



WASHINGTON STATE  
**Department of  
Children, Youth, and Families**

**Administrative Policy**

**Chapter 11** Human Resources  
**11.21** Ethics and Employee Conduct

**Original Effective Date:** November 28, 2018  
**Revised Date:** July 21, 2021  
**Sunset Review Date:** May 19, 2024  
**Approved by:** Frank Ordway, Chief of Staff

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance regarding ethics, conduct, and a productive workplace that promotes positive and respectful behaviors inside and outside the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

**Scope**

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, and contractors. For union represented employees, when there are conflicts between agency policy and the provisions of the [Collective Bargaining Agreement \(CBA\)](#), the [CBA](#) will supersede.

**Laws**

<a href="#">RCW 9.46.0209</a>	Bona fide charitable or nonprofit organization
<a href="#">Chapter 42.17A RCW</a>	Campaign disclosure and contribution
<a href="#">Chapter 42.52 RCW</a>	Ethics in public service
<a href="#">Chapter 42.56 RCW</a>	Public records act

**Policy**

1. DCYF expects their employees will serve the public with integrity, respect, concern, and responsiveness to uphold public trust and promote racial equity and social justice.
2. Division and office leadership, managers, and supervisors must:
  - a. Model and promote respectful behavior.
  - b. Not leverage their position for private benefit or financial gain.
  - c. Not use their position to establish or promote personal or financial relationships with clients, providers, employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, or contractors.
  - d. Encourage employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, and contractors to ask questions and share their concerns or complaints.
  - e. Not condone, minimize, or ignore violations of this policy.
  - f. Demonstrate compliance with this policy and be held accountable for its success as a part of their leadership duties.
  - g. Document and take appropriate action when incidents occur, including training, feedback, investigation, and corrective action, when appropriate.

- h. Consult with the [Human Resources Division \(HRD\)](#) or the [DCYF ethics advisor](#) when there are questions or concerns related to appropriate actions or this policy.
- 3. Supervisors must verify their:
  - a. Direct reports:
    - i. Review this policy within the first six months of start date and annually thereafter.
    - ii. Complete ethics training within the timeframes outlined in the [Mandatory Training Manual](#).
  - b. Volunteers have reviewed this policy before performing volunteer activities.
- 4. The [DCYF ethics advisor](#) must review and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy every three years using data from the following:
  - a. Exit interviews
  - b. Employee engagement surveys
  - c. Workplace investigations
  - d. External regulatory agencies, e.g., [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), [Washington State Human Rights Commission](#), and [Washington State Executive Ethics Board](#)
  - e. Grievances and complaints
  - f. [Washington State Learning Center](#)
- 5. Employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, and contractors, regardless of their position, must:
  - a. Serve the public with the highest level of ethical standards, including honesty, integrity, respect, concern, and responsiveness, to promote an environment of public trust, racial equity, and social justice.
  - b. Review this policy within the first six months of start date and annually thereafter.
  - c. Complete ethics training within the timeframes outlined in the [Mandatory Training Manual](#).
  - d. Create a respectful work environment that promotes racial equity and social justice consistent with the following DCYF Administrative policies:
    - i. [6.01 Racial Equity and Social Justice](#)
    - ii. [11.13 Preventing and Addressing Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Retaliation](#)
    - iii. [11.20 Preventing Workplace Violence](#)
  - e. Perform duties consistent with the following DCYF Administrative policies:
    - i. [11.30 Outside Employment, Volunteering, and Honorariums](#), when requesting approval for outside employment, volunteer activities, and honorariums.
    - ii. [11.33 Relatives or Household Members and Personal Relationships](#)
    - iii. [12.04 Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources and the Internet](#), when using IT resources
    - iv. [13.04 Protecting Privacy and Confidential Information](#)
  - f. Follow the [ethics law](#) and this policy. For:
    - i. Employees, volunteers, interns, and work study students, failure to do so may result in training, feedback, corrective action, or disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
    - ii. Employees, interns, and work study students, failure to do so may result in external investigation by the [Office of the State Auditor](#) and [Washington State Executive Ethics Board](#).
    - iii. Contractors, failure to do so may impact the contract agreement.
  - g. Consult with [HRD](#) or the [DCYF ethics advisor](#) when they are unsure whether conduct or circumstances may be a violation of this policy.

6. Appointing authorities, in consultation with [HRD](#), must verify the appropriateness of disciplinary action, checking for validity, fairness, and consistency of approach when a violation of this policy has occurred.

