

**County Of San Diego**  
**Health and Human Services Agency (HHSa)**

SUBJECT: **HHSa Code of Conduct**

NO: **HHSa-M-1.2**

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DATE: December 10, 2024

REFERENCE: County of San Diego Code of Ethics; HHSa Program Policies and Procedures; California Fair Political Practices Commission.

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**POLICY:**

All Health and Human Services Agency (HHSa) employees, temporary workers, and volunteers (staff) shall uphold the highest standards of conduct in the performance of their duties by complying with the following principles:

1. Adhere to the County of San Diego Code of Ethics and attest to their understanding of the contents and agreement to abide by such annually.
2. Adhere to all applicable HHSa program policies and procedures in the performance of their employment duties.
  - a. Successfully complete all applicable program specific training requirements
3. Adhere to all applicable HHSa computer system usage rules.
  - a. When accessing County of San Diego computer systems, HHSa employees shall acknowledge the following banner language:
    - i. *System data is confidential and/or protected under the law.*
    - ii. *You are an authorized user.*
    - iii. *You will use the system only for business purposes.*
    - iv. *System usage is logged, monitored, and misuse may be grounds for disciplinary action.*
      - a. **IMPORTANT REMINDER** - *You are prohibited from looking up yourself, friends, and family members; and you are prohibited from looking up any others for whom you have no business purpose, in any system that the county provides you access to.*
4. Treat members of the public and fellow employees with integrity, and respect. In the performance of their duties, HHSa staff shall:
  - a. Provide all services in accordance with applicable federal, State, and local laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances. Take appropriate measures to ensure practical knowledge of those laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances applicable to their workplace duties.
  - b. Provide customers, patients, clients and facility residents with the information they need to make informed decisions, including access to information about HHSa services,

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policies, procedures and charges, as well as any information for which they are legally entitled to receive regarding their involvement with HHSa.

- c. Treat others with equity, dignity, respect and courtesy, without regard to race, religion, creed, color, gender, economic status, sexual orientation, age, national origin, citizenship, ethnic group identification, disability, political affiliation, marital status, domestic partnership, source of payment, or any other non-treatment or non-service-related characteristic.
  - d. Comply with mandated reporter requirements for any suspected or alleged child or adult abuse or neglect.
  - e. Actively promote quality assurance and quality improvement and raise concerns regarding possible deficiencies or errors in the quality of care, treatment or services provided to the appropriate level of management for assessment and resolution.
  - f. While on County duty or representing themselves as an employee of the County, act in a manner that maintains their own safety and the safety of customers, patients, clients, facility residents, the community, co-workers and other employees, and the environment.
  - g. In the performance of employment duties, conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to their standing as representatives of HHSa and support the best interests of the public.
5. Have practical knowledge of and perform employment duties in compliance with all federal, State, and local laws, as well as County policies and procedures applicable to their job. HHSa staff, whether working in-person, hybrid or remote, shall:
- a. Comply with workplace safety policies.
  - b. Secure and protect information, including all identifiable data regarding both past and present County clients, according to the applicable HHSa policies, laws and regulations governing the confidentiality and security of information. No client identifiable data or information shall be shared or used for any purpose outside of County duties without appropriate client release of information, unless required by law and/or approved by management and HHSa Business Assurance and Compliance.
  - c. Dispose of all medical waste or other hazardous materials properly.
  - d. If holding a supervisory position:
    - i. Ensure their staff have sufficient information and training to comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies that are relevant to the staff's responsibilities.
    - ii. Ensure adequate processes and controls to consistently monitor staff productivity and effectiveness, as well as compliance with HHSa policies, regardless of any alternative work locations.

