

Jefferson County

Employee Administrative Rules & Regulations

Ethics and Conflicts of Interest



Rule Number: 5.1.6

Date Established:

Date of Last Revision: 4/27/18

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Rule is to set forth the expectation that Jefferson County employees will maintain the highest ethical standards in the conduct of County affairs in concert with Alabama Code Title 36-25-1. The intent of this Rule is that each employee will conduct the County's business with integrity and comply with all applicable laws in a manner that excludes considerations of personal advantage or gain.

2.0 RULE

The following is a summary of Jefferson County's Rule with respect to (1) gifts, favors, entertainment and payments given or received by County associates, (2) potential conflicts of interest and (3) certain other matters:

2.1 Gifts and Favors by Jefferson County: Gifts and favors may be given to others at County expense, if they meet all of the following criteria:

- They are consistent with accepted business practices;
- They are of sufficiently limited value and in a form that will not be construed as a bribe or payoff;
- They are not in violation of applicable law and generally accepted ethical standards; and
- Public disclosure of the facts will not embarrass the County.

Payments, commissions or other compensation to or for the benefit of individuals (or their family members or associates) not required by written contract are contrary to Jefferson County Rule.

2.2 Gifts, Favors, Entertainment and Payments Received by Jefferson County Employees:

Employees may not seek or accept for themselves or others any gifts, favors, entertainment, payments without a legitimate business purpose nor may they seek or accept personal loans (other than conventional loans at market rates from lending institutions) from any persons or business organizations that do or seek to do business with the County. In the application of this Rule:

Employees may accept for themselves and members of their families common courtesies usually associated with customary business practices. These include but are not limited to:

- Lunch and/or dinner with vendors as long as the invitation is extended by the vendor.

- Gifts of small value from vendors such as calendars, pens, pads, etc. An employee may accept a gift, other than cash, worth up to \$25, as long as the total value of all gifts from any one source does not exceed \$50 in a calendar year. Offers of free attendance at certain events may be accepted if approved by the employee's department head.
- Gifts of perishable items usually given during the holidays such as hams, cookies, nuts, etc., are acceptable if they do not exceed the \$25 limit.

A strict standard is expected with respect to gifts, services, discounts, entertainment or considerations of any kind from suppliers.

- Use of vendor's facilities (vacation homes, etc.) by County employees or their families for personal use is prohibited.
- It is never permissible to accept a gift in cash or cash equivalent such as stocks or other forms of marketable securities of any amount.
- The receipt of alcoholic beverages is never permissible.

Employees who are offered impermissible gifts should decline or return the gifts. Sometimes employees find declining gifts to be awkward, usually because they are afraid to seem rude or ungrateful. While these are legitimate concerns, situations in which employees must decline gifts present opportunities to educate the public on government's employee's high standards for impartiality and integrity. Employees can explain that they are not rejecting the expressions of generosity or gratitude that the gifts represent, even though strict rules for public service prevent them from accepting the gifts. While ethics rules may seem to dampen the spirit of, for example, a holiday season, they protect the County from even the appearance of impropriety. With that in mind, the best way someone to show gratitude for a County employee's good services is usually to offer a simple, "Thank you."

In addition, employees should not exchange gifts of more than \$25 from those under their supervision.

2.3 Conflicts of Interest

Jefferson County employees should avoid any situation which involves or may involve a conflict between their personal interest and the interest of the County. As in all other facets of their duties, associates dealing with customers, suppliers, contractors or any person doing or seeking to do business with the County are to act in the best interest of Jefferson County. Each employee must make prompt and full disclosure in writing to their manager of any potential situation which may involve a conflict of interest. Such conflicts include:

- Prior employment or any association with a vendor.
- Ownership by an employee or by a member of their family of interest in any outside enterprise which does or seeks to do business with Jefferson County.
- Serving as a director, officer, partner, consultant, or in a managerial or technical capacity with an outside enterprise which does or is seeking to do business with of the County.
- Acting as a broker, finder, go-between or otherwise for the benefit of a third party in transactions involving or potentially involving Jefferson County or its interests.

- Any other arrangements or circumstances, including family or other personal relationships, which might dissuade a County employee from acting in the best interest of the County.

2.4 Confidential Information

The revelation or use of any confidential product information, data on decisions, plans, or any other information which might be contrary to the interest of the County without prior authorization, is prohibited. The misuse, unauthorized access to, or mishandling of confidential information, particularly personnel information, is strictly prohibited and will subject an employee to the discipline up to and including immediate discharge.

3.0 COMPLIANCE

Any violation of this Rule will subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Any Jefferson County employee having knowledge of any violation of the Rule is required to promptly report such violation to the appropriate level of management. When questions arise concerning any aspect of this Rule, contact the Director of Human Resources.