## Procedures

### 1. Required Conduct

Employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, and contractors, regardless of position, must create a respectful work environment and serve the public in a manner that builds public trust, racial equity, and social justice by:

- a. Treating others civilly and with respect for human dignity and individuality in the workplace.
  - i. A respectful workplace includes, but is not limited to:
    - A. Engaging others with an open, collaborative, and cooperative approach.
    - B. Recognizing the dignity of a person through courteous conduct.
    - C. Emphasizing positivity and commonality, rather than negativity and opposition.
    - D. Encouraging and valuing diverse cultural and individual perspectives.
  - ii. A disrespectful workplace includes, but is not limited to:
    - A. Making or displaying offensive or inappropriate remarks, gestures or content.
    - B. Yelling at, belittling, intimidating, gossiping about, or bullying others.
    - C. Reprimanding someone in the presence of others.
    - D. Exclusive or discriminatory practices.
- b. Recognizing both the intent and impact of their conduct in creating a respectful work environment.
- c. Acting with honesty, integrity, and respect.
- d. Delivering professional and compassionate quality services.
- e. Engaging in meaningful and tactful dialogue.
- f. Maintaining high professional and ethical standards at all times.
- g. Placing public interests before private interests or outside obligations.
- h. Promoting an environment free from fraud, abuse of authority, and misuse of public resources.
- i. Being forthcoming with agency-related information while protecting privacy and confidentiality, per [DCYF Administrative 13.04 Protecting Privacy and Confidential Information](#) policy, so DCYF may serve and protect its employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, contractors, clients, and providers.

### 2. Specifically Prohibited Activities

Employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, and contractors must not engage in activities that may undermine a respectful work environment or erode public trust in state government. They must not:

- a. Have a conflict of interest, financial or otherwise, which interferes with the proper performance of their official duties.
- b. Make statements during the course of official duties that they know, or have reasonable cause to believe, are untruthful.
- c. Benefit personally or financially from any contract, sale, lease, purchase, grant, decision, or public resource under their supervision or control.
- d. Advertise items or services for sale or trade, collect payment, or deliver orders while using state resources. Advertising may be posted on bulletin boards available to the public.

- e. Use state-owned facilities or resources for personal gain, in excess of de minimis use. There is no de minimis use allowance for certain activities, including but not limited to, use of state resources:
    - i. To assist in political activities, e.g., election campaigns, lobbying, or promoting or opposing ballot issues.
    - ii. For non-work-related shopping.
    - iii. To conduct any activities related to ownership of or partnership in a business.
    - iv. To conduct any activities prohibited by law, regulation, or any other policy.
  - f. Use their position to obtain special privileges or exemptions for themselves or others.
  - g. Privately assist with state business when they have been involved in that business as part of their official state duties within the previous two years.
  - h. Accept employment or engage in any business or professional activities that requires disclosure of confidential information about employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, contractors, clients, or providers.
  - i. Use DCYF information, or any other DCYF resource, for personal benefit or gain, or for the benefit or gain of another, except as required for official duties.
  - j. Disclose confidential information to individuals not authorized to receive the information per [DCYF Administrative 13.04 Protecting Privacy and Confidential Information](#) policy.
  - k. Conceal or destroy records required to be released per [chapter 42.56 RCW](#).
3. Accepting Gifts, Rewards, or Gratuities  
To preserve public trust, employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, and contractors:
- a. Must not accept gifts, rewards, or gratuities from any source, except as authorized by [RCW 42.52.140](#) and [RCW 42.52.150](#). This includes:
    - i. Any gift that may cast doubt on the integrity, independence, or impartiality for those covered by this policy or DCYF.
    - ii. Gifts, gratuities, or favors from clients, their family members, legal guardians, known associates, or providers.
  - b. May accept the following from other sources, with no restriction on the value:
    - i. Items from their own family or friends, when it is clear they are not intended to gain influence with DCYF.
    - ii. Items from other individuals covered by this policy that are not intended to influence the personal performance or non-performance of their official duties.
    - iii. Unsolicited items of nominal value, such as pens and note pads, normally offered by an organization to customers, potential customers, or the general public as samples or for public relations or advertising purposes.
    - iv. Unsolicited tokens of appreciation, e.g., plaques and trophies.
    - v. Unsolicited items received for the purpose of evaluation or review, when no personal beneficial interest exists.
    - vi. Informational material, publications, or subscriptions related to the performance of official duties.
    - vii. Food and beverages consumed at hosted receptions, e.g., at social events involving diverse groups of people that do not include sit-down meals and attendance is related to the performance of official duties.
    - viii. Discounts available to an individual as a member of a broad-based group.
    - ix. Awards, prizes, scholarships, or other items provided in recognition of academic or scientific achievement.

