

Staff Ethics

I. Conflict of Interest

No ESD employee will attempt to use their ESD position to obtain financial gain or avoidance of financial detriment for themselves, relatives, members of household or for any business with which the employee, a household member or relative is associated, if the financial gain or avoidance of financial detriment would not otherwise be available but for the ESD employee's employment with the ESD.

This prohibition does not apply to any part of an official compensation package, as approved by the Board, honorarium, reimbursement of expenses, or unsolicited awards of professional achievement. Further, this prohibition does not apply to gifts from one without a legislative or administrative interest. Nor does it apply if the gift is under the \$50 gift limit for one who has a legislative or administrative interest in any matter subject to the decision or vote of the ESD employee.

ESD employees will not engage in, or have a personal financial interest in, any activity that raises a reasonable question regarding the use of their official position in regards to their duties and responsibilities as ESD employees. This would also apply to any personal financial benefit for the ESD employee's relative or member of household of the employee, or any business with which the ESD employees or a relative or member of the household of the ESD employee is associated.

This means that:

1. Employees, relatives or members of the ESD employee's household will not use the employee's position to obtain financial gain or avoidance of financial detriment from students, parents or staff;
2. Any device, publication or any other item developed during the employee's course of employment shall be ESD property;
3. Employees will not further personal gain through the use of confidential information gained in the course of or by reason of position or activities in any way;
4. No ESD employee may serve as a Board or budget committee member in the ESD.
5. An employee will not perform any duties related to an outside job during his/her regular working hours or during the additional time that he/she needs to fulfill the position's responsibilities; nor will an employee use any ESD facilities, equipment or materials in performing outside work;
6. If an employee authorizes a public contract, the employee may not have a direct beneficial financial interest in that public contract for two years after the date the contract was authorized.

If an ESD employee has a potential or actual conflict of interest, the ESD employee must notify his/her supervisor in writing of the nature of the conflict and request that the supervisor dispose of the matter giving rise to the conflict. This must be done on each occasion the ESD employee is met with a conflict of interest.

In order to avoid violation of nepotism provisions and ESD policy, ESD employees must abide by the following when an employee's relative or member of the household of the ESD employee is seeking and/or holds a position with the ESD:

1. An ESD employee may not appoint, employ, promote, discharge, fire, or demote or advocate for such an employment decision for a relative or a member of the household, unless he/she complies with the conflict of interest requirements of Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) Chapter 244. This rule does not apply to employment decisions regarding unpaid volunteer position, unless it is a Board-related position;

2. An ESD employee may not participate as a public official in any interview, discussion, or debate regarding the appointment, employment, promotion, discharge, firing, or demotion of a relative or a member of the household. An employee may still serve as a reference, provide a recommendation, or perform other acts that are part of the normal job functions of the employee;
3. More than one member of an employee's family may be hired as a regular ESD employee. In accordance with Oregon law, however, the ESD may refuse to hire individuals, or may transfer current employees, in situations where an appointment would place one family member in a position of exercising supervisory, appointment or grievance adjustment authority over another member of the same family.

II. Gifts

ESD employees must comply with the following rules involving gifts:

Employees are public officials and therefore will not solicit or accept a gift or gifts with an aggregate value in excess of \$50 from any single source in a calendar year that has a legislative or administrative interest in any matter subject to the decision or vote of the ESD employee. All gift-related provisions apply to the employee, their relatives, and members of their household. The \$50 gift limit applies separately to the employee, and to the employee's relatives or members of household, meaning that the employee and each member of their household and relative can accept up to \$50 each from the same source/gift giver. A gift may be received by the ESD employee from, but not limited to, another ESD employee, a student or parent of a student or a vendor. Except for exclusions in ORS 244.040(2), an item received by an employee from the ESD is prohibited.

