the fax machine, copier and other equipment is also prohibited.

The law does allow for de minimis use, so long as the use does not interfere with your official duties and the use is infrequent and short in duration. Please ask your supervisor or human resources department for agency policies.

**YOU MAY NEVER USE PUBLIC FACILITIES TO ASSIST IN AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN, OR TO PROMOTE OR OPPOSE A BALLOT ISSUE!**

### **Gifts**

As a general rule, never accept a gift, gratuity, or anything of value if it could be reasonably expected to influence your vote, judgment or action.

The law allows some employees to receive gifts up to \$50, and also provides special limits and exemptions. You may receive:

- Gifts from family members;
- Gifts not related to the performance of your job;
- Items exchanged at a social event;
- Payments for expenses for an official speech or presentation;
- Payment of enrollment of course fees in a seminar or other educational program;
- Items returned within 30 days;
- Campaign contributions;
- Discounts available to a broad-based group;
- Awards, prizes for recognition of achievement.

Unless you regulate or contract with the person giving the gift, you may receive the following:

- Unsolicited flowers, advertising or promotional items, tokens of appreciation or items for evaluation purposes;
- Food and beverage at hosted receptions when related to official duties;
- Admission to and cost of food and beverage at an event hosted by a civic, charitable or governmental organization;
- Unsolicited gifts from dignitaries in other states or countries;
- Food and beverage on infrequent occasions in the ordinary course of business.

If you are in a position to regulate, further restrictions apply. Refer to RCW 42.52.150(4).

### **Outside Employment**

You may, under certain circumstances, enter into a contract with another entity. The following conditions must be met:

- The contract is bona fide and performed;
- The performance is not within your official duties or under your supervision;
- It is not prohibited by law;
- Compensation is not from a person from whom you cannot receive a gift;
- Is not created by you in your official capacity; and
- Would not require you to disclose confidential information.

If the contract is with another state agency you must first get approval from the Executive Ethics Board by providing the following information:

- A description of your current duties;
- A statement of the work to be performed and a copy of the contract;
- The duration and dollar amount of the contract;
- A statement that no state resources will be used to perform the outside employment and a description of how the work will be performed without using state resources;
- A statement that the employing agency has reviewed or approved the outside contract.

For more information regarding outside employment, please refer to RCW 42.52.120 and WAC 292-100-060.

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