

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE
CODE OF CONDUCT

Management Directive #17-01 (REV)

Date Issued:	02/05/2021
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Policy Release
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Revision of Existing Management Directive dated: 04/12/2017
Revision Made:	NOTE: Current Revisions are Highlighted
Cancels:	None

POLICY

In order to provide quality customer service to the public and other County departments, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) employees should conduct themselves in a professional, courteous and efficient manner at all times. We should interact appropriately with all employees and the public, and present a proper positive image. Each employee is expected to act responsibly by observing regular business hours and should adhere to all policies and procedures including any office practices.

Additionally, all DCFS employees regularly have access to and the responsibility for handling confidential and sensitive information. Therefore, DCFS staff are required to maintain the highest degree of confidentiality and discretion regarding information and documents acquired during the course of their duties.

The general conduct expected of each employee includes but is not limited to the following:

A. WORK HOURS

1. All employees are required to be at their work areas and ready to work at their designated starting time. Employees who are mobile workers, work in the field, or telecommute are required to be at their designated work areas in accordance with those specific work schedules and approved itineraries. Additionally, employees whose duties include phone coverage should never leave their post unattended or be away from the desk unnecessarily. Employees are expected to remain at their posts until the end of their shift.
2. Work schedules of individual employees including lunch and break periods are the responsibility of the appropriate supervisor or manager, but must comply with the following:

- a. Special circumstances may necessitate alternate 30-minute lunch periods, which must be pre-approved by the appropriate supervisor.
- b. Employees are entitled to mid-morning and mid-afternoon rest periods of 15 minutes each, respectively.
- c. Adequate staffing is maintained to ensure proper telephone and office coverage during the business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- d. Breaks are not combined with a lunch break or used at the beginning or end of the employee's workday, nor are morning and afternoon breaks to be combined as an extended break period.

B. OFFICE PRACTICES AND PERSONAL CONDUCT

All employees of DCFS are expected to:

1. Demonstrate honesty, objectivity, professionalism and diligence in performing duties and responsibilities while accepting personal responsibility to provide clear and accurate information to customers and co-workers.
2. Be courteous and treat fellow employees, the public, and all outside contacts with respect and consideration at all times.
3. Conduct all interactions with the public in a professional, businesslike manner, and refrain from behavior which may be misconstrued or reflect negatively on the Department.
4. Refrain from activities which may appear to be a conflict of interest as described in the DCFS Human Resources Personnel Manual.
5. Comply with all County policies and rules including, but not limited to those regarding threats and violence in the workplace, sexual harassment prevention, and use of County equipment.
6. Maintain confidential information, files, records, reports, personnel and personal matters and do not release such information to any person or discuss with anyone, including other DCFS employees who do not have a business need to know. **Employees are not to access DCFS files without a business need.**
7. Dress in a professional manner, appropriate for the workplace and assigned duties. On those days designated as "business casual days," attire should always be neat and clean.
8. Maintain a neat and safe personal workspace and use care to operate office equipment correctly and in accordance with the Department's Injury and Illness Prevention Program Manual and Guidelines.

9. Leave common office areas and appliances, such as kitchens, restrooms, microwaves and refrigerators neat and clean after use.

10. In order to avoid any conflicts of interest, all employees must set and maintain clear professional boundaries with current, former clients, and individuals for whom the Department provides services.

C. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

All DCFS staff **must** be culturally sensitive. Acknowledge, respect, value and understand the importance of diversity. Demonstrate leadership. Engage, motivate, and inspire others to collaboratively achieve common goals through example, vision, and commitment. Be accountable. Take responsibility for your actions, behavior, and results. Avoid behaviors which have the appearance of impropriety. Protect departmental information and equipment. Be responsive. Be accountable to those that need your help. Listen, to make sure you understand before offering opinions or making judgments. Build positive and constructive working relationships with colleagues. Practice integrity. Be honest, forthcoming and transparent. If you make a decision later determined to be incorrect, admit to the error regardless of the consequences. Persevere during difficult or tedious situations. Show commitment to the Department's interests. Act in accordance with County and departmental policies and procedures. Commit to excellence. Perform your job duties with professionalism and integrity. Do not judge yourself by comparison to others, but by your own sense of pride and personal accomplishment.

