

## **ADAMS COUNTY, COLORADO - CODE OF ETHICS**

### **I. Mission, Governing Principles & Values.**

The citizens of Adams County, Colorado, are entitled to have a fair, ethical, and accountable local government that has earned the public's full confidence for integrity. We adopt this Code of Ethics to assure public confidence in local government and its effective and fair operation and to ensure that we comply with all applicable State and local laws relating to conflicts of interest and ethics.

Integrity in government requires that decision-makers be independent, impartial, and accountable to those they serve, to that end, all officials and employees of Adams County, Colorado, must carry out their job responsibilities in accordance with the following principles:

- A.** As public servants, Adams County officials and employees are stewards of the public trust, entrusted with and responsible for the property and resources of Adams County, and shall carry out their duties for the benefit of the people of Adams County.
- B.** The citizens of Adams County expect and deserve their public servants to act with courtesy, impartiality, honesty, and openness in the performance of their duties.
- C.** Officials and employees must always perform their duties with the best interests of Adams County in mind, and not for any personal interest or for the interest of family, friends, or business and political associates.
- D.** Governmental decisions and policies are made utilizing the proper channels of the government structure, free of coercive or other improper influence.
- E.** To gain and retain public confidence in government operations, County officials and employees must avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

### **II. Intent.**

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to provide the officials and employees of Adams County the tools and resources necessary to conduct themselves in the most ethical and appropriate manner possible and to ensure that Adams County government operates in accordance with its mission, governing principles, and values.

It is the intent of Adams County that its officials and employees adhere to high levels of ethical conduct so that the public will have confidence that persons in positions of public responsibility are acting for the benefit of the public. Officials and employees should comply with both the letter and spirit of this Code of Ethics and strive to avoid situations which create impropriety or the appearance of impropriety.

Ethical issues will arise in the course of public service. It is the intent of this Code of Ethics to clarify which actions constitute a breach of the public trust.

### III. Definitions.

A. **“Employee”** shall mean all members of the Adams County workforce, including but not limited to full-time and part-time employees, and appointed or elected officials and their employees.

B. **“Gift”** shall mean anything of monetary value for which consideration of equal or greater value is not made. The term includes a rebate or discount in the price of anything of value unless the rebate or discount is made in the ordinary course of business to a member of the public without regard to that person’s status as a County employee. The term “gift” shall not include tokens of award (such as a plaque, memento, or trophy), informational materials related to the recipient’s performance of official duties (such as a book, pamphlet, or periodical), or unsolicited items of nominal or trivial value (such as a pen, note pad, or calendar).

C. **“Official”** shall mean a person in an elected or appointed position in Adams County, Colorado, including members of County boards appointed by the Board of County Commissioners.

D. **“Relative”** shall mean a spouse, domestic partner, fiancé/fiancée, parent(s), child(ren), brother(s), sister(s), aunt(s), uncle(s), grandparent(s), or grandchild(ren), including “in-law” and “step” relatives. The term “relative” also applies to any person who is a member of the household of a County employee regardless of family relationship.

### IV. Applicability.

This Code of Ethics applies to the officials and employees of Adams County, to the extent that the official has adopted the Code, and shall supersede the prior Code of Ethics adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on November 10, 2008. The provisions of this Code of Ethics shall apply in addition to all applicable federal, State and local laws relating to conflicts of interest and ethics including, but not limited to, the Colorado Constitution, Article XXIX, Colorado Revised Statutes § 24-18-101, *et seq.*, and all rules, regulations, policies and procedures of Adams County, including any ethical code or policy adopted by any elected official that is applicable to employees of that elected official.

### V. Conflicts Of Interest.

No official or employee should have any direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, engage in any business or transaction or professional activity, or incur any obligation of any nature, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of his or her duties in the public interest.

A. **Misappropriation of County Resources:** No official or employee shall misappropriate to himself, herself or to others the property, services or other resources of the County for private purpose or other compensated non-governmental purposes.

**B. Favoritism:** An official or employee shall guard against any relationship that creates conflicts of interest or which might be reasonably construed as evidence of favoritism, coercion, unfair advantage, or collusion.

**C. Improper Influence:** An official or employee should not act in a manner that creates by his or her conduct a reasonable basis for the impression that any person can improperly influence him or her or unduly enjoy his or her favor in the performance of his or her official duties, or that he or she is affected by the kinship, rank, position or influence of any party or person.

**D. Privileges or Exemptions:** No official or employee should use or attempt to use his or her official position to secure privileges or exemptions for himself, herself or others.

**E. Protection of Public Trust:** An official or an employee should endeavor to pursue a course of conduct which will not raise suspicion among the members of the public that he or she is likely to be engaged in acts that are in violation of the public trust.

