



ETHICS REMINDERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Many city officers and employees are working from home under the Mayor's stay-at-home directives. Other city personnel continue to report to their work sites or are working to reopen their agencies to the public. Whether you're working from your home or at your city worksite, work is different under COVID-19. Stress and anxiety can affect the way you do your work and make decisions. Here are some ethics law reminders to help you make good ethical decisions.

Make Fair Decisions (Fair and Equal Treatment)

- Make decisions that treat people as equally as possible. City work decisions affect our community and should not favor some people, but disadvantage others.
- Your duty is to serve the public—make decisions that serve the public interest, not your own interest or the interest of anyone else.
- Many people in Honolulu have lost their jobs. Even if you want to help, you may not enter into a financial or business transaction with anyone you supervise or for anyone or any business your city agency regulates.
- You can't be involved in hiring or promoting a relative.
- You can't award a city contract to a family member's business.

Using City Resources and Working from Home

- If you're working from home with city-issued equipment (laptop, Toughbook, NUC, printer, other device), use that equipment for city work only.
- Report to work as scheduled and work a full day. Trust is very important as you work from home, so be diligent and honest about the hours you've worked.
- If you're using city supplies (paper, pens, paper clips, staplers, other) and equipment in your home office to work from home, return leftover supplies and equipment to your city office after work-from-home orders have been lifted and you return to your city office or worksite.
- You may have been given access to secret (confidential) city information in the city's servers so that you can do your work from home. The city has entrusted you with sensitive city resources, so do the right thing and keep that information safe.



Avoid Conflicts of Interest when Spending Special Emergency or Disaster Funds

- If your agency will receive special funding for COVID-19-related matters, follow all applicable guidelines (federal, state, city, procurement, others) when spending that money. Even though some state procurement laws (such as HRS Chapters 103D, 103F) have been suspended through May 2020, they will apply again after the governor's proclamations end. Contact your agency's COR deputy for guidance on spending special funding such as CARES Act funds. Contact the Ethics Commission or your agency's COR deputy for guidance on conflicts of interest.
- If you have a personal, business, or financial interest in a matter, take yourself out of making decisions and delegate that decision to someone else. Notify your appointing authority and file a public Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Statement. Find this form on the Ethics Commission website: [honolulu.gov/ethics/Disclosure Forms & Instructions/Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Statement](http://honolulu.gov/ethics/Disclosure%20Forms%20&%20Instructions/Disclosure%20of%20Conflict%20of%20Interest%20Statement).
- Don't make decisions involving your relative or close friend.

Gifts to First Responders and Gifts of Cash, Personal Protective Equipment

- If you are a city officer or employee first responder, including those who enforce the law (e.g., police officer, fire fighter, emergency medical technician, lifeguard, other), the Commission recently decided that you may accept tokens of aloha and acts of kindness during the governor's and/or mayor's declaration of state of emergency or disaster. For example, you may accept gifts of food, coffee, personal protective equipment (PPE), and discounts.
- In general, gift guidelines remain unchanged during the pandemic. Politely refuse and return personal gifts of cash and gift cards. If you receive an anonymous cash gift or gift card and can't return the gift, forward the cash or gift card to your director's office.
- Only the City Council can accept gifts of cash as a "gift to the City." Consult your agency's COR deputy for guidance.
- The Council can also accept gifts of PPE as a "gift to the City" and designate use by your department. Consult your agency's COR deputy for guidance.

Still have questions?

Contact the Ethics Commission for specific guidance on city ethics laws:
p: 768-9242 w: honolulu.gov/ethics e: ethics@honolulu.gov

Stay safe during the pandemic.