

**CODE OF ETHICS
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
SEMINOLE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

SCOPE

This Code of Ethics speaks to all full-time, part-time and temporary deputy clerks of the Circuit Court of Seminole County.

CITIZENSHIP

It is fundamental to this code and a prerequisite to its other tenets that we commit to fulfilling the duties of citizenship in a self-governing democratic society. This includes upholding the United States Constitution, the Constitution of the State of Florida, as well as Federal and State laws, and administrative orders. We shall comply with our legal duties, placing loyalty to the principles of this code before loyalty to any person or affiliation.

**CODE 1
AVOIDING IMPROPRIETY AND THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY**

Performing Duties

We shall faithfully carry out all our appropriate duties striving at all times to perform our work diligently, efficiently, equitably, thoroughly and courteously; observing the highest standards of conduct and professionalism.

Accountability

We shall conduct clerk business to further the public interest so that same public can make informed judgments and hold us to the highest degree of accountability. We shall constantly look for better ways to perform the tasks which have been entrusted to us by the public. We shall always commit ourselves to pursuing the highest standard of excellence in the execution of our duties.

Avoiding impropriety

We shall avoid both impropriety and the appearance of impropriety. We shall avoid subjecting ourselves to improper influences from any source whatsoever. We shall avoid any activities that would impugn the dignity of the clerk's office.

Fairness

We shall conduct our work without bias or prejudice based on any factor to include: race, skin color, religion, age, national origin, language, martial status, socioeconomic status, and physical or mental challenge.

Honesty and Truthfulness

We shall express the truth as best we know it with complete candor and sincerity. We shall endeavor to never mislead or deceive anyone, at anytime, for any reason.

Involvement in Actions before the Court

We shall notify the appropriate authority whenever we or anyone in our immediate family are named in any action pending before the court. Such notification is to be directed to our immediate supervisor upon our knowledge of any such action.

Avoid Privilege

We shall use our official position solely for its intended purpose. We shall not use our position (intentionally or unintentionally) to secure unwarranted privileges or exemptions for ourselves or others; we shall not dispense special favors to anyone, at anytime or for any reason. We shall never accept remuneration in any form for the commission or omission of any act or official duty.

We shall not attempt to take advantages of our enhanced access to judges and court files to further any personal interest we might have in a case or engage in non-court related ex-parte discussions with judges.

We shall not discuss or divulge information we may know to anyone outside the clerk's office or the court system without the express permission of the Clerk.

Gift Policy

We understand the clerk's office has a "no gift" policy. As such, gifts of any kind to individual deputy clerks are not acceptable. We shall not solicit, accept, or agree to accept, or dispense any gift, favor or loan either for ourselves or on behalf of another, based upon any understanding, either explicit or implicit, that could influence any official duty.

Gifts of reasonable de minimis value that can be shared with an entire department are acceptable, as are gifts given within the clerk's office for birthdays, showers, promotions and recognitions.

CODE 2

PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF POSITION IMPARTIALLY AND DILIGENTLY

Independent Judgment

We shall avoid relationships that would impair our impartiality and independent judgment. We shall be vigilant of conflicts of interest or the potential for same, and ensure that outside interests are never so extensive or of a nature as to impair the ability to perform clerk duties.

Personal Relationships

We shall recruit, select and advance personnel based on demonstrated knowledge, skills, abilities and bona fide work-related factors, not favoritism. We recognize that we cannot and shall not supervise any relative or roommate. We shall avoid appointing, assigning or directly supervising a relative or roommate or attempting to influence the employment or advancement of a relative or roommate.

Misconduct of Others

We expect our fellow deputy clerks to abide by the standards set out in this code. We shall expose violations where they may appear to exist. We shall report to the proper authority, the behavior of any clerk who violates this code including, but not limited to, potential conflicts of interest involving our duties; and attempts to inappropriately influence us in performing our duties. The Clerk should be contacted directly if a deputy clerk believes that it is appropriate and/or required under the circumstances.

Attempts at Influence

We shall immediately report any attempt to compel us to violate these tenets in any manner to the appropriate authority. The Clerk should be contacted directly if a deputy clerk believes that it is appropriate and/or required under the circumstances.

Properly Maintain Records

We shall not inappropriately destroy, alter, falsify, mutilate, backdate or fail to make required entries on any records within the clerk's control unless ordered in writing to do so by the court.

Legal Requirements

We shall maintain the legally required confidentiality of the office, not disclosing information, whether or not confidential, to any unauthorized person for any purpose. We shall properly provide confidential information that is available to specific individuals authorized to receive such by reason of statute, court rule or administrative order.

Discretion

We shall at all times respect litigants and the public. We shall treat personal or sensitive information with the same discretion that we ourselves would desire and expect if we were involved in a similar case.

Proper use of Public Resources

We shall use the resources, property and funds under our official control judiciously and solely in accordance with prescribed procedures and appropriate law(s).

CODE 3
CONDUCTING OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

Outside Business

The clerk’s office is our primary employment. We shall conduct our outside activities, including employment, business, or social in a manner that reflects positively on both the office of the clerk and our own integrity and professionalism.

Outside Compensation for Court Work

We shall accept only our compensation as deputy clerks when giving advice or assistance as part of our official capacity. Compensation from an outside source or entity to access court records or clerk maintained information is strictly forbidden.

Not giving Legal Advice

We shall respond to inquiries regarding standard court procedures, but shall not render any legal advice unless it is required as part of our official position. We shall not recommend specific private attorneys, nor render any opinion of same to members of the public.

CODE 4
REFRAINING FROM INAPPROPRIATE POLITICAL ACTIVITY

We retain our right to vote and should strive to exercise it as a part of citizenship. We are free to participate in political activity. If we choose to engage in partisan political activity, we do so strictly as private citizens. We shall participate in such activities only during non-working hours. We shall not use our position or title with the clerk’s office to influence others, or in any manner related to our outside activities.

All deputy clerks shall conduct any political activities during non-work hours or take unpaid leave of absence upon declaring any intent to run for office. If elected, we shall resign our position with the clerk, unless holding a political office that clearly does not create a conflict of interest, or interfere with our ability to perform the duties of deputy clerk. Such determination shall be made in consultation with the Clerk.

DEFINITION OF COMMON TERMS REFERRED TO IN THIS CODE OF ETHICS:

- “Immediate family” - shall be construed to mean: current and/or former spouses, children, parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and/or uncles.
- “Appropriate authority” - shall be construed to mean: supervisors, directors, or the Clerk.
- “We” - shall refer to all Deputy Clerks of the Court, whether probationary or deputized.