**F. Official Actions:**

1. An official or employee shall not take any direct or official action on any matter in which the official, employee or a relative or business associate has any substantial employment, contractual, or financial interest.

2. An official or employee shall not perform an official act directly and substantially affecting a business or other undertaking to its economic detriment when he or she has a substantial financial interest in a competing firm or undertaking.

**G. Contracting & Transacting Business:**

**1. Sale or Purchase of Goods or Services:**

a) No official or employee shall, in his or her official or private capacity, offer for sale or sell goods or services to the County. A waiver may be granted by the Independent Ethics Officer where the circumstances clearly demonstrate that there is no conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict presented by the proposed sale of goods or services to the County.

b) No official or employee shall, for his or her own private purposes, directly or indirectly obtain goods or services for anything less than fair market value from any contractor or vendor that performs work for Adams County.

2. **Transactions on behalf of Adams County:** No official or employee should engage in any transaction as representative or agent of Adams County with

any relative, business associate, or business entity in which he or she has a direct or indirect financial interest.

**H. Personal Investments & Business Ventures:**

An official or employee should not acquire or hold an interest in any business or undertaking which he or she has reason to believe may be directly involved in decisions to be made by him or her or which will otherwise create substantial conflict between his or her duty in the public interest and his or her private interest.

**VI. Confidential Information.**

**A.** No official or employee shall use any confidential information received by virtue of that person's office or employment for any private purpose, including but without limitation to commercial purposes, financial gain, or present or future employment.

**B.** An official or employee may only use confidential information in the conduct of his or her official County duties.

**VII. Political Solicitations.**

**A.** Elected officials and candidates shall not engage in political campaigning at County meetings or public hearings. No official, candidate, or employee shall use public resources for political campaigning.

**B.** County officials or employees may in their private capacity give financial or other support to political parties and candidates for elected office, unless otherwise restricted.

**C.** No official or employee shall directly or indirectly compel or induce a subordinate employee to make or promise to make any political contribution, whether by gift of money, service or other thing of value.

**D.** No official or employee may make any employment recommendation or decision based on political affiliation, participation or contribution.

**VIII. Hiring Of Relatives.**

The purpose of this section is to avoid favoritism and the appearance of favoritism by officials or employees.

**A.** No official or employee shall appoint, hire, or advocate for the appointment or hiring of any person who is the employee's relative.

**B.** No official or employee shall participate directly or indirectly in the recruitment and selection process that involves a relative.

**C.** No official or employee shall directly or indirectly exercise supervisory, appointment or dismissal or disciplinary authority over any relative of the employee.

**D.** No official or employee shall audit, verify, receive or be entrusted with monies received or handled by a relative.

**E.** No relative of an official or employee shall have access to that person's confidential information, including payroll processing and personnel records within his or her organization.

**IX. Gift Ban Policy.**

**A.** In accordance with the Colorado Constitution, no official or employee may directly or indirectly solicit, accept or receive any gift or other thing of greater than fifty-nine dollars (\$59) in any calendar year, without providing consideration of equal or greater value. Gifts include but are not limited to loans, rewards, promises or negotiations of future employment, favors or services, honoraria, travel, entertainment, and special discounts. Exceptions recognized by Colorado law are recognized by the County.

**B.** No official or employee shall directly or indirectly receive a gift regardless of the value where such gift is given with the intent or appearance of influencing, or as a reward for, the person's official actions or duties for Adams County. No department, office, or agency shall accept any gift from any vendor, applicant for a license, applicant for a land use approval, or any other person having pending or regular business being handled by that department, office, or agency.

**C.** A department, office, or agency may accept a gift from a person or entity with no pending or regular business before it only if it is valued at less than the current statutory gift limit and is placed in a common area to be shared by all employees of the department, office or agency.

**D.** In addition to any other disciplinary action, an official or employee, or department, office or agency that accepts a gift in violation of this policy will be required to return the gift to the donor or, if the gift is of such a nature that it cannot be returned, to compensate the donor for the full monetary value of the gift.

**X. Distribution.**

**A.** A copy of this Code of Ethics and any amendments to this Code shall be provided to every official and employee of the County via the County's website; it shall also be distributed via electronic mail each year.

**B.** A guide with frequently asked questions shall be provided to assist officials and employees in understanding the Code.

## **XI. Enforcement.**

Any official or employee who violates the Colorado Constitution or Colorado statutes or this Code of Ethics may be fined or prosecuted, in any manner provided by law. In addition, any employee who aids and assists an official or employee in violating this Code of Ethics is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including, termination of employment