- x. Unsolicited gifts from dignitaries from another state or a foreign country that are intended to be personal in nature.
  - xi. Campaign contributions reported per [chapter 42.17A RCW](#).
  - c. May accept the following items when their duties do not include regulating or contracting, i.e., researching, advising, recommending, selecting, approving, denying, monitoring, or any other action involved in acquiring goods or services, with the person or organization giving the gift. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - i. Payments of reasonable expenses, e.g., travel, lodging, and meals, incurred in connection with a speech, presentation, or appearance made in an official capacity.
    - ii. Enrollment, course fees, and reasonable travel expenses to attend seminars and educational programs sponsored by a governmental or non-profit professional, educational, trade, or charitable association or institution.
    - iii. Unsolicited flowers or plants.
    - iv. Food and beverages on an infrequent basis where attendance is related to the performance of official work duties.
    - v. Admission to, including food and beverages consumed at, events sponsored by a civic, charitable, government, or community organization.
    - vi. Unsolicited gifts, when the aggregate value of gifts received from a single source does not exceed \$50.00 in a calendar year.
  - d. Must notify the giver when they receive a prohibited gift and must either return or donate it to a charitable organization within two business days of receipt.
4. Permissible Activities Requiring Approval
- Employees, interns, and work study students may, with prior approval from the appointing authorities, use limited time and resources for the following:
- a. Supporting, promoting, or soliciting for state- or DCYF-sponsored bona fide charitable or non-profit organizations e.g., coats, clothing, and toiletry drives and Adopt-a-Family, per [RCW 9.46.0209](#).
  - b. Organizational effectiveness activities, including, but not limited to:
    - i. State, DCYF, division, office, and unit events that recognize work-related group and individual contributions.
    - ii. Activities sponsored by local or DCYF committees supporting employees, volunteers, interns, and work study students and their families in times of need.
    - iii. Celebrations for significant life events, e.g., birthdays, retirements, weddings, or baby showers.
    - iv. Teambuilding events.
  - c. State- or DCYF-sponsored health activities, e.g., vaccinations, diabetes screenings, and cholesterol screenings, or recording participation in Public Employees Benefits Board- or DCYF-sponsored wellness programs.
5. Concerns and Complaints
- a. Employees, volunteers, interns, work study students, and contractors who believe they have experienced or witnessed a violation of this policy may report incidents, to one of the following, if they feel comfortable:
    - i. Division and office leadership
    - ii. An appointing authority
    - iii. A manager
    - iv. A supervisor
    - v. [HRD](#)

- vi. [DCYF ethics advisor](#)
  - vii. [Washington State Executive Ethics Board](#), for [complaints](#) of potential violations of [chapter 42.52 RCW](#)
  - viii. [Office of the Washington State Auditor](#), for [whistleblower](#) concerns of improper government action
- b. When reporting, they are encouraged to:
- i. Provide as many details as possible regarding the incident, including but not limited to:
    - A. The date of the incident.
    - B. Specifics about the incident.
    - C. Location of the incident.
    - D. Names of witnesses, if applicable.
    - E. Any other details that would assist in follow up on the incident.
  - ii. Cooperate in any investigation of the incident.
- c. When division and office leadership, appointing authorities, managers, supervisors, [HRD](#), or the [DCYF ethics advisor](#) are notified of a possible violation of this policy, they must provide information to the complainant about available support, including the [Employee Assistance Program](#), when needed.
- d. When supervisors are notified of a possible violation of this policy, they must:
- i. Assess the severity and nature of the incident, in consultation with the [HRD](#), to determine the appropriate action. For behaviors that:
    - A. Can be addressed through additional training or coaching, supervisors must complete the corrective action and document the actions taken by both the supervisor and the individual in the supervisory file.
    - B. Have been previously addressed but not corrected, supervisors must consult with their manager or the [HRD](#) to determine the appropriate level of action.
    - C. If proven to be true, may result in disciplinary action, supervisors must follow the delegated authority and the investigative process established by the appointing authority.
  - ii. Maintain confidentiality to the greatest extent provided by law.
- e. When made aware of possible violations of this policy, division and office leadership and managers must:
- i. Direct the individuals engaged in the behavior to stop immediately, unless doing so would compromise the integrity of an investigation. For circumstances that may require additional follow up, consultation, or corrective action, leadership must notify the individuals there may be follow up actions.
  - ii. Document the incident, including:
    - A. The date of the incident
    - B. Specifics about the incident
    - C. Location of the incident
    - D. Names of witnesses, if applicable
    - E. Any other details that would assist in follow up on the incident
    - F. Any corrective action that was taken as a follow up or at the time of the incident
  - iii. Send the documentation as follows to:
    - A. [HRD](#), per [DCYF Administrative 11.13. Preventing and Addressing Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Retaliation](#) policy for behaviors that could be discriminatory, harassing, or retaliatory

