

United Way of Olmsted County



## United Way of Olmsted County Code of Ethics Guide

**As approved by United Way of Olmsted County's Board of Directors on December 20, 2006**

**Section 8 added February 5, 2010**

## A Message from the United Way of Olmsted County Board of Directors

***At the core, to care for one another, we have to trust one another.***

As volunteers, employees, and representatives of United Way of Olmsted County, we have a responsibility to uphold the highest of ethical standards—both for ourselves and for the benefit of our community. We believe these standards go beyond compliance with laws and regulations—calling us to fulfill higher obligations as stewards of the public trust.

This Code of Ethics is an important way for us to reaffirm our ethical commitments. It sets forth the principles and standards that guide our decisions and actions. As you are probably aware, many of the ideas that are included within the Code have come from discussions with our employees and volunteers over the last few years. This collaborative process has been essential in developing the Code and has made it a document that reflects and is more responsive to our needs.

As we read the Code, we must remember that it is more than a set of standards and responsibilities. It is a way of connecting our values and our ideals with the work we do every day.

The Code is not just about what we should do, but why we do it.

Of course, no document can give us all the answers to our ethics questions. This Code is meant to help us further the discussion of ethics in our workplace. It also encourages us to seek guidance and clarification when we have questions about applying our principles and standards. The involvement of all our employees and volunteers is essential to upholding these principles and standards. Only by continuing to work together on these issues can we ensure that the United Way of Olmsted County fulfills its commitment to build and maintain the public trust in all that we do.

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# OUR CORE VALUES

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The mission of United Way of Olmsted County (UWOC) is to unite people and resources to improve lives in our community.

This critical role requires that all of us involved in the UWOC, who foster such an essential public good, must assume the responsibility of earning public trust.

To fulfill this special obligation, five core values provide the foundation on which we base our actions and decisions.

## **1. INTEGRITY**

- We maintain and strengthen the trust of our customers (donors, partners and the community.)
- We serve in all our actions.
- Our actions are honest and open in every regard.

## **2. DIVERSITY**

- We value the rich diversity of our community.
- We measure all our actions in terms of inclusion of all, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity and economic status.

## **3. EXCELLENCE**

- Our efforts exceed our customers' expectations.
- We lead our peers in every performance measure.

## **4. ACCOUNTABILITY**

- We establish and demonstrate with every opportunity the highest standards of stewardship.

## **5. LEADERSHIP**

- We participate in solving problems facing our community by mobilizing resources for collective action.
- Our leadership gives direction to the community in the pursuit of optimizing our mission.

United Way of Olmsted County (UWOC) is committed to the highest ethical standards. Indeed, based on the unique trust placed in UWOC to serve the public good, we have a special obligation to act ethically.

The success of our United Way and our reputation depend upon the ethical conduct of everyone affiliated with the UWOC. Volunteers, staff, and representatives set an example for each other by their pursuit of excellence in high standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct.

This UWOC Code of Ethics (Code) is based on our mission and guided by our fundamental values. (See Our Core Values): Integrity, Diversity, Excellence, Accountability and Leadership.

We are mindful that these core values must be clearly articulated, communicated and continuously reinforced. In addition, more detailed policies, guidelines, explanations, definitions and examples are often needed to bring these values into actual practice. While no document can anticipate all of the challenges that may arise, the Code communicates key guidelines and will assist UWOC volunteers, staff and representatives in making good decisions that are ethical and in accordance with applicable legal requirements. All are encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns they have with a supervisor or with the UWOC President.

## **1. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY**

A personal commitment to integrity in all circumstances benefits each individual as well as the organization. We therefore:

- Strive to meet the highest standards of performance, quality, service and achievement in working towards the UWOC mission.
- Communicate honestly and openly and avoid misrepresentation.
- Promote a working environment where honesty, open communication and minority opinions are valued.
- Exhibit respect and fairness toward all those with whom we come into contact.

