

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Employee Code of Conduct

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Policy Each employee of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) shall engage in appropriate and ethical conduct while carrying out official duties or while engaged in off-duty conduct that directly reflects on his or her ability to carry out assigned duties as an employee of DCF.

Standards of Conduct - Ethics Employees shall comply with all aspects of the Connecticut Code of Ethics for Connecticut state employees and officials and any DCF ethics statements, policies and procedures.

Legal reference: Conn. Gen. Stat. §1-79 *et seq.*

Standards of Conduct - Staff/Client Interactions Appropriate boundaries shall be maintained between clients and DCF staff, with particular attention paid to the effects of the power differential between a client and a staff member.

Note: These boundaries shall not be diminished when the client becomes a former client of DCF.

In situations in which a family member, co-worker or other individual significant in the life of an employee become a client of DCF creating a conflict with this policy, the employee shall inform his or her supervisor and Human Resource Management of the conflict immediately.

Except as indicated in the next section, DCF employees shall not:

- cultivate, attempt to cultivate or maintain social relationships with clients outside the boundaries of a professional relationship;
 - use any social media site to make comments about or knowingly "friend," "follow" or otherwise contact or monitor clients, except with the express permission of a DCF manager for professional purposes only and in full compliance with DCF's Social Media policy;
 - provide their or any other staff member's personal telephone number, address or other contact information to a client;
 - engage in any conduct of a sexual nature with a client;
 - engage in conduct toward a client that results in a substantiation of child abuse or neglect;
 - engage in conduct toward a client that results in placement of the employee's name on the DCF Central Registry for Child Abuse or Neglect;
 - use excessive force toward a client or engage in any conduct that may degrade or threaten a client or use physical or mechanical restraint techniques not authorized by DCF;
 - purchase items for a client using personal funds; or
 - accept personal gifts from a client, except for token items (having a value of less than \$10.00) that are reported to the employee's direct supervisor no later than the next business day.
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Exceptions to Standards of Conduct - Staff/Client Interactions

DCF recognizes the importance of permanency in the lives of the children who have received services from DCF and, in some cases, DCF staff represent some of the most stable relationships in a child's life. In those cases, staff who wish to continue a relationship with a child who is no longer assigned to the employee's caseload may do so only in accordance with this subsection.

An employee who wishes to continue a relationship with a child shall:

- review the restrictions in the "Standards of Conduct - Staff/Client Interactions" section above; and
- submit a written request to his or her Office Director, facility superintendent or division head stating:
 - the name of the client;
 - the relationship the employee had with the client while he or she was involved with DCF;
 - if the client is still active with DCF, the name of the current Social Worker;
 - the reason for requesting an ongoing relationship;
 - the anticipated extent of the relationship (*e.g.*, spending holidays with the employee, meeting for dinner occasionally, attending significant events in the former client's life); and
 - address any restrictions in the policy such as inclusion on social media and providing personal contact information.

The Office Director, facility superintendent or division head shall:

- review the request and indicate his or her approval or disapproval in writing with a brief statement regarding the reason for the decision;
- notify the Regional Administrator, facility superintendent or division head; and
- submit the request and decision of the manager to the Director of Human Resources Management.

The Director of Human Resources shall:

- review the request in the context of the "Standards of Conduct – Staff/Client Interactions" policy above;
- issue a waiver of that policy or deny the request; and
- send a written response to the employee and the employee's manager.

Standards of Conduct - Administrative Work Rules

Employees shall:

- be at their designated work locations, ready to work, promptly as scheduled and shall remain at their work locations during scheduled work hours (in units in which operations are continuous, employees shall not leave their posts at the end of their scheduled shifts until they have been properly relieved);
- report to their supervisors, or to the person formally designated by management in the absence of a supervisor, when leaving the work location during working hours;

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**Standards of
Conduct -
Administrative
Work Rules**
(Continued)