- B. The individual's direct supervisor or, for contractors, to the [Contracting Unit](#), for behaviors that are not discriminatory, harassing, or retaliatory

## Definitions

**Appointing Authorities** are employees lawfully authorized with delegated authority by the secretary to appoint, transfer, layoff, reduce, dismiss, suspend, or demote employees.

**Clients** are individuals who are the beneficiaries of services or benefits from DCYF. This term includes but is not limited to, consumers, recipients, applicants, parents, youth, and children involved with DCYF. Clients include individuals who previously were the beneficiaries of services or benefits and persons applying for benefits or services.

**Conflict of Interests** occur when individuals have direct or indirect interests, financial or otherwise, engage in business, transactions, or professional activities, or have an obligation of any nature, and the interest, activities, or obligations interfere with or have the potential to interfere with the performance of their official duties.

**Contractors** are any persons, businesses, non-profits, or government entities who provide goods or services when requested by DCYF under a contractual agreement and not as an employee of DCYF.

**De Minimis Use** is the use of state resources that is too trivial or minor to merit consideration and meets the conditions outlined in [WAC 292-110-010](#).

**Division and Office Leadership** means DCYF division and office heads and other employees they designate as leadership for their division or office. Division and office head does not mean the head of a field office or facility.

**Employees** are individuals to whom DCYF pays salaries, wages, or benefits for work performed for DCYF.

**Information Technology (IT) Resources** are all servers, networks, hardware, software, internet, applications, technical knowledge, expertise, and other IT goods and services held, owned, or used by DCYF.

**Interns** are individuals who work for DCYF with or without pay or benefits. This is typically short term and allows individuals to gain valuable skills and abilities.

**Manager** means any employee who:

- Formulates statewide policy or directs the work of an agency or agency subdivision.
- Is responsible to administer one or more statewide policies or programs of an agency or agency subdivision.
- Manages, administers, and controls a local branch office of an agency or agency subdivision, including the physical, financial, or personnel resources.
- Has substantial responsibility in personnel administration, legislative relations, public information, or the preparation and administration of budgets.
- Functionally is above the first level of supervision and exercises authority that is not merely routine or clerical in nature and requires the consistent use of independent judgment.

**Organizational Effectiveness Activities** are activities that promote or improve teamwork, performance, efficiency, or communication to meet organizational goals.

**Providers** are individuals or businesses that provide a service for DCYF.

**Respectful Work Environments** are work environments where the workplace is a safe place of employment and where employees are valued, recognized, treated fairly, have clear expectations, and work harmoniously.

**Volunteers** are individuals who of their own free choice, perform any assigned or authorized duties for DCYF. Volunteers receive no wages, and are registered and accepted as a volunteer by DCYF to engage in authorized volunteer services.

**Work Study Students** are college students participating in programs that enable them to work for DCYF while enrolled in school.

## **Resources**

[DCYF Administrative 6.01 Racial Equity and Social Justice policy](#)

[DCYF Administrative 11.04 Developing and Training Employees policy](#)

[DCYF Administrative 11.13 Preventing and Addressing Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Retaliation policy](#)

[DCYF Administrative 11.20 Preventing Workplace Violence policy](#)

[DCYF Administrative 11.30 Outside Employment, Volunteering, and Honorariums policy](#)

[DCYF Administrative 11.33 Relatives or Household Members and Personal Relationships policy](#)

[DCYF Administrative 12.04 Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources and the Internet policy](#)

[DCYF Administrative 13.04 Protecting Privacy and Confidential Information policy](#)

[Employee Assistance Program](#)

[Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

[Mandatory Training Manual](#)

[Office of the Washington State Auditor](#)

[WAC 292 Ethics in Public Service](#)

[Washington State Executive Ethics Board](#)

[Washington State Human Rights Commission](#)