

	P - §7.0	Policy Name: Code of Ethics	Approved Date:
	Prepared By: Human Resources		Adopted Date: August 4, 1993
	Amended Date:		

A. PURPOSE

Ensuring that our actions and decisions are fair and honest creates public confidence in local government. This policy sets standards to further that goal and applies to all employees.

B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees – Employees are responsible for complying with this policy, as well as the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act. Employees are required to report any known instances of fraud, waste, or abuse of County funds, time, or assets.

Supervisors – Responsible for overseeing the identification, documentation, escalation, and management of conflicts of interest as they arise within their areas of responsibility.

Human Resources – Assists departments with interpretation of law and County policy and investigates reported violations.

C. POLICY

1. Code of Ethics

- a. *Honesty*: Be truthful, honest, and forthright with other employees and the public.
- b. *Integrity*: Show a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.
- c. *Public Service*: Ensure that all actions and decisions are in the best interest of the community at large.
- d. *Respect*: Treat all individuals with dignity; be fair and impartial; affirm the value of diversity in the workplace and in Albemarle County; create a work environment that enables all employees to perform to the best of their abilities.
- e. *Responsibility*: Take responsibility for actions; work diligently; report concerns in the workplace, including violations of laws and policies; seek clarification when in doubt.
- f. *Stewardship*: Exercise care with County resources; make accurate, clear, and timely disclosures to the public; maintain accurate and complete records.

2. Conflicts of Interest

- a. *State and Local Government Conflicts of Interest Act* – A violation of that Act is considered a violation of this policy, as well.
- b. *Acceptance of Gifts* – No officer or employee of a local government or advisory agency shall accept any money, loan, gift, favor, service, or opportunity that reasonably tends to influence them in the performance of their official duties. Items given to a group shall be permitted if used or consumed on the County premises and not used in contravention of the above policy.
- c. *Nepotism* – For the purpose of this section, “relative” means
 - Parents, children, spouses, domestic partners, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, or in-laws;
 - Relatives of a domestic partner;
 - Step-relatives; or
 - Romantic partners, regardless of the seriousness of the relationship.

Employees may not supervise or be in a position capable of making employment-related decisions about their relatives, including hiring, transfer, promotion and demotion, evaluation, and discipline. If that situation does occur, then the higher-ranking relative must immediately disclose that fact to Human Resources for resolution.

The department head and Human Resources will adopt a mitigation plan that discontinues the supervision and employment-related decision-making capacity of an employee over a relative. Mitigation plans may require the transfer of one relative to a different position. If no mitigation plan will meet the business needs of the County, then the termination of one relative’s employment is possible.

- d. *Conflicts in the Hiring Process* – Employees participating in a hiring process must disclose to the hiring manager whether any candidate is a relative, or if the employee’s ability to be fair and unbiased in the hiring process may otherwise be compromised or may be perceived as compromised. The hiring manager and Human Resources will determine whether the employee must be excused from participating. Employees may not share information with applicants that would give that applicant an advantage over other applicants.
- e. *Outside Employment by County Employees* – Employees must notify their department heads if they work for an employer other than the County, or occupy a leadership role in a business. If the outside work creates a conflict of interest or the appearance of one, then the employee may be required to cease either the outside work or County employment.

- f. Indebtedness to the County – Employees must pay County taxes, licenses, and fees by their due dates. While the County may pursue legal means of recovering delinquent amounts, delinquency is a violation of this policy.
- g. Fraud, Waste and Abuse – Employees must report known or reasonably suspected violations of County policies to Human Resources or to the Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Auditor. Decisions on whether to make a report must themselves meet the County's standards for honesty, integrity, public service, respect, responsibility, and stewardship. See Complaints below.
- h. Post-Employment Restrictions – For one year after employees leave County employment, they may not have a financial or other beneficial interest in a County action that they participated in or influenced during their employment.
- i. Use of Position to Give Favorable Treatment – Employees must treat all community members equitably and fairly. Employees must not give or obtain special consideration, treatment, or advantage to friends, relatives, or any other person.

3. Complaints

Upon receiving a complaint, Human Resources will review the allegation and, if warranted, investigate. Disciplinary steps under Policy P-§32.0, Employee Discipline, will be taken as appropriate.

4. Protecting Employees Who Report Complaints

Retaliation against any employees who make a report under this policy or who cooperate with an investigation under this policy will not be tolerated. However, making a report for the purpose of harassment, intimidation, or another improper purpose is a violation of this policy. (Code of VA 2.2-3011)

5. Training and Education

Human Resources conducts training for new county employees, an in-depth seminar for supervisors, and on-site meetings with employees to address department-specific concerns.

Employees with questions related to this policy may contact Human Resources.

Employees with questions about financial fraud, waste, and abuse should contact the [Fraud, Waste & Abuse Auditor](#) through the reporting system on the County's website.