



**POLICY HR-01: Code of Conduct Policy**  
**Human Resources & Staff Development**

**Approval Date:** September 30, 2015  
**Approval Authority:** Council Resolution No. 6  
**Effective Date:** December 2000  
**Revision Date/s:** May 29, 2013; September 11, 2015

**Purpose:**

Norfolk County employees must provide excellent service and be accountable for their actions. This responsibility and accountability to the public and other employees is conferred by Norfolk County Council.

Norfolk County expects each and every employee to adhere to the following Code of Conduct, in the delivery of their services to the public and the Corporation. This Code is meant to enhance Norfolk County's mission statement, vision and values.

This Code of Conduct is not intended for use by County Councillors, as they are covered by the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*.

**Implementation Procedure:**

It is recognized that no set of guidelines can address every ethical question. These guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive. They are intended to assist employees in matters of conduct, to avoid conflict of interest and to serve the public in a manner beyond reproach. Perceptions of others are critical to the reputation of an individual employed in public service. Nothing is more important to public administrators than the public's opinion about their honesty, truthfulness, and personal integrity. The best insurance against loss of public confidence is adherence to the highest standards of honesty, truthfulness and integrity.

**Acceptable Employee Conduct**

This section should be read in conjunction with EBS-26 "Customer Service Standards", HR-04 "Respectful Workplace & Violence Prevention Policy" and HR-05 "Interpersonal Conduct". Other policies which address acceptable conduct issues include HR-03 "Dress Code", HR-23 (a) "Smoking in the Workplace", **CSD-11 "Municipal Alcohol Policy"** and all policies and procedures in Norfolk County's Occupational Health and Safety manual and any applicable Collective Agreement.

Employees are required to work in compliance with all Norfolk County corporate and departmental policies and procedures and any applicable Provincial or Federal legislation.

Failure to comply may result in discipline, up to and including termination. Further employees must advise their supervisor of any pending charges they may have under any legislation.

Employees are required to take direction from their supervisors. **Insubordination will not be tolerated.**

**Employees are required to cooperate with a County investigation, including giving an accurate account of actions, witness account and/or other relevant information. Employees will not falsify or misrepresent information, whether written or oral.**

**Employees are to immediately report incidents that result (or could have resulted) in injury to self or others and/or damage to County property and/or equipment or the personal property and/or equipment of others. Employees will not vandalize or apply graffiti to County equipment or property or another individual's property.**

**Employees will promote effective performance and will not participate in any horseplay.**

**Employees will attend work for their regularly scheduled shift.**

Employees are required to refrain from foul language and swearing while working.

**Employees will promote Norfolk County in a positive manner in their conduct and communication with others (emails, social media, conversations, etc.).**

Employees are required to maintain an acceptable level of personal hygiene while at work.

Employees should be prepared to provide their Norfolk County photo identification upon request.

When working or visiting in a non-County building, employees are expected to follow the direction of the building's host in all items regarding security, safety and emergency evacuation.

It is never permissible for employees to **bring into the workplace for personal consumption alcohol or illicit drugs during working hours and/or** attend work **while** under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. **An employee will be considered under the influence if he or she is not fit for work due to the consumption or after affects of drugs, illicit drugs, medications, alcohol or other substances. Legal drugs may also have similar effects.** An employee is also responsible for determining the potential adverse effects of using prescribed or over-the-counter medication to ensure they can remain alert, productive and that their judgment is not impaired at any time. Employees must abide by all applicable laws and regulations related to the possession and use of drugs and alcohol.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Employees shall not, without approval:

- a. Engage in any business or transaction or have a financial or other personal interest which is in conflict with the discharge of their official duties;

- b. Engage in any outside work or activity in business undertaking:
  - which interferes or appears to interfere with the employee's duties
  - where the employee has an advantage or appears to have an advantage derived from employment with the County
  - in a professional capacity that will or might appear to influence or affect the carrying out of duties as a County employee.

County employees shall not:

- i. Place themselves in a position where they are under obligation to any person who might benefit from special consideration or favor on their part **or** who might seek preferential treatment, in any way;
- ii. Place themselves in a position where they could derive any direct or indirect benefit or interest from any contracts about which the employee can influence decisions;
- iii. Benefit from the use of information acquired during the course of official duties, which is not generally available to the public;
- iv. Participate in any decision, promotion or make any recommendation to their supervisor, Committee or Council, in which they or their family has any financial interest except as a resident of the County;
- v. Accept a specific gesture without determining with their supervisor whether or not it constitutes "moderate hospitality".