Determining the Source of Gifts

Employees, employee's relatives or members of the employee's household should not accept gifts in any amount without obtaining information from the gift giver as to who is the source of the gift. It is the employee's personal responsibility to ensure that no single source provides gifts exceeding an aggregate value of \$50 in a calendar year, if the source has a legislative or administrative interest in any matter subject to the decision or vote of the ESD employee. If the giver does not have a legislative or administrative interest, the \$50 limit does not apply and the employee need not keep track of it, although they are advised to do so anyway in case of a later dispute.

Determining Legislative and Administrative Interest

A "legislative or administrative interest" means an economic interest, distinct from that of the general public, in any action subject to the official decision of an employee.

A decision means an act that commits the ESD to a particular course of action within the employee's scope of authority and that is connected to the source of the gift's economic interest. A decision is not a recommendation or work performed in an advisory capacity. If a supervisor delegates the decision to a subordinate but retains responsibility as the final decision maker, both the subordinate and supervisor's actions would be considered a "decision."

Determining the Value of Gifts

The fair market value of the merchandise, goods, or services received will be used to determine benefit or value. Below are acceptable ways to calculate the fair market value of a gift:

1. In calculating the per person cost at receptions or meals the payor of the employee's admission or meal will include all costs other than any amount donated to a charity.

For example, a person with a legislative or administrative interest buys a table for a charitable dinner at \$100 per person. If the cost of the meal was \$25 and the amount donated to charity was \$75, the benefit conferred on the employee is \$25. This example requires that the employee does not claim the charitable contribution on personal tax returns.

2. For receptions and meals with multiple attendees, but with no price established to attend, the source of the employee's meal or reception will use reasonable methods to determine the per person value or benefit conferred. The following examples are deemed reasonable methods of calculating value or benefit conferred:

- a. The source divides the amount spent on food, beverage and other costs (other than charitable contributions) by the number of persons whom the payor reasonably expects to attend the reception or dinner;
- b. The source divides the amount spent on food, beverage and other costs (other than charitable contributions) by the number of persons who actually attend the reception or dinner; or
- c. The source calculates the actual amount spent on the employee.

The employee may request that the source will give notice of the value of the merchandise, goods, or services received.

Attendance at receptions where the food or beverage is provided as an incidental part of the reception is permitted without regard to the fair market value of the food and beverage provided.

Value of Unsolicited Tokens or Awards: Resale value

Employees may accept unsolicited tokens or awards that are engraved or are otherwise personalized items. Such items are deemed to have a resale value under \$25 (even if the personalized item cost the source more than \$50), unless the personalized item is made from gold or some other valuable material that would have value over \$25 as a raw material.

Entertainment

Employees may not accept any gifts of entertainment over \$50 in value from any single source in a calendar year that has a legislative or administrative interest in any matter subject to the decision of the employee unless:

1. The entertainment is incidental to the main purpose of another event (e.g. a band playing at a reception). Entertainment that involves personal participation is not incidental to another event (such as a golf tournament at a conference); or
2. The employee is acting in their official capacity for a ceremonial purpose at the invitation of the source of the entertainment who requests the presence of the employee at a special occasion associated with the entertainment, such as appearing in a parade and ribbon cutting for an opening ceremony.

Exceptions

The following are exceptions to the ethics rules on gifts that apply to employees.

1. Gifts from "relatives" and "members of the household" to the employee are permitted in an unlimited amount; they are not considered gifts under the ethics rules;
2. Informational or program material, publications, or subscriptions related to the recipient's performance of official duties;
3. Food, lodging, and travel generally count toward the \$50 aggregate amount per year from a single source with a legislative or administrative interest, with the following exceptions:

Organized Planned Events. Employees are permitted to accept payment for travel conducted in the employee's official capacity, for certain limited purposes:

- a. Reasonable expenses (i.e., food, lodging, travel, fees) for attendance at a convention, fact-finding mission or trip, or other meeting do not count toward the \$50 aggregate amount IF:
 1. The employee is scheduled to deliver a speech, make a presentation, participate on a panel, or represent the ESD; AND
 - a. The giver is a unit of:
 - i. The federal, state, or local government;
 - ii. An Oregon or federally recognized Native American Tribe; OR
 - iii. A nonprofit corporation.

