

Ethical Employment

Web Article

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ETHICS - FOURTEEN PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

This guide provides a brief overview of the ethics rules and standards of ethical conduct that all employees should know and follow.

Discuss any question not answered here with your supervisor or ethics counsel. Your ethics counsel is:

- For Field Office employees, your respective field counsel.
- For Headquarters employees, the Office of the Assistant General Counsel for General Law: 202-586-1522 or Standardsofconduct@hq.doe.gov.

Public service is a public trust. Federal employees must always place loyalty to high ethical standards above private gain. Understanding and observing ethics rules are essential to fulfilling that trust. Print and sign a certification of completion and bring it with you on your first day of employment.

Fourteen Principles of Ethical Conduct for Federal Employees

(Executive Order 12674)

1. Public service is a public trust; employees must place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. Employee shall not, except as permitted by the Standards of Ethical Conduct, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.
5. Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.
6. Employees shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
7. Employees shall not use public office for private gain.
8. Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

10. Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities - including seeking or negotiating for employment - that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all financial obligations, especially those imposed by law, such as Federal, state, or local taxes.
13. Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
14. Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in the Standards of Ethical Conduct. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts.

These principles form the basis for the standards of ethical conduct regulation (5 C.F.R. part 2635) that is discussed and illustrated by examples on the following pages. A violation of these rules could result in disciplinary action or, for certain offenses, prosecution under related criminal statutes on conflicts of interest. You should become familiar with the rules and talk to your ethics official if you have any questions or need more information. The DOE also conducts periodic ethics training that may benefit you.