### **Disclosure of Conflict of Interest**

Whenever an employee considers he or she could be involved in a conflict of interest as prohibited by this policy, the employee shall disclose the situation to his/her General Manager (or designate), or the County Manager, and shall abide by the advice given.

Once an employee has disclosed an interest it is understood that he/she will be removed from the decision-making process relative to the interest that has been disclosed.

### **Gifts**

County employees will serve in such a way that they do not realize undue personal gain from the performance of their official duties. No County employee shall place him/herself in a position where he/she could derive any benefit from any County contracts or organizations with whom the County does business.

- No employee should borrow or accept gifts from staff of any corporation which buys services from, or sells to, the County other than:
  - a) Normal hospitality among persons doing business;
  - b) Tokens exchanged as a part of protocol;
  - c) Normal presentations made to persons participating in public functions;

- d) Those discounts offered on a generic “government” basis on a provincial and/or national basis; e.g. hotel accommodations and corporate memberships (COSTCO).
- Customer discounts based on your employment with the County are not permitted.
  - Public property, funds and power should never be directed toward personal gain.
  - Employees should not directly or indirectly solicit any gift or accept or receive any gift whether it be money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, promise, or any other form.
  - County staff should not be able to benefit from County purchasing, unless a specific exception is made in the interest of the County.

**Media Relations** – see EBS-25 “Media Relations Policy”

### **Political Activity**

County employees may run for political office at all levels of government. Depending on the office sought, it may be necessary to request a leave of absence while campaigning. If elected, it may be necessary that the individual resign. Employees may campaign on behalf of candidates running for political office provided that it does not interfere with the performance of his/her normal duties, and it is done without reference to the fact that the employee is employed by Norfolk County.

An employee of Norfolk County who intends to be a candidate in the election for Norfolk County should consult *The Municipal Elections Act* as well as any other relative legislation or Collective Agreement addressing the conditions of such candidacy vis-à-vis his/her employment. These employees are required to take a Leave of Absence from their current County employment while running for the offices of Norfolk County Councillor or Mayor. Employees who are elected as a County Councillor or Mayor are required to resign from their current position with the County.

Employees may be involved in Provincial and Federal campaigns as long as this involvement does not affect the objectivity with which they must discharge their duties.

### **Membership on Local Agencies, Boards, Commissions**

Employees of Norfolk County shall not be involved with a local agency(ies), Board(s), or Commission(s), if such service might affect the objectivity with which they must discharge their duties.

Employees of Norfolk County, where appointed in an advisory capacity by Council to attend local Agency(ies), Board(s) or Commission(s), shall not vote on any matter before the body.

### **Confidentiality of Information**

All new employees shall sign the County “Confidentiality Agreement” prior to their assumption of work.

Onus is placed on General Managers to ensure that employees are cognizant of confidential information held in their department.

Employees shall not disclose or release by any means to any member of the public, either in verbal or written form, any personal and confidential information or material acquired by virtue of their official position as an employee.

Employees shall not permit any person to inspect or have access to information, papers or documents which are confidential, other than those persons who are appropriately entitled thereto.

Formal procedures are in place, in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, which govern the collection, use and disclosure of personal and confidential information by Norfolk County. See EBS-24 "Freedom of Information Request Policy".

Employees shall not, by virtue of their position with the Corporation, use information not available to the public for perceived personal or private gain or for the gain of friends, relatives, or any person or corporation having dealings with the County. See section entitled "Conflict of Interest" in this Code of Conduct.

All personnel matters and files of an employee of the Corporation shall be kept in strictest confidence with the Department of Human Resources & Staff Development, and knowledge of their contents shall be available only to those who need the information in the performance of their duties and if the disclosure is necessary and proper in the discharge of the organization's function.

Where an employee is unsure of the status of information, he/she shall **consult with and confirm** with the **Human Resources & Staff Development Division and Records Management/FOI Coordinator** or the County Clerk.

### **Use of Personal Electronic Devices (PED's) In the Workplace**

Employees are not to use personal entertainment devices such as **iPads**, iPods, MP3 players while working.

During regular working hours, employees are not permitted to use their personal cell phones to receive or make personal telephone calls or texting. Talking on cell phones and texting at work causes unnecessary distractions, often minimizes productivity and can be intrusive. Cell phones are distracting not only because they require attention to operate, but because the conversation itself engages the employee's attention to something other than the job at hand.

