

Model Code of Conduct for Those Who Serve in Courts of Limited Jurisdiction

Preamble

Courts of limited jurisdiction process thousands of cases daily and are often the place where the public develops opinions about justice and the court system. Service to the judicial branch is a public trust, and the conduct of court employees should reflect the ideals consistent with the fundamental values of the judicial system. These values include fairness, accessibility, accountability, equity, impartiality, responsiveness, service, integrity, and independence. This code of conduct is a personal and professional pledge by court employees to uphold public trust and confidence in the courts and exemplify judicial branch values.

Canon One INTEGRITY

1.1 I will uphold the integrity and independence of the court.

The behavior of court employees reflects not only on themselves but also on the court which they serve. Court employees should always act in a way that promotes public trust and confidence, incorporates values such as honesty, fairness, and service, and sets an example for others.

Canon Two IMPROPRIETY OR THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY

2.1 I will avoid activities that could reflect unfavorably on my position or the court.

Improper behavior, or the appearance of improper behavior, by court employees may compromise the dignity, independence, and integrity of the court. Behavior that is or appears to be improper extends beyond violating laws, regulations, policies, or rules, and includes accepting without proper authority outside employment that conflicts or appears to conflict with job duties at the court, or being involved in the hiring of a relative or close friend.

2.2 I will not use or attempt to use my court position to seek or secure privileges or benefits for myself or others.

Improper or perceived improper behavior also may include using, or appearing to use, an employee's position with the court for personal gain or the personal advantage of another. Such behavior might include requesting or receiving any gift that might be seen as influencing job duties; providing special favors to some and not others in similar situations; or providing confidential case information to others not authorized to receive it.

**Canon Three
PROFESSIONALISM AND COMPETENCE**

3.1 I will provide equitable and impartial service to all those requesting court assistance.

All persons interacting with the court are entitled to equitable treatment, regardless of their personal behavior or legal situation. Favoring one person or side over another or treating persons differently due to politics, rank, influence, or kinship reflects unfavorably on the integrity of all court employees as well as the court.

3.2 I will carry out my responsibilities to colleagues and all those interacting with the court in a professional manner.

To properly carry out their public trust, court employees must exhibit a high level of professionalism as they faithfully carry out their assigned duties. They must strive to provide efficient, courteous, and helpful service to all court users without exceeding their authority or giving legal advice. They must also treat colleagues with the same dignity, respect, and courtesy that they provide to the public.

3.3 I will be accountable for court resources and minimize waste and inefficiency.

Court employees are stewards of public resources; they must use the court property, funds, and other resources solely in accordance with approved and documented procedures and avoid any use that would personally benefit themselves or others. In addition, court employees should proactively look for ways to improve efficiency and decrease waste.

3.4 I will disclose information about me to the court as required by law, rule, regulation, or policy.

When required by law, rule, regulation, or court policy, court employees shall inform the appropriate authority if the employee is arrested or is named as a party or otherwise is formally involved in any proceeding which calls into question the employee's honesty or integrity. Court employees shall also disclose required information such as financial and business interests and activities, such as outside employment, which may conflict or appear to conflict with the employee's job duties.

3.5 I will actively pursue opportunities to improve my professional knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Court employees should participate in professional associations and educational activities to enhance their personal and professional skills. They should also keep abreast of changes and developments in the field of court operation and management.

**Canon Four
CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCRETION**

4.1 I will maintain as confidential any information gained through my court position.

Court employees must become familiar with the types of cases and documents that are designated confidential by law and follow all prescribed procedures for handling and storing confidential information. Confidential information should only be disclosed to those authorized by law to receive it. Court staff should use care to avoid even inadvertent or unintentional disclosures of confidential information, such as by discussing cases only for permissible reasons and avoiding being overheard by others.

Even if information acquired by court employees in the course of performing their official duties is not designated confidential, court employees should use care when revealing it to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

**Canon Five
NON-DISCRIMINATION**

5.1 I will treat my colleagues and those who interact with the court with dignity, respect, and courtesy and without regard to race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation.

No form of discrimination against court users, colleagues, members of the public, or applicants for employment with the court is acceptable. Court employees shall treat colleagues with respect and provide all court users with efficient and courteous service. Applicants for employment should be evaluated based solely upon job-related criteria such as experience, skills, and attitude in the performance of their duties.

Canon Six
CONDUCTING OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

- 6.1 I will not participate in political activities during working hours and will not use or appear to use my position or my court’s authority in connection with such activities.**

Court employees shall follow all laws or court policies regarding political activity outside working hours. No court employee may at any time use any court resources for political activity or use, or appear to use, his or her official position in connection with political activity.

- 6.2 My activities and employment outside of court hours will not conflict or appear to conflict with my court duties and position.**

Participation by court employees in activities that take place outside court hours is allowed as long as these activities do not adversely reflect upon the court or conflict, appear to conflict, or impinge upon the employee’s court duties.

Court employees should not accept outside employment unless such employment is allowed by the court and the proper approval has been obtained. The employment should not conflict or appear to conflict with the court employee’s performance of court-related duties and should not be in any agency or branch of government within the jurisdiction of either the court on which the employee serves or any other court within the appellate jurisdiction of the court on which the employee serves.

**Acknowledgement of Receipt of
the Model Code of Conduct
for Those Who Serve in Courts of Limited Jurisdiction**

I have read and understand the Model Code of Conduct for Those Who Serve in Courts of Limited Jurisdiction. As a court employee, I also agree that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of _____ and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of my office.

Signature and Date