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6. Conduct HHSa duties in accordance with the highest standards of ethical and legal conduct. HHSa staff shall:
- a. Conform to the ethics and standards for their profession and licensure and exercise sound judgment in the performance of their duties.
  - b. Avoid commitments, including but not limited to outside employment or consulting, that interfere with, or could be perceived to conflict or interfere with, their ability to properly perform their HHSa duties. If providing similar services to County duties in outside employment, refrain from providing services to clients that may be enrolled in each program by requesting re-assignment of client in whichever program client is seen secondarily.
  - c. Report all outside employment as required on the County of San Diego Disclosure Statement.
  - d. Disclose to their supervisor relationships that may impact their duties, such as a relative, friend or tenant who is an applicant or recipient of HHSa services that may present for services at the location employee is stationed and ensuring any such applicant is assigned to an alternative County staff.
  - e. Disclose to their supervisor or management a personal relationship with another staff in their chain of supervision.
  - f. Refrain from entering into personal relationships with clients, patients, or facility residents met as a result of their HHSa duties which may compromise the staff's judgment or objectivity.
  - g. Adhere to the California Fair Political Practices Commission regulations related to acceptance of any gifts from persons doing business, or seeking to do business, with the County.
  - h. Ensure any House Committee fundraising avoids State of California Department of Justice, Federal Internal Revenue Service, and other regulatory restrictions.
7. Ensure that HHSa funds and property are used with care, guided by prudent judgement and good business practices. HHSa staff shall:
- a. Be accountable for the proper expenditure of HHSa funds, including, if applicable, ensuring that contractors use HHSa funds appropriately and for the intended purposes.
  - b. Use HHSa assets and property appropriately and not use HHSa time, computers, facilities, equipment, badge, or uniforms for private gain or advantage, or the private gain or advantage of another.
  - c. Be responsible for HHSa assets and property in their possession and use caution to ensure that such assets or property are not broken, lost, or stolen. Store assets and property, including data, in a secure manner and immediately report if lost or stolen.

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- d. Maintain accurate and thorough records and ensure that information provided to internal or external entities is accurate, thorough, and timely.
  - e. Ensure no false, fraudulent, inaccurate, incomplete, or fictitious claims are submitted by only billing services rendered and fully documented. Immediately report and promptly correct all identified errors.
  - f. Obtain appropriate authorization prior to committing or spending County funds.
  - g. Dispose of surplus, obsolete, and salvaged property appropriately.
8. Create a work environment that promotes open and honest communications and encourages raising ethical concerns without fear of retribution or retaliation. HHSa staff shall:
- a. Ensure no disciplinary action or retaliation be taken against any staff for reporting in good faith a perceived issue, problem, concern, or violation.
  - b. Ensure no staff is required to compromise appropriate professional standards.
  - c. Otherwise promote a cooperative and service-oriented image and environment free from harassment.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. Provision of Code of Conduct
  - a. New employees will receive a copy of this HHSa Code of Conduct during their orientation to the County and will provide a signed code of conduct acknowledgement to HHSa Human Resources no later than thirty (30) days after beginning employment with HHSa.
  - b. Staff will review the code of conduct and complete the acknowledgement through the Learning Management System (LMS) annually.
2. Reporting Violations
  - a. Report suspected violations of the code of conduct, including those of federal, State and local laws, to a supervisor, manager, HHSa Business Assurance and Compliance, the County Office of Ethics and Compliance or the County's Ethics Hotline.

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**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

HHSA is committed to providing consistently high quality, skilled, compassionate, and reliable care and customer service to its patients, clients, facility residents, constituents and the larger community, regardless of race, creed, color, citizenship, economic status or any other personal characteristic, and to maintaining a culture that promotes the prevention, detection and resolution of instances of conduct that do not conform to laws, rules, regulations, or County policies or procedures.

The standards required by this Code of Conduct can only be achieved through the efforts of dedicated employees who conduct themselves with honesty, integrity and professionalism and in adherence to the letter and the spirit of all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures. Although each individual is ultimately responsible for his or her own conduct, HHSA is committed to assisting its employees in these efforts by maintaining a work environment that promotes these standards and encourages its employees to demonstrate the highest ethical standards in performing their daily tasks.

**QUESTIONS/INFORMATION:**

Please contact HHSA Business Assurance and Compliance by email at [Compliance.HHSA@SDCounty.ca.gov](mailto:Compliance.HHSA@SDCounty.ca.gov) or by phone at (619) 237-8571.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_



Kimberly Giardina, DSW, MSW  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
Health and Human Services Agency