

CODE OF ETHICS

I. Purpose and Scope

In order to best serve SVCE customers, the agency's officers and employees must act individually and collectively to create a public agency that is responsible, fair, honest and open. SVCE officers and employees are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, honesty and conduct in all activities in order to inspire public confidence and trust.

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to establish policy and guidelines that reflect the expected values and behaviors for SVCE officers and employees.¹ It is to be viewed as a supplement to applicable local, state, and federal legal and ethical requirements, and is not intended as a comprehensive summary of such requirements. Officers and employees are encouraged to seek assistance from the General Counsel's Office or their managers or supervisors for any legal or ethical concerns.

II. Policy

A. Responsibilities of Public Service

Officers and employees of SVCE at all levels are guardians of the public trust. SVCE officers and employees are required to be impartial and responsible in the fulfillment of their duties. The customers of SVCE expect and must receive the highest standard of ethics from all those in public service.

SVCE officers and employees are obligated to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California and to comply with Federal and State laws and SVCE policies, rules and regulations. Recognizing the special responsibilities of serving SVCE customers, SVCE officers and employees are required to maintain the highest standards of integrity and honesty, and they are expected to treat all members of the

¹ "Officers" includes the members of the Board of Directors and Board-created advisory commissions, boards, or committees.

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public and fellow SVCE employees with respect, courtesy, concern and responsiveness.

The conduct of SVCE officers and employees in both their official and private affairs should be above reproach to assure that their position is not used for personal gain. Officers and employees shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges, or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other officers or employees or members of the public.

Officers and employees are bound to discharge the duties of their offices regardless of personal consideration. Public interest must be their primary concern.

B. Open Government

SVCE is committed to open and transparent government and strives to consistently meet the community's expectations by providing excellent service in a positive, timely, and transparent manner. SVCE officers and employees are obligated to serve the public by reaching decisions and conducting activities in full view of the public in accordance with the Brown Act (Government Code Section 54950 *et seq.*).

C. Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when a SVCE officer or employee is in a position to benefit personally, whether directly or indirectly, from his or her dealings with an organization, contractor, consultant, or person conducting business with SVCE. Officers and employees are expected to avoid conflicts of interest. Further, officers and employees should avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest in order to ensure that SVCE decisions are made in an independent and impartial manner.

SVCE officers and employees are prohibited from making, participating in making, or attempting to influence a decision of SVCE in which he or she has a financial interest as defined by law. If an officer or employee believes he or she may have a financial interest related to a contemplated decision, he or she must disclose their interest to their immediate supervisor or the General Counsel's Office and remove themselves from any decision-making process.

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In accordance with state law, officers and employees who are designated in the SVCE Conflict of Interest Code or are listed in Government Code Section 87200 shall file annual written disclosures of their economic interests.

For additional rules and regulations related to conflicts of interest, please refer to the Political Reform Act of 1974 (Government Code Section 87100 *et seq.*), Government Code Section 1090 *et seq.*, and related state and federal laws.

D. Favors, Gratuities, and Gifts

SVCE officers and employees shall not accept money, gratuities, gifts, or other consideration or favors from anyone other than SVCE for the performance of an act which they would be required or expected to perform in the regular course of their duties; nor shall such persons accept any gifts as defined under the Political Reform Act which could be perceived or interpreted as an attempt to influence their actions with respect to SVCE business.

If you encounter a situation which could tend to compromise this policy, you should courteously decline such an offer or consult a supervisor or the General Counsel. In the event perishable gifts are received and are unable to be returned, supervisors may wish to contact the Director of Finance and Administration to arrange for such gifts to be donated to a local non-profit.

This is just a summary of your obligations. For additional information regarding specific regulations on the acceptance of gifts, please refer to Government Code Sections 89500 to 89522 and 2 California Code of Regulations Sections 18930 to 18961.

E. Use of SVCE Resources for Personal Gain

SVCE officers and employees shall not use SVCE resources not available to the general public (e.g., SVCE staff time, funds, facilities, equipment, or supplies) for personal gain or for campaign related political activities, nor shall they use or attempt to use their position to secure unwarranted privileges or exemptions for themselves or others.

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F. Use of Confidential Information

SVCE officers and employees shall respect the confidentiality of information concerning the property, personnel, and affairs of SVCE. They shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial, or other private interests. Any official or employee who is aware of a breach of confidentiality is expected to bring forth that information to the appropriate supervisor or official in a timely manner.

In accordance with the Brown Act, SVCE officers and employees shall uphold the public's right to know not only the decisions taken, but also the deliberations which shape agency policies conducted by the Board of Directors and Board-created advisory commissions, boards, or committees that are subject to the Brown Act's open meeting requirements.

G. Outside Employment

No employee shall engage in any work, employment or occupation outside SVCE employment which is detrimental to SVCE service, which prevents or impedes the efficient performance of their duties in SVCE employment, or which in any way conflicts with their employment with SVCE. No employee shall engage in any work, employment, or occupation outside of SVCE unless they have notified their department head and such outside work has been approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

H. Reporting of Improper Activities

SVCE has a responsibility to conduct its affairs ethically and in compliance with the law. SVCE officers and employees are expected and encouraged to promptly raise questions and concerns regarding possible violations of SVCE policy, rules or regulations or state or federal law with his or her immediate supervisor, department head, or the General Counsel.

I. Fair and Equal Treatment

In dealing with the public, the guiding principle should be to provide courteous and fair treatment. SVCE officials and employees shall not, in the

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performance of their duties, discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, gender, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, medical condition, and actual or perceived gender identity. SVCE officials and employees shall reinforce SVCE's commitment to equal employment opportunity and a work environment free of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment; shall behave in a respectful manner towards others; and shall refrain from abusive or disruptive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character, motives, ethics or morals of others.

III. Violations

In addition to any other penalty as provided by law, employees who violate the Code of Ethics will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Members of the Board of Directors or other officers who intentionally or repeatedly do not follow this Code of Ethics may be reprimanded or formally censured by the Board, lose committee assignments, or have official travel restricted. Serious or repeated violations by a Board member should be referred by the Board to the governing body of the Party that appointed such Board member. Officers should point out violations of the Code of Ethics to the offending officer. If the offenses continue, then the matter should be referred to the Chair of the Board. If the Chair is the individual whose actions violate the Code of Ethics, then the matter should be referred to the Vice Chair. Refer to SVCE's Operating Rules and Regulations for the termination of Board Officers or Board Directors.

IV. Distribution

This policy shall be distributed to all SVCE officers and employees upon appointment or hire, and annually thereafter.