

Introduction to County Ethics



**MILWAUKEE
COUNTY**



Agenda

What is the Ethics Code?

What is a Public Servant?

Examples of Ethics Issues

Statements of

Economic Interests (“SEIs”)

Contacting the Ethics Board

Tips & Takeaways

What is the Ethics Code?

- The difference between “moral ethics” and “government ethics”
- Chapter 9 of the County Ordinances
- The Code is focused on specific standards of conduct (including potential conflicts of personal and public interest) and the promotion of transparency and integrity in County government.



BEING A PUBLIC SERVANT

“The ethical county public official or employee accepts the responsibility that his or her mission is that of servant and steward to the public.”

Section 9.01(2)(c) of the Ethics Code

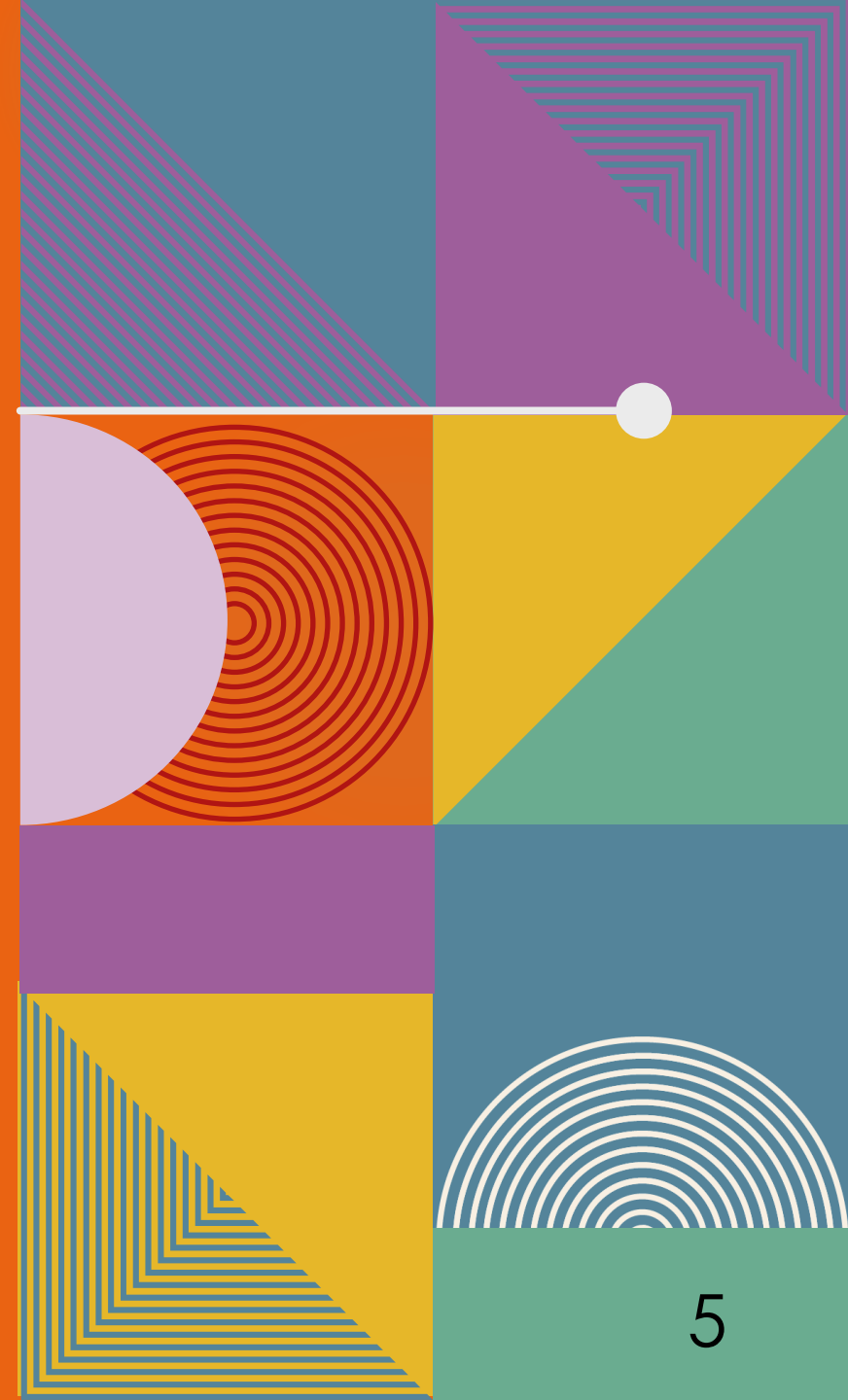
BEING A PUBLIC SERVANT

A public servant is someone who works for a governmental entity, whose wages are paid for by taxpayers in the community and whose sole purpose is to provide service to the public.