- if unable to report for work as scheduled, follow DCF and office procedures for notifying his or her supervisor of the absence and requesting time off from work, whether such time off is paid or unpaid;
- submit all requests for vacation, personal leave and compensatory time in accordance with DCF or office procedures and collective bargaining agreements;
- ensure they have received proper authorization for time off in accordance with DCF policies and provide documentation as required to support absences;
- maintain accurate attendance records, recording all absences on their official attendance records and ensuring that absences do not exceed accrued leave balances unless authorized through Human Resource Management for unpaid leave;
- if in a designated on-call status, respond to any call promptly, reporting to the work location ready to work as required;
- notify Human Resource Management in writing of any change in personal data, including any change in eligibility status of dependents carried on the employee's health insurance benefits, within 48 hours of such change;
- not fail or refuse to perform any of the duties contained in their class specification or functional job description;
- comply with all lawful directives of supervisory and managerial staff; when such a directive conflicts with a prior directive, the employee shall inform the supervisor or manager of the conflict and follow the order as directed thereafter (no employee is required to comply with such a directive if doing so will place the employee or another person in imminent danger of harm to his or her physical well-being);
- obtain the express written authorization of their supervisor to work beyond their regular schedule for overtime pay or compensatory time (the reasons for the overtime or compensatory time shall be documented on the employee's time sheet);
- not knowingly make false entries in or alter any DCF reports or records including but not limited to casework records, incident reports, attendance and pay records and mileage reimbursement requests;
- follow all requirements for electronic information systems and never knowingly make a false entry or misrepresentation into such system;
- not interfere with the productivity of co-workers or any other DCF staff, nor shall they cause any interruption of work;
- perform their duties in a diligent, efficient, courteous and respectful manner;
- act in a professional manner, showing respect to other employees, clients and the public;
- engage in productive work activities during their scheduled work hours (activities such as reading personal materials, playing games or watching television shall be limited to lunch, breaks and authorized periods of inactivity);
- not engage in personal business for gain while on duty;
- obtain approval from Human Resources prior to seeking or holding secondary employment with a private employer, operating a private professional practice or seeking or holding dual employment with another state agency;
- neither bring nor display any items in the workplace that may reasonably be considered offensive to other employees, clients or the public or are in violation of DCF or State of Connecticut policies (such items include but are not limited to written materials, visuals, pictures, posters and computer materials);

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Standards of Conduct - Administrative Work Rules (Continued)

- not unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use controlled substances, illegal drugs or alcohol or be under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol while on the job or in the workplace;
- not engage in intimate relationships between managerial or supervisory staff and subordinate staff within their direct chains of command;
- not be employed or remain in any position that places the employee above or under the supervision of an immediate family member, nor shall the employee be placed above or under the supervision of a relative of an immediate family member;
- comply with all training requirements established by DCF and when certifications are required for the use of equipment or techniques utilized in the course of employment, employees shall keep such certifications current;
- keep licenses or certifications current if their job descriptions require possession of a professional license or certification;
- report any suspension, revocation or modification to a required professional license or certification to the employee's immediate supervisor and to Human Resource Management in writing no later than the next business day following such action;
- not use personal recording devices unless agreed to by all parties to the conversation or activity;
- report work-related injury or illness using the procedure set forth in DCF Policy 2-3, "Human Resources Management";
- comply with the DCF Dress Code as set forth in DCF Policy 2-3, "Human Resources Management"; and
- cooperate fully and truthfully in any inquiry or investigation conducted by DCF or by any other entity investigating matters related to their employment, whether such employee is involved as a witness or as the subject of an investigation (employees who are the subject of an investigation and who are members of a bargaining unit are entitled to have a union representative present during such investigation and to all other protections provided under their collective bargaining agreement).

Standards of Conduct - Off Duty Conduct

Employees shall:

- not engage in off-duty conduct that:
 - may compromise their ability to perform their official job duties,
 - may compromise the integrity of DCF, or
 - may bring discredit to DCF;
- not engage in the use of controlled substances, illegal drugs or alcohol off duty in a manner that causes the employee to be impaired in the workplace or otherwise interferes with the mission of DCF;
- not engage in off-duty conduct that results in a substantiation of child abuse or neglect against the employee;
- not engage in off-duty conduct that results in the employee's name being placed on the DCF Central Registry for Abuse or Neglect;
- if the employee is the subject of an investigation by any agency of an incident involving child abuse or neglect, report that investigation to his or her supervisor and to Human Resource Management no later than the next business day following notification of such investigation;

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Standards of Conduct - Off Duty Conduct (Continued)

- report revocations, suspensions or restrictions to their motor vehicle driver's licenses to their immediate supervisor and to Human Resource Management no later than the next business day following such action;
- if employer verification to obtain a work permit from the Department of Motor Vehicles due to suspension of his or her driver's license is required, submit the request to the Director of Human Resource Management (no other DCF employee shall be authorized to sign a DMV employer verification form on behalf of DCF for such work permit);
- report any arrest or pending criminal charges to their supervisor and to Human Resource Management no later than the next business day;
- report the disposition of an arrest, including conviction information and loss of driver's license, no later than the next business day following such disposition; and
- promptly obtain and provide copies of the arrest reports and disposition information to Human Resource Management.

Standards of Conduct - Workplace Violence

No DCF employee shall:

- bring into any state workplace any weapon or dangerous instrument, except as may be required as a condition of employment;
- use, attempt to use or threaten to use any such weapon or dangerous instrument in a state workplace, except as a condition of employment;
- engage in any physical altercation with another person at a state workplace, except as a condition of employment;
- engage in behavior that constitutes workplace violence;
- cause or threaten to cause death or physical injury to any individual at a state workplace;
- intimidate, harass or otherwise perform any violent act against another employee;
- knowingly make a false report of violence or threat of violence; or
- engage in workplace bullying including but not limited to the use of social media or other public sites to post defamatory or bullying statements regarding other employees regardless of where such activity occurs.