## **2. ACCOUNTABILITY**

UWOC is responsible to its stakeholders, which include member UWOC organizations, donors and others who have placed faith in UWOC. To uphold this trust we:

- Promote good stewardship of UWOC resources, including donations, grants and other contributions that are used to pay operating expenses, salaries, and employee benefits.
- Refrain from using organizational resources for non-UWOC purposes.
- Observe and comply with all laws and regulations affecting UWOC.

## **3. SOLICITATIONS AND VOLUNTARY GIVING**

The most responsive contributors are those who have the opportunity to become informed and involved. We therefore:

- Promote voluntary giving in dealing with donors and vendors.
- Refrain from any use of coercion in fundraising activities, including predicating professional advancement on response to solicitations.

#### **4. DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

UWOC is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to the principle of diversity. We therefore:

- Value, champion, and embrace diversity in all aspects of UWOC activities and respect others without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, national origin or ancestry, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, or status as a qualified disabled or handicapped individual.
- Support affirmative action and equal employment opportunity programs throughout UWOC.
- Refuse to engage in or tolerate in any other form of discrimination or harassment.

#### **5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

To avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest which could tarnish the reputation of UWOC as well as undermine the public's trust in all United Way organizations, UWOC staff and representatives:

- Avoid any activity or outside interest which conflicts or appears to conflict with the best interest of UWOC, including involvement with a current or potential UWOC vendor, grantee, or competing organization unless disclosed to and not deemed to be inappropriate.
- Ensure that outside employment and other activities do not adversely affect the performance of their UWOC duties or the achievement of UWOC's mission.
- Ensure that travel, entertainment and related expenses are incurred on a basis consistent with the mission of UWOC and not for personal gain or interests.
- Decline any gift, gratuity or favor in the performance of UWOC duties except for promotional items of nominal value, and any food, transportation, lodging or entertainment unless directly related to UWOC business.
- Refrain from influencing the selection of staff, consultants or vendors who are relatives or personal friends or affiliated with, employ, or employed by a person with whom they have a relationship that adversely affects the appearance of impartiality.

#### **UWOC VOLUNTEERS:**

- Should not knowingly take any action, or make any statement, intended to influence the conduct of UWOC in such a way to confer any financial benefit on themselves, their immediate family members or any organization in which they or their immediate family members have a significant interest as stakeholders, directors or officers.
- Disclose all known conflicts or potential conflicts of interest in any matter before the Board of Governors, if they are Board members, or any committee upon which they serve and withdraw from the meeting room during any discussion, review and voting in connection with such matter.
- Members of the Board shall annually file with the United Way office a disclosure of all known potential conflicts of interest.

#### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY**

Confidentiality is a hallmark of professionalism. We therefore:

- Ensure that all information, which is confidential, privileged or nonpublic, is not disclosed inappropriately.
- Respect the privacy rights of all individuals in the performance of their UWOC duties.

## **7. POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

UWOC encourages individual participation in civic affairs. However as a charitable organization, UWOC may not make contributions to any candidate for public office or political committee and may not intervene in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. We therefore:

- Refrain from making any contributions to any candidate for public office or political committee on behalf of UWOC.
- Refrain from making any contributions to any candidate for public office or political committee in a manner that may create the appearance that the contribution is on behalf of UWOC.
- Refrain from using any organizational financial resources, facilities or personnel to endorse or oppose a candidate for public office
- Clearly communicate that we are not acting on behalf of the organization, if identified as an official of UWOC, while engaging in political activities in an individual capacity.
- Refrain from engaging in political activities in a manner that that may create the appearance that such activity is by or on behalf of UWOC.

## **8. PROHIBITION OF LOANS**

UWOC prohibits loans or the extension of credit to employees, board members or volunteers. Travel advances are not considered loans and must be reconciled within 45 days of the conclusion of associated travel.