Employees are discouraged from living with a client or person for whom the Department provides services. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate. For example, living with a client who is a relative or living with personal friends prior to employment, and/or persons whom an employee does not know are clients.

If an employee is living with, or intends to live with a client of this Department for any amount of time, they must notify their Administrator in writing within fifteen (15) calendar days from the day their living arrangements begin or when the employee becomes aware, whichever is sooner. Failure to report within fifteen (15) calendar days of living with a client may be cause for disciplinary action including discharge.

D. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

Listed below is unacceptable behavior for DCFS employees and may subject **them** to disciplinary action, including discharge from their County position and/or legal action when appropriate. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Failure to timely notify the appropriate supervisory staff of the inability to report to work, including the expected length of absence.
2. Possessing, consuming, or being under the influence of any alcoholic beverage or illegal or dangerous drugs/substance while on duty.

3. Harassing, bullying, injuring, or threatening fellow employees or members of the public in any manner. Including domestic violence disputes and or any violent crime.
4. Substantiated allegation of abuse and neglect of any individual.
5. Misappropriating, misusing or abusing any County property, including, but not limited to, monetary funds, equipment, computer systems, data, telephones and County vehicles.
6. Lying, knowingly misrepresenting, or refusing to participate in an investigative interview or withholding information from anyone with a legitimate right to know information specially to ensure child safety.
7. Using files, computers, or other means of technology to gain otherwise confidential information which is not a part of their specific assignment or position. Including sharing information with other DCFS staff or individuals who do not require the information to perform their job function.
8. Using computers or other technology to access/copy materials including, but not limited to, any photographs or graphics from on-line magazines, newspapers, books, or other copyrighted sources without proper licensing agreements and/or copyright agreements.
9. Conducting or acting in a manner which includes, but is not limited to discrimination based on race, color, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, sexual harassment, religion or lack thereof, and retaliation.
10. Employees must not visit or contact a client, or anyone on behalf of a client of this Department, outside of working hours without notifying his/her supervisor or recording the substance of the contact in the client's case record. An exception can be made when a current or former client or persons for whom the Department provides services, contacts an employee for guidance or resources outside of working hours and the employee responds. These contacts must also be recorded in the client's case record, unless the case is closed.

If the case is closed, the employee may direct the client to contact the Child Protective Hotline (CPH) in order to be documented as a consultation call and the document must be filed by CPH. Further, an employee must refer clients to CPH for referrals to resources and refer clients to call CPH to report any abuse and/or neglect.

11. DCFS employees should not engage in relationships, whether social or business with current clients or persons for whom the Department provides services. Examples of dual relationships include:
 - Romantic relationships
 - Employee/employer relationships
 - Caregiver relationships
 - Financial relationships
 - Personal relationships

12. Employees should not engage in inappropriate relationship/communication with current clients or persons for whom the Department provides services, via any social media platform/text messages, etc. Examples of inappropriate relationships/communication include:

- Sexual
- Stalking
- Conduct that is unwarranted, threatening, demeaning, or offensive
- And/or any relationship as defined in item 11

REFERENCE

Board of Supervisors Policy 6.100, 6.106, 6.200, 9.015, 9.020, and 9.060

Los Angeles County Code Sections 5.09, 5.10, and 6.12.020

Department of Human Resources Policies, Procedures and Guidelines 512, 812, 1000, 1040, 1041, and 1042

DCFS Human Resources Manual revised on May 25, 2016

DCFS Personnel Manual – Chapter 14.400 – Subdivision A-12: Engaging in and failing to report employment or activity constituting a conflict of interest.

DCFS Personnel Manual – Chapter 14.400 – Subdivision D-16: Engaging in inappropriate or sexual or social relationships with minors, clients or persons for whom the Department provides services.

DCFS Personnel Manual – Chapter 14.400 – Subdivision F-1: Violation of the recognized code of ethics of the professional group of the offender.