



Pinellas County Attorney Ethics Guide

TO: New Hires to Pinellas County Government

FROM: James L. Bennett, County Attorney

SUBJECT: Ethics Guide for Employees of Pinellas County

DATE: November 1, 2013

As County Attorney for Pinellas County, Florida, I want to take this opportunity to welcome you to employment in County Government. Additionally, as the chief legal advisor for the Board of County Commissioners, I want to take this opportunity to brief you concerning some of the ethics laws which govern your performance of public duties with the County.

Our performance of County duties is governed principally by four different ethical regulations. These include:

- The Florida Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees, located at Chapter 112 of the Florida Statutes;
- Pinellas County's Conflict of Interest Ordinance, located at Section 2-1-78, et seq., of the Pinellas County Code;
- The Pinellas County Personnel Rules, which are applicable to those employees within the Unified Personnel System; and
- The Pinellas County Statement of Ethics.

What I am going to do next is briefly outline for you some requirements, restrictions and prohibitions which the above-listed sources place upon County employees:

1. Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts. Public officers and employees are prohibited from soliciting or accepting anything of value, such as a gift, loan, reward, promise of future employment, favor or service, which is based on an understanding that their official action or judgment would be influenced by such a gift. Additionally, the County's Personnel Rules prohibit acceptance of a gift if it could be construed as a means of receiving a favor or obtaining better treatment than that accorded other persons, either presently or in the future. However, the Pinellas County Statement of Ethics states that County employees will not accept any gifts or gratuities from those with whom they do business. (Note: If you happen to be an employee who is required to file a financial disclosure form

annually, some special rules regarding gifts apply to you. Please contact Jewel White in our office at 464-3354 if you have any questions regarding these rules.)

2. Unauthorized Compensation. County employees and their spouses and minor children are prohibited from accepting any compensation, payment or any other item of value when they know, or with the exercise of reasonable care should know, that it is given to influence their official action.

3. Misuse of Public Position. County employees are prohibited from corruptly using or attempting to use their official positions to obtain a special privilege for themselves or others.

4. Disclosure or Use of Certain Information. County employees are prohibited from disclosing or using information not available to the general public and obtained by reason of their public positions for the personal benefit of themselves or others.

5. Doing Business with One's Agency. County employees, acting in a private capacity, are prohibited from renting, leasing or selling any realty, goods or services to the County or any of its agencies. For those County employees who have purchasing authority, they may not purchase, rent or lease any realty, goods or services for the County from any business in which they, their spouse, or child hold a material interest, which means they own more than 5%.

6. Conflicting Employment or Contractual Relationship. County employees may not hold any employment or contractual relationship with any business or agency that is regulated by or doing business with their public agency. They also may not hold an employment or contractual relationship that will pose a frequently recurring conflict between their public duties and private interests, or which will impede the full and faithful discharge of their public duties.

7. Employees Holding Office. A County employee may not be a member of the governing body which serves as his employer while also continuing as an employee of that body.

8. Nepotism. County officials may not seek any appointment, employment, promotion or advancement for a relative in the agency in which they are serving or over which they exercise jurisdiction or control.

9. Misappropriation of County Property. County employees may not appropriate County property or County funds for their personal use, except for authorized wages or reimbursement, or illegally dispose of County property.

Should you have any questions concerning the ethical issues discussed above and your County employment, feel free to contact my office at 464-3354.