

**CLASSIFICATION: All Personnel****ADOPTED: 10/21/09****REVISED:****SUBJECT: Code of Ethics****PAGE: 1 of 6**

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This Code of Ethics presents expectations and guidance to San Diego County Office of Education employees for maintaining the highest ethical standards in their official activities and relationships. This Code supports the mission of the County Office of Education by promoting trust, commitment, and teamwork within the organization and between the San Diego County Office of Education and its clients, partners, and the greater community.

All official conduct should be well above the minimum standards required by law. Accordingly, employees must ensure that their actions can withstand the closest possible public scrutiny and can, in no way, be interpreted as being in contravention of the laws and regulations governing the County Board of Education, the San Diego County Superintendent of Schools, and the schools, programs, and operations of the San Diego County Office of Education.

The San Diego County Office of Education is committed to ensuring that the conduct of its business and activities is free from misconduct or illegality. Employees are expected to disclose any improper governmental activity on the part of the San Diego County Office of Education or its employees. Employees should immediately report any evidence of such activity to their immediate supervisor or the executive director, Human Resources. Employees may use the WeTip toll-free hotline to submit an anonymous report of criminal activity.

#### General Employee Conduct

It is expected that employees will be proactive in creating a positive work environment in which the inherent worth of each person is recognized and colleagues, students, clients, business associates, and members of the public are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Employee conduct is expected to be professional, businesslike, and in accordance with high standards of decorum.

The San Diego County Office of Education is dedicated to maintaining a culture in which employees adhere to the highest ethical standards. It is expected that employees will demonstrate ethical conduct in the performance of their duties by acting, at all times, responsibly and conscientiously, with honesty and integrity. All official actions must reflect employees' use of good judgment, due care, competence, and diligence.

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### Conflicts of Interest

State law requires that San Diego County Office of Education employees refrain from engaging in any employment, activity, or enterprise for compensation that is inconsistent, incompatible, or in conflict with their duties, functions, or responsibilities as employees of a local agency. The Conflict of Interest Code adopted by the County Board of Education specifies positions and disclosure categories for individual employees who are required, by law, to disclose their personal financial interests by filing annual statements of economic interest (SEIs).

Employees must avoid actual or apparent conflicts of interest in their personal and professional relationships. It is expected that employees will perform their duties in an impartial manner, using independent judgment that is free from the influence of personal considerations and in accordance with the best interests of the San Diego County Office of Education. Employees must not make, participate in making, or use their official position to influence any decision that has a reasonably foreseeable material financial effect on their personal financial interests.

#### 1. Relationships with Clients and Suppliers

Employees may not enter into any contract on behalf of the San Diego County Office of Education in which they have a financial interest. Employees should avoid investing in or acquiring a financial interest in any business that has a contractual relationship with, or provides goods or services to, the County Office of Education, if such investment or interest could influence or create the impression of influencing their decisions in the performance of their duties.

#### 2. Gifts, Entertainment, and Favors

Employees must refrain from accepting gifts, entertainment, or personal favors that could in any way influence, or appear to influence, official decisions in favor of any person or organization with whom or with which the San Diego County Office of Education has, or is likely to have, dealings.

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In connection with San Diego County Office of Education business activities, employees may not receive payment or compensation of any kind, except as authorized under San Diego County Office of Education remuneration policies. In particular, the acceptance of kickbacks and secret commissions from suppliers or others is strictly prohibited.

All employees share a responsibility for the San Diego County Office of Education's good public relations, especially at the community level. Their willingness to support religious, charitable, educational, and civic activities brings credit to the San Diego County Office of Education and is encouraged. Employees must, however, avoid acquiring any business interest or participating in any other activity, enterprise, or employment outside the San Diego County Office of Education that would, or might appear to:

1. Create an excessive demand upon their time and attention and thus cause the performance of their duties to be less efficient.
2. Involve the performance of an act that may later come under the review or enforcement of the San Diego County Office of Education.
3. Involve the use of the assets, influence, or prestige of the San Diego County Office of Education for private gain or advantage.

Regardless of the circumstances, if employees sense that a course of action they have pursued, are presently pursuing, or are contemplating pursuing may involve them in a conflict of interest with their employer, they should immediately communicate all the facts to their immediate supervisor.

#### San Diego County Office of Education Funds and Other Assets

As an organization that serves the public and uses public funds to do so, the San Diego County Office of Education takes very seriously its responsibility for safeguarding and ensuring responsible use of its assets and the funds under its control.