As public servants, we work for the citizens of Milwaukee County who are, by way of paying their taxes, our employers.

Your duties as a public servant include:

- Putting the needs and interest of the public first.
- Ensuring all sensitive information is kept confidential.
- Treating all members of the public with equality and fairness.
- Communicating with the public in a respectful manner that recognizes the priority of the citizen's need.
- Making sure the experience of dealing with government is as friendly, helpful and positive as possible.



Examples of Ethical Issues

- Conflicts of Interests
- Gifts and Perks
- Use of Government Resources
- Outside Employment

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Section 9.05(2) of the Ethics Code:

(a) *No financial gain or anything of substantial value*: except as otherwise provided or approved by the county board, no county public official or employee shall use his/her public position or office to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for the private benefit of himself/herself or his/her immediate family, or for an organization with which he/she is associated.

Example:

A COA member holds the position of President on the Board of Directors with Company ABC. Company ABC has applied for a large (100K +) contract with Milwaukee County. What are some things the COA member should keep in mind?

Answer:

- The member should refrain from using their county role to exercise influence related to the contract.
- If the contract is one that the COA could have authority over or be involved with, the member should refrain from being involved in actions or discussions related to the contract.

GIFTS AND PERKS

Section 9.05(2) of the Ethics Code:

(b) *No person may offer anything of value* : no person shall offer or give to any public official...directly or indirectly, and no public official...shall solicit or accept from any person, directly or indirectly, anything of value if it could reasonably be expected to influence the public official's...vote, official actions or judgment, or could reasonably be considered as a reward for any official action or inaction or omission by of the public official...

(f) *No offer of gifts or anything of value* : no county public official shall offer or give anything of value to a member or employee of a county department or entity, while that member or employee is associated with the county department or entity, and no member or employee of a department shall solicit or accept from any such person anything of value from a county official or employee.

“Anything of Value” = A value exceeding fifty dollars (\$50)



USE OF GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

SECTION 9.05(2)(C)(2)

No substantial interest or benefit: Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (1.), no public official or employee shall use his/her office or position in a way that produces or assists in the production of a substantial benefit, direct or indirect, for the public official, employee, members of the public official's or employee's immediate family either separately or together, or an organization with which the public official or employee is associated.

Example:

A COA member has a second job at a non-profit called MKE Homes. Currently, the supervisor, is working on a project for MKE Homes that requires a lot of time and attention. Can the COA member use a County-issued device to send a quick e-mail for the project?

Answer:

No, the member should refrain as much as possible from using resources they have access to through their county position to conduct business for a secondary employer.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

THE ETHICS CODE DOES NOT PROHIBIT EMPLOYEES OR OFFICIALS FROM HAVING ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT WHILE WORKING FOR THE COUNTY.

What is prohibited:

- Employment that looks like it influences you in your County role.
- Employment that could look like a reward for something you did or do in your County role.

Things to keep in mind:

- Do not disclose information that is not publicly available information. §9.05(2)(d)
- Do not use County property or resources for your outside employment. §9.05(2)(c)(2)
- Avoid participating in matters in your County role that might affect your outside employment or vice versa when possible.

IF YOU NEED ADVICE...

Reach out to the Ethics Board's office!

We are here to provide confidential advisory opinions to all employees and officials.

Contacts Us:

- E-mail - ethics@milwaukeecountywi.gov
- Phone – 414-278-5332
- Written Correspondence



FINAL TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

If you think you're facing a scenario that may involve the County's Ethics Code, ask yourself:

- Does it look fair?
- Is there an appearance of bias or favoritism?
- Is there special treatment because of your position?



If you find yourself questioning how to handle a situation, reach out to the Ethics Board Office to discuss and to receive an advisory opinion specific to your situation.



THANK
YOU

CONTACT THE ETHICS BOARD

414-278-5332

ETHICS@MILWAUKEECOUNTYWI.GOV