## **GUIDANCE AND DISCLOSURE**

Volunteers, staff, and representatives are encouraged to seek guidance from the Board Ethics Committee and Staff Ethics Officer concerning the interpretation or application of this Code of Ethics. Any known or possible breaches of the Code of

Ethics should be disclosed. Staff and representatives should contact the president. Volunteers should contact a member of the Board Ethics Committee. Reports of possible breaches will be handled in the following manner:

- All reports of possible breaches will be treated in confidence as much as the organization's duty to investigate and the law allow. If confidentiality cannot be maintained, the individual disclosing the possible breach will be notified.
- All reported breaches will be investigated and, if needed, appropriate action taken based upon the policies of the organization. Retaliation against a person who suspects and reports a Breach in good faith will be treated as an independent breach of the Code. UWOC affirms prompt and fair resolution of all reported breaches.

## GLOSSARY

**Candidate for Public Office:** An individual who offers herself or himself or is proposed by others as a contestant for an elected public office, whether such office is federal, state or local.

**Contribution, Political:** Anything of value, including monetary and in-kind gifts, provided for the purpose of influencing the outcome of an election.

**Donors:** All individuals and entities that make charitable or in-kind contributions to UWOC.

**Immediate Family Members:** An individual's spouse, children, parents, siblings, and spouses of children and siblings.

**Nonpublic Information:** Any business, financial, or personal information, which is not publicly known or available.

**Political Committee:** Any party, committee, association, fund or other organization organized and operated primarily for accepting contributions to influence the selection, nomination, or election of any individual to any federal, state or local office.

**Privileged Information:** Information protected from involuntary disclosure by legally recognized privileges such as attorney-client, doctor-patient, and others.

**Promotional Items of Nominal Value:** Gifts used to promote an organization's name, products, or services which have a retail value of \$25 or less.

**Representatives:** Individuals who provide personal services to UWOC as independent contractors, consultants or loaned executives.

**Staff:** All individuals, who provide services to UWOC as employees or leased employees.

**Vendors:** Entities which provide goods and services to UWOC for a fee.

**Volunteers:** All members of the UWOC Board of Trustees and committees appointed by the Board of Trustees, who perform their UWOC duties without compensation.

## **EXAMPLES**

These examples are provided only to illustrate how provisions of the Code of Ethics may be applied under certain circumstances. The outcome of any particular situation depends on the facts presented and in all cases, the language of the Code of Ethics is controlling.

### **Harassment**

**Situation:** Joe is continually teased by his younger coworkers for being an “old-geezer” “out of touch” and not able to keep up with the pace of the office.

**Solution:** This could be considered harassment and is, at least, contrary to maintaining a positive work environment. Joe should tell his co-workers that their behavior is unwelcome and ask them to stop. If it continues, he should bring it to the attention of his supervisor, human resources representative, or the president.

### **Conflict of Interest**

**Situation:** A firm that your father owns is interested in bidding on a contract to supply goods to UWOC.

**Solution:** You must notify your supervisor and the Staff Ethics Officer. It is important to avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest or favoritism, especially in situations that could appear to personally benefit you or your family. However, as long as you do not participate in, or are able to remove yourself from the decision making process, and thereby do not have influence in the awarding of the contract, he will likely be allowed to submit a bid.

**Situation:** While at a conference you bump into a representative from a hotel who learns you are planning UWOC’s next conference. He invites you to dinner and then offers you tickets for you and your spouse to attend the theater.

**Solution:** This could be considered a conflict of interest. You should decline any gift or entertainment that exceeds a nominal value. Similarly, you should not offer any entertainment or gift to a potential donor or supplier that could be interpreted as inappropriately influencing their decision about interaction with UWOC.

### **Solicitation**

**Situation:** Your daughter is in the school band and at your previous job you sold gift wrapping paper for her to your colleagues at work. Can you do that here at UWOC?

**Solution:** Solicitations are permitted at UWOC provided prior approval is obtained from Human Resources. However, solicitations should be done in such a manner to avoid coercion, whether real or implied, