

## Ethics – Commonly Asked Questions

Hanover County Ethics Policy (HR Policy 13.9)

1. [What are the general guidelines for the use of County resources?](#)
2. [May I occasionally use my County e-mail account to send a personal message to a friend or coworker? May I occasionally use a County phone for a personal local call?](#)
3. [If I discover that a co-worker forged records and stole from the County, what should I do?](#)
4. [Because of the nature of my work for the County, citizens often ask me to recommend a company or commercial service provider. Is it appropriate for me to provide recommendations, based upon my knowledge and experience?](#)
5. [Is it permissible on my off-duty days for me to work for a private contractor that does work for the County?](#)
6. [Is it ethical for me to purchase or even ask to purchase products or services at County-negotiated prices for my personal use?](#)
7. [Is it permissible for me to hire a relative or close friend?](#)
8. [May I accept a free lunch or some other type of gift from a vendor, client, or customer?](#)
9. [May I fund-raise at work, during my work hours?](#)
10. [An employee in my department overcharged a customer. The co-worker corrected the transaction but did not refund the customer, since the customer was not aware they were overcharged. How should I report this?](#)

1. We have a duty to ensure the proper stewardship of all County resources, including funds, facilities, equipment, supplies, and employee work time. We should conserve County resources and use them efficiently.
2. The County network resources, including e-mail accounts, are provided for official County business and generally should not be used for personal reasons. Occasional, but not frequent, use of your County e-mail account for a personal message is permissible, as is occasional use of a County phone for a personal local call. **Information Technology Security and Use policy 1.4-1.6**
3. If you suspect an illegal activity involving the County, its records or its resources, you have an obligation to report it to your supervisor, Internal Audit, or the Sheriff's Office. You can also contact Human Resources for help in how to best handle the situation.
4. No. Such recommendations made while acting in an official capacity, or by virtue of your position, improperly suggests that the County favors one individual or business over another.
5. Secondary employment is permissible only upon the employee's supervisor's prior written approval. It is the employee's responsibility to obtain the approval on at least an annual basis. Approval will be based upon whether the secondary employment may impair your efficiency in your County employment or create a potential conflict of interest. Generally, secondary employment with a business that does work for the County will not be approved. **HR Policy 13.4**
6. No. That would bring into question the County's objectivity in making procurement decisions. **Accounting Regulations, Business Purposes and Purchasing Guidelines**
7. County policy and the Conflict of Interests Act prohibit the employment of relatives in a supervisory-subordinate relationship. Neither County policy nor the Conflict of Interests Act addresses the employment of close friends. All County employment decisions must be based solely on merit. If a close friend applies for a County position and you are authorized to make a hiring decision on your close friend's application, avoid the potential appearance of impropriety by disqualifying yourself from making the hiring decision.

8. The State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act contains the following prohibitions concerning gifts: Government employees may not accept a gift from any person, business, or other entity that has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance of the employee's official duties under circumstances where the timing and nature of the gift would cause a reasonable person to question the employee's impartiality. Also, employees may not accept gifts from sources on a basis so frequent as to raise the appearance that they are using their public office for private gain. In summary, the safest course of action is to decline gifts of more than a nominal value. With respect to meals, take turns paying or, better yet, always pay for your own meal.
  
9. The County and its employees have a long tradition of supporting nonprofit fund-raising activities, including the United Way Campaign, Relay for Life, and a host of smaller efforts for schools and others. Such activities demonstrate our commitment to the community we serve. Department directors and supervisors are responsible for monitoring their service delivery efforts, and they must use appropriate discretion in allowing employees to use work time for nonprofit fundraising activities. If fund-raising activities take employees away from their jobs for extended periods of time or negatively impact service delivery, the supervisor is responsible for refocusing efforts on service delivery and stewardship of public resources.
  
10. The best approach would be to notify the supervisor. The supervisor will review proper procedures with the employee. Reconciliation controls will identify over/short cash receipt differences. A misappropriation of County funds will also be reported to the Internal Audit Department and the Sheriff's Office. Thank you for the continued support of the Internal Audit Department