Standards of Conduct - State Vehicles

Employees shall follow the following standards regarding the use of State Vehicles:

- Employees shall maintain good stewardship of all state property and equipment including state vehicles, and shall not utilize such property or equipment for personal use, except as authorized by DCF policy or procedure.
- State vehicles may not be used to transport passengers, including other state employees, unless such transportation is necessary to perform official state business.
- Any accident or incident with a state vehicle being utilized by or in which a DCF employee is a passenger shall be reported promptly to the employee's supervisor, and all required paperwork shall be completed and submitted promptly. Incidents occurring outside of normal business hours that cannot be reported to the employee's supervisor shall be reported to the Careline.

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Standards of Conduct - State Vehicles
(Continued)

- Employees driving state vehicles must at all times remain alert and adhere to all motor vehicle laws and shall not engage in the use of cell phones while driving, including texting while driving, or engage in other conduct that constitutes distracted driving.
- Employees shall not use any controlled substance, illegal drug or alcohol while operating a motor vehicle in the performance of state business or at any time while operating a state vehicle.
- Employees shall not smoke in state vehicles.
- Employees driving a state vehicle or riding as a passenger shall at all times conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the expectations contained within this policy; maintaining professionalism and showing respect to others, including never using rude, insulting, offensive or profane language or offensive gestures towards others.
- Employees shall not drive state vehicles unless holding a proper license for operating the type of state vehicle being driven.
- Employees shall maintain a professional demeanor at all times and shall not engage in acts that could reasonably be expected to cause damage to state vehicles.

Note: Requirements regarding procuring fuel for a state vehicle are found in DCF Policy 2-2, "Fiscal Services Division."

Standards of Conduct - Equipment

Employees shall follow the following standards regarding equipment:

- Employees shall not duplicate or misuse any keys, badges, proximity cards or identification cards and shall safeguard these against loss or misuse by others.
- When conducting state business through the use of a cell phone, either by call, email or through text messaging, employees shall utilize only state cell phones.
- Use of state equipment to conduct union business shall be governed by the relevant collective bargaining agreement.
- Employees shall utilize state computer systems only as authorized by the State of Connecticut and DCF Acceptable Use policies and shall not utilize state email for personal use outside the limited emergency usage allowed in the Acceptable Use Policy (for example, receiving school closure notices relevant to the employee's child).
- Employees shall not utilize state computers to access non-work related internet sites at any time.
- Employees shall report the loss of any state equipment immediately following the DCF Loss Procedure subsection of DCF Policy 2-4 A, "Loss Reporting Action Steps".

Standards of Conduct - Confidentiality

Employees shall:

- adhere to all laws and DCF policies and directives regarding the confidentiality of DCF records;
 - not remove DCF records, work or equipment containing confidential information from DCF worksites unless authorized to do so by a supervisor or manager;
 - not look into any client record, including but not limited to accessing electronic case records, except for business purposes as authorized by policy or procedure;
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**Standards of
Conduct –
Confidentiality**
(Continued)

- not disclose any client information without proper authorization;
- not enter the office, desk, file cabinet, locker or personal effects of any other employee unless authorized to do so by a supervisor or manager;
- in areas in which workspaces are shared, be respectful of this arrangement and not access items in those spaces that are not shared or otherwise pertinent to the performance of their duties.

Cross-reference: DCF Policy 6-2, "Confidentiality"

**Standards of
Conduct -
Fitness For
Duty**

Employees shall:

- not use or consume alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or other intoxicating substances and shall not use prescription drugs without a valid prescription while on duty;
- not report to work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or in an impaired condition;
- not report for duty in an impaired state due to the influence of legally- prescribed and obtained drugs;
- remain alert and attentive to duty at all times;
- not sleep while on duty unless periods of sleep are authorized under the relevant collective bargaining agreement or during emergency staffing situations when this restriction has been suspended by appropriate managerial staff;
- report to their supervisor or to Human Resource Management any medical condition or use of medication that may affect their work performance or judgment prior to the start of their shift; and
- maintain all medication brought to the work place in a secure manner.

**Standards of
Conduct -
Communicable
Illnesses**

Employees who have an illness or condition that may cause a risk of contagion in the workplace are required to minimize their exposure in the workplace by utilizing their accrued leave balances to cover any absence from work and to provide documentation required by Human Resource Management to ensure identification of any leave entitlements.

Employees shall:

1. seek medical care for any illness or condition that could cause a risk of contagion;
2. keep their supervisors apprised of their need for time off from work;
3. follow their medical practitioners' advice regarding the criteria for returning to work; and
4. provide documentation necessary to support their absence as well as any required medical clearance to return to duty.

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**Standards of
Conduct -
Communicable
Illnesses**
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Employees who report to work and either display signs of potential contagious illness or advise others of the existence of a condition that poses a risk of imminent contagion shall be required to leave work, utilizing their sick leave accruals, to seek medical attention. Such employees shall be required to provide medical documentation that clears them to return to duty.

No employee shall be harassed or discriminated or retaliated against based on any medical condition or for compliance with this policy.

Exceptions

Any exception to any provision of this Code of Conduct requires written approval from the Office of the Commissioner of DCF or a management representative authorized by the Commissioner.