2. The employee is representing the ESD:
 - a. On an officially sanctioned trade-promotion or fact-finding mission; OR
 - b. Officially designated negotiations or economic development activities where receipt of the expenses is approved in advance by the superintendent.

The purpose of the exception in a. above is to allow employees to attend organized, planned events and engage with the members of organizations by speaking or answering questions, participating in panel discussions or otherwise formally discussing matters in their official capacity. This exception to the gift definition does not authorize private meals where the participants engage in discussion.

4. Food or beverage, consumed at a reception, meal, or meeting IF held by an organization and IF the employee is representing the ESD.
5. Food or beverage consumed by employee acting in an official capacity in the course of financial transactions between the public body and another entity described in ORS 244.020(7)(b)(l)(i);
6. Waiver or discount of registration expenses or materials provided to employee at a continuing education event that the employee may attend to satisfy a professional licensing requirement;
7. A gift item received by the employee as part of the usual or customary practice of the employee's private business, employment or position as a volunteer that bears no relationship to the employee's position;
8. Reasonable expenses paid to employee for accompanying students on an educational trip.

Honoraria

An employee may not solicit or receive, whether directly or indirectly, honoraria for the employee or any relative or member of the household of the employee if the honoraria are solicited or received in connection with the official duties of the employee.

The honoraria rules do not prohibit the solicitation or receipt of an honorarium or a certificate, plaque, commemorative token, or other item with a value of \$50 or less; or the solicitation or receipt of an honorarium for services performed in relation to the private profession, occupation, avocation, or expertise of the employee.

Definitions

"Potential conflict of interest" means any action or any decision or recommendation by an ESD employee that could result in a financial benefit or detriment for self or relatives or for any business with which the ESD employee that could result in a financial benefit or detriment for self or relatives for any business with which the ESD employee or relatives are associated, unless otherwise provided by law.

"Actual conflict of interest" means any action or any decision or recommendation by an ESD employee that would result in a financial benefit or detriment for self or relatives or for any business with which the ESD employee or relatives are associated, unless otherwise provided by law.

"Gift" Something of economic value given to an employee without valuable consideration of equivalent value, which is not extended to others who are not public officials on the same terms and conditions.

"Member of Household" Any person who resides with the employee

"Relative" The spouseⁱ, parent, step-parent, child, sibling, step-sibling, son-in-law or daughter-in-law of the employee; or the parent, step-parent, child, sibling, step-sibling, son-in-law or daughter-in-law of the spouse of the employee. Relative also includes any individual for whom the employee has a legal support obligation, whose employment provides benefits to the employee, or who receives any benefitⁱⁱ from the employee's public employment.

"Honoraria" Payment given for professional services that are rendered nominally without charge.

“Decision” An act that commits the ESD to a particular course of action within the employee’s scope of authority and that is connected to the source of a gift’s economic interest.

“Legislative and Administrative Interest” An economic interest, distinct from that of the general public, in any action subject to the official decision of an employee.

“Fair Market Value” The dollar amount goods or services would bring if offered for sale by a person who desired, but was not obligated, to sell and purchased by one who is willing, but not obligated, to buy. Any portion of the price that was donated to charity, however, does not count toward the fair market value of the gift if the employee does not claim the charitable contribution on personal tax returns.

“Reception” A social gathering. Receptions are often held for the purpose of extending a ceremonial or formal welcome and may include private or public meetings during which guests are honored or welcomed. Food and beverages are often provided, but not as a plated, sit-down meal.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):

[ORS 244.010](#) to -244.400
[ORS 332.016](#)

[ORS 659A.309](#)
[OAR 199-005-0001](#) to -199-020-0020

[OAR 584-020-0040](#)

OREGON ETHICS COMMISSION, OREGON GOVERNMENT ETHICS LAW, A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

ⁱ The term spouse includes domestic partner.

ⁱⁱ Example of benefits may include, but not be limited to, elements of an official compensation package including benefits such as insurance, tuition or retirement allotments.