Personal electronic devices are to remain clear of the employee's working area. Employees may access their cell phones during break and lunch periods, and can only be used away from their personal work space.

Employees who have children with babysitters, daycare, attending school, or eldercare, etc., can provide their business number and extension to those caregivers for emergency situations. Norfolk County business phones are equipped with voicemail and alternate contacts, who can locate the employee expeditiously.

Employees may use telephones provided by Norfolk County during work hours for emergency situations. Excessive personal calls during the workday, can interfere with productivity and be distracting to others. Employees are expected to make personal calls during breaks and lunch periods and to limit incoming personal calls coming into the workplace during the workday as much as possible. Flexibility will be provided in circumstances demanding immediate attention.

Employees are not permitted in any circumstance to use their phones for talking, recording and distribution of images **and/or conversations** which could be perceived as exploitation and bullying.

### **Use of Photography and Recorded Images**

Norfolk County strives to provide safe, quality programs and services which respect and protect the privacy and safety of vulnerable\* individuals and patrons participating in our programs or members of the public utilizing our services. The following measures have been adopted to ensure the ongoing privacy and confidentiality of our employees, clients and visitors:

Norfolk County employees are strictly prohibited from posting sensitive, libellous, incendiary or personal information, regarding our clients, visitors and employees, on social networking sites and/or the internet in general.

Norfolk County employees are strictly prohibited from taking photographs or videos of clients, visitors or employees on Norfolk County premises for personal reasons. Norfolk County premises include; office buildings, libraries and services areas, i.e. park and recreation change rooms, washrooms, dressing rooms, long-term care home, treatment areas in the Health Unit and emergency scenes.

Video Surveillance: Reference EBS-58- *Video Surveillance Policy*.

Norfolk County employees are strictly prohibited from posting photographs (from either a camera, cell phone or a digital/film camera) of other employees, clients or visitors on the internet, unless authorized to do so. This authorization must be in writing.

**\* Vulnerable clients: refer to any person who is under 8 years of age, over 65 years of age or someone who has a mental or physical disability and who may be susceptible to inappropriate behaviour by persons in a position of trust.**

### **Property**

Property of Norfolk County such as vehicles, equipment and materials shall not be used by employees for personal use unless authorization, in writing, has been obtained from a General Manager with a copy sent to the County Manager.

Property of Norfolk County includes computer programs, technological innovations, and other patentable items devised while in the employ of the County and which remain the exclusive property of Norfolk County. See EBS-20 "Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy".

Employees are expected to use Corporate vehicles, equipment, and materials with due care and accountability. **It is never permissible for employees to operate a Corporate vehicle and/or equipment while possessing, consuming or being under the influence of alcohol and/or illicit drugs.** Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action.

### **Theft and Fraud**

All employees shall work in accordance with both County policies and procedures and all applicable laws in order to prevent fraudulent misconduct. All employees shall exercise honesty, integrity, objectivity and diligence and shall not knowingly be a party to any fraudulent activity, including theft.

Fraud and/or theft of County property or resources by an employee is considered a major form of misconduct.

**Employees will accurately record (and will not misrepresent) their hours of work on their timesheet.**

**Employees will ensure that they swipe/scan their own access card for entry and exit to the building or ensure that they input only their own employee pin code.**

Norfolk County will identify and promptly investigate any possibility of fraudulent or related dishonest activities against Norfolk County and, when appropriate, pursue legal remedies available under the law.

In addition to disciplinary action as outlined in the contravention section of the policy, and possibly considering restitution, Norfolk County will forward information to the appropriate authorities for criminal prosecution, as deemed appropriate.

### **Employee Responsibility**

Compliance with this Code of Conduct is a condition of employment. Employees who are unclear of their responsibilities under this Code should discuss their concerns with their supervisor and/or member of Human Resources & Staff Development Department.

### **Contravention**

Should a situation arise which appears to be in contravention of this policy, the County Manager, the departmental General Manager and General Manager, Employee & Business Services Department shall meet to determine if discipline, up to and including termination is warranted.

### **Enforcement**

1. Management staff shall, to the best of their ability, ensure that this Code is followed by individuals employed in their area of responsibility.

2. Management staff having knowledge of a breach of this Code of Conduct by an employee shall bring such information immediately to the attention of the employee and the County Manager.
3. Any employee who has reason to believe that a General Manager or Supervisor is committing a breach of the Code shall approach the General Manager or County Manager in confidence.
4. Where it is determined that an employee is in contravention of any one of the foregoing points or of the Code itself, disciplinary action may be taken **up to and including termination for cause.**