The San Diego County Office of Education imposes strict standards to prevent fraud and dishonesty. Employees who have access to the County School Service Fund,

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school or community college district funds, charter school funds, or other assets in cash or non-cash form must follow prescribed procedures for recording, handling, and protecting public funds, as detailed in applicable accounting manuals or other regulatory materials.

It is expected that funds and all other assets of the San Diego County Office of Education and the County Board of Education will be used only for official business and not for personal benefit. Employees must refrain from the improper use of San Diego County Office of Education resources, such as fleet vehicles, supplies, and equipment.

When an employee's position requires spending San Diego County Office of Education funds or incurring reimbursable personal expenses, that individual is expected to use good judgment on behalf of the San Diego County Office of Education to ensure that good value is received for the funds expended.

Ownership of intellectual property created by employees under specified circumstances is held by the San Diego County Board of Education. Employees must maintain the highest ethical standards in the use and protection of materials copyrighted, trademarked, or otherwise owned by the San Diego County Board of Education.

#### Records and Communications

Comprehensive, reliable records of many kinds are necessary to meet the San Diego County Superintendent of Schools' legal and financial obligations and to manage the business of the San Diego County Office of Education. The San Diego County Office of Education's financial records must reflect all business transactions in an accurate and timely manner. Employees responsible for accounting and record keeping must fully disclose and record all assets, liabilities, or both, and must exercise diligence in enforcing these requirements.

Employees must not make or be a party to any false record or communication of any kind, whether internal or external, including but not limited to: false expense, attendance, financial, or similar reports and statements; and false advertising, deceptive marketing practices, or other misleading representations.

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When communicating publicly on official business, employees must take care to protect the integrity and reputation of the San Diego County Office of Education, the San Diego County Superintendent of Schools, and the San Diego County Board of Education. Employees must not presume to speak for the San Diego County Office of Education on any topic, unless they are certain that the views they express are those of the San Diego County Office of Education and that it is the San Diego County Superintendent of Schools' desire that such views be publicly disseminated. Under all circumstances, employees must clearly distinguish official statements from the expressions of their private views.

Employees must ensure that the San Diego County Office of Education letterhead, logo, and any other representations identified with the San Diego County Office of Education are used only for official business and not for personal, political, or other inappropriate purposes.

In all matters related to clients, students, suppliers, government authorities, the public, and others within the San Diego County Office of Education, employees must make every effort to ensure that communications are complete, accurate, objective, relevant and timely. All proper requests for information are expected to be handled with courtesy and professionalism.

#### Privacy and Confidentiality

The San Diego County Office of Education is committed to abiding by all state and federal laws and San Diego County Office of Education policies and administrative regulations concerning confidential information, including student records, personnel files, and records of the County Office of Education and County Board of Education that are exempt from disclosure.

It is expected that employees who have access to confidential information in the course of their work assignments will use that information only for legitimate business purposes of the San Diego County Office of Education and will be diligent in protecting privacy rights. Employees must ensure that confidential records are managed, retained, and stored in a safe and secure manner and are reviewed by, or released to, only those individuals with proper authority.

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### Making Ethical Decisions

While this Code of Ethics describes general guidelines, it is not intended to be a complete listing or to provide a definitive answer to every ethical dilemma that could arise in the workplace. When making decisions, employees must use good judgment to adhere to both the letter and the spirit of this Code.

Employees who are uncertain about the application or interpretation of this Code of Ethics or any related legal requirements should refer the matter to their supervisor, who, if necessary, should follow established procedures for seeking the advice of legal counsel.

### Application and Enforceability

This Code of Ethics applies to all San Diego County Office of Education employees. Its provisions are supported by State and Federal law and regulations and the policies and administrative regulations that govern this agency. Violations may result in administrative or disciplinary action under applicable laws, policies, and regulations.

**Board Bylaw:** 9270 – Conflict of Interest Code

**Board Policy:** 2122, 2301, 3310, 4004

**Administrative Regulations:** 2300, 3310, 3460, 3512, 3513.2, 3542, 3543, 3560, 3600, 4006, 4020, 4021, 4024

**Legal references:** Education Code

7054, 44110 - 44114, 44932, 44933, 49073 - 49079

Government Code

1090, 1098, 1125 – 1126, 8547, 53296 – 53299, 87100, 87103, 87302, 89500 et seq.

Labor Code

1102.5, 1106

**Management Resources:**

California Fair Political Practices Commission: [www.fppc.ca.gov](http://www.fppc.ca.gov)

WeTip crime hotline: 1-800-78-CRIME; WeTip Website: [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com)