**Georgia Council of Municipal Court Clerks**

**Municipal Court Clerks Code of Ethics**

A profession has an obligation to state its basic values and ethical standards for guiding the conduct of its practitioners. Indeed, an ethical code of conduct is one of several defining characteristics of a profession. Properly drafted ethical codes articulate general values, principles, and standards to guide the decision-making and conduct of practitioners in paradigm professions at the top end of the spectrum and in occupations aspiring to become developing professions, at the other end of the spectrum.

Municipal court clerks in Georgia may decide to aspire to have their occupation develop into an emerging profession. If so decided, this ethical code would be one practical step toward professionalizing their occupation. The code articulates the core values and ethical standards for which municipal court clerks are accountable to their courts, local governments, colleagues, the public and themselves.

Ethical codes are not collections of minute rules that infallibly prescribe in great detail how exactly practitioners of a profession should act in all conceivable particular situations. Because of their general nature, values and standards set forth in ethical codes cannot exactly fit each concrete situation in all its complexity, richness, and uniqueness. Code applications must take into account the concrete contexts, distinguishing features and facts of specific situations, in addition to potential conflicts among relevant general values and standards of ethical conduct.

This code does not rank-order general values, principles, and standards and specify which among them always more important and must override others in case of conflict. Responsible and defensible ethical decision-making in any given situation requires informed judgment in applying relevant ethical principles in their situation-specific order of priority. A litmus test for the soundness of ethical judgments would be the decision makers’ comfort level if their ethical judgments were both publicized in the local media and also scrutinized by an expert board of their peers.

This code of ethics for municipal court clerks in Georgia conforms with and supports the core values and ethical principles enunciated in the Model Code of Conduct of the National Association for Court management. It also complies with and mirrors those prescriptions of the American Bar Association’s Model Code of Judicial Conduct and of the Georgia State Bar’s Code of Judicial Conduct that are relevant to non-judicial personnel in the municipal courts of Georgia.

1. **Preamble: Mission of Municipal Court Clerks in Georgia**

The Mission of municipal court clerks in Georgia is threefold: (1) to assure the administrative efficiency of the court, (2) to protect the court’s ethical integrity, and (3) to help maintain public confidence in the court’s fairness in dispensing justice impartially.

In carrying out their mission, Georgia municipal court clerks’ primary duties include the following:

1. Performing administrative tasks for the court (for example, assisting police officers, attorneys, city solicitor, indigent counsel, and municipal court judges with court cases, processing arrest warrants, collecting fines and court costs, accounting for daily receipts, filling closed and pending cases, submitting monthly reports and payments to the Georgia Court Clerks’ Authority, preparing and managing the court’s annual budget, and so on).
2. Providing information to and serving as liaison between the citizenry at large and the court, thereby influencing public perception of the court.
3. Balancing obligations to the public, to judges, to court staff, to city government, and to standards of judicial conduct applicable to non-judicial court employees.
4. Complying with court procedures.
5. Managing the court staff.

The mission of municipal court clerks in Georgia is based on a set of core values and ethical principles. Some of the most important among them include the following:

1. **Core Values and Ethical Principles of Georgia Municipal Court Clerks**
2. Lawfulness
To uphold federal, state, and local laws.
3. Propriety
To maintain high standard of personal conduct and avoid even the appearance of impropriety that can harm the reputation of and diminish public trust in the court (for example, refrain from soliciting or receiving gratuities or favors or promises of the same by using one’s position at the court, interfering in court proceedings, letting one’s responsibilities at the court be compromised, oneself unduly influenced, or independence of judgment impaired, engaging in actions or outside employment in conflict with duties at the court).
4. Financial probity
To account accurately and fully for all court receipts and financial transactions.
5. Integrity
To act honestly, truthfully, and above reproach.
6. Impartiality
To treat all stakeholders in the court equitably, fairly, and neutrally.
7. Confidentiality
To protect confidential information, never use it for personal advantage or disclose it, except for lawful reasons.
8. Service
To provide courteous and timely service to all stakeholders in the court, respectful of their human dignity and personal worth.
9. Competence
To know all aspects of the job and continually perfect job skills.
10. Motivation
To perform job responsibilities and apply job knowledge and skills with dedication and a positive attitude.
11. Information
To provide accurate, understandable, timely, and, within legal constraints, complete information to all stakeholders but without giving legal advice.
12. Non-discrimination
To avoid discriminatory, biased, or prejudicial acts or words based on race, color, gender, age, religion, national origin, language, appearance, disability, martial status, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or political affiliation.
13. Non-harassment
To refrain from harassing another either sexually or non-sexually.