

ETHICS REMINDERS

Working for the State during the COVID-19 pandemic?
Remember—whether in the office or at home—ethics rules still apply!

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the way the State workforce operates. For many agencies, their missions have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, with employees thrust into situations never encountered. Considering the very real financial and professional implications of the current public health crisis, you may find yourself wondering:

- Can I accept financial support from a friend with business before my agency?
- Do I need approval to take on a second job to help pay the bills?
- Can I engage in fundraising and ask my colleagues for donations to support a friend who has been hospitalized?
- My office loaned me a laptop so that I could work from home. Can I use it for personal purposes outside normal work hours?

It is crucial to remember that, despite the current environment, the State's ethics rules regarding gifts, outside activities, use of State resources, charitable fundraising, and conflicts of interest generally continue to apply to all State officers and employees (except for specific statutory provisions in the Public Officers Law temporarily suspended by Executive Order of the Governor in response to the COVID-19 outbreak).

In order to ensure that you are acting appropriately under the ethics laws, questions should be directed to your agency's Ethics Officer, the employee designated by the agency to provide guidance on compliance with the ethics laws, including agency-specific rules.

Alternatively, JCOPE maintains an Attorney of the Day program, where you may contact a JCOPE attorney on any business day for assistance on these and other ethics issues you may face.

Call: 1-800-87-ETHICS (800-873-8442)

OR

Email: legal@jcope.ny.gov

Press "2" for Attorney of the Day

Violating Public Officers Law § 74 can result in a maximum fine of \$10,000 and the value of any gift, compensation, or benefit received in connection with that violation, and is punishable as a Class A misdemeanor. Violation of Public Officers Law § 73, can result in a maximum fine of \$40,000 and the value of any gift, compensation, or benefit received in connection with that violation, and is punishable as a Class A misdemeanor. Violation of Public Officers Law § 73-a can result in a maximum fine of \$40,000; punishable as a Class A misdemeanor.



The Joint Commission on Public Ethics periodically releases Ethics Reminders. Each reminder is a synopsis of the laws and rules under the Commission's jurisdiction. Ethics Reminders are issued to assist those who are subject to the Commission's jurisdiction in understanding and complying with their obligations under the law.

Have Questions? Contact us by calling 1-800-87-ETHICS (3-8442) or by email at legal@jcope.ny.gov.
All communications with JCOPE are confidential.