

The County of Lackawanna

Code of Ethics

Changing the Way Lackawanna County Does Business

Adopted by the Board of Commissioners: January 8, 2008

Effective Date: January 8, 2008

Amended and Restated: June 11, 2008

Purpose of the Lackawanna County Code of Ethics

This Amended and Restated Code of Ethics is intended to establish standards of conduct expected of those persons who act for or on behalf of the public in the performance of all county governmental duties and responsibilities.

Government service and public sector employment is a public trust, and those who serve the public as part of its government must perform and discharge their duties consistent with the highest principals, serving always the best interests of the County and its citizens.

Representative government is based solely on the consent of the governed, under a system in which every citizen has a right to expect those who govern or serve in the government to act not for themselves but for the governed as a whole. Because government can act only through its officials and employees, it is incumbent upon them to honor the public trust and to instill confidence in government by their own integrity and conduct in all official actions.

The people of Lackawanna County are entitled to fair, ethical and accountable county government. The effective functioning of democratic government requires that county public officials, both elected and appointed, and public employees comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting the operations of government.

To this end, the Lackawanna County Commissioners have adopted the following Code of Ethics, which applies to all officials, elected and appointed, as well as county employees, all of whom will be referred to hereinafter as "employees" of Lackawanna County government:

Political Activities

An employee may participate in the political process on his or her own time and outside of the workplace, but that person may not use county facilities for such purposes. He or she may not use county property, including telephones, e-mail, fax or copy machines, or the time or talents of co-workers while in the workplace, on behalf of political candidates or ballot issues.

Use of County Property and Public Resources

Using government resources for personal convenience or profit is a misuse of taxpayer dollars. The use of county property is limited to the conduct of official business. All other use is prohibited. County property includes vehicles, facilities (such as buildings or conference rooms, etc.), equipment (computers, telephones, cell phones, copy and fax machines, etc.) and supplies.

Gifts and Favors

County employees are prohibited from accepting anything of value, including favors, gifts or entertainment, either directly or indirectly, from any person, business, group, or organization that does business or seeks to do business with the county. This Code of Ethics is not intended to restrict the solicitation or receipt of political contributions by County employees. County employees may contribute, solicit and accept political contributions so long as such political contribution is not based on any understanding of that County employee that the vote, official action or judgment of the County employee would be influenced thereby.

County employees shall not solicit or accept anything of monetary value, including a gift, loan, political contribution, reward or promise of future employment based on any understanding of that County employee that the vote, official action or judgment of the County employee would be influenced thereby.

If a gift which is prohibited by this section is received, it must be returned to the donor within 10 working days of receipt or donated to a charitable organization. If the item is donated to charity, the recipient may not take a tax deduction for the donation.

Meals and Refreshments

It is a common business practice to take clients to lunch or dinner in the private sector. This practice is not acceptable for public employees. If an employee is invited to lunch or dinner by someone who does business or seeks to do business with the county, the employee must pay for his or her own meal.

Prohibition on the Use of Confidential Information

Employees shall respect the confidentiality of information concerning property, personnel or any and all types of county documents or transactions. The employees shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial or other private interests.

Business Relationships and Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an employee has a personal or financial interest in any matter in which they participate as a county employee.

Conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to:

1. Possessing a financial interest in a firm or organization that does business or seeks to do business with the county.
2. Participating in or seeking to influence the selection of persons, firms, or organizations doing business in the county when having a financial interest in the outcome.

3. Seeking or receiving economic gain through access to privileged information or official position.

These conflicts of interest apply to the employee and his or her immediate family, which includes spouses, parents, children and siblings of the employee.

Outside Employment

From the date of hire, county employees make a commitment to full-time employment and the successful completion of the duties to which they are assigned. County employees are permitted to maintain outside employment so long as such employment does not conflict with the official and proper discharge of his or her county duties.

Post Employment Restrictions

For one year after an employee leaves county employment, that person may not have a financial or beneficial interest in a contract or grant that was planned, authorized, or funded by a county action in which the former employee participated during county employment.

After leaving county government, the employee may not disclose or use any privileged or proprietary information gained by reason of the former employment unless the information is a matter of public knowledge or is available to the public upon request.

Severability

If any provision of this Amended and Restated Code of Ethics or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of this Amended and Restated Code of Ethics and the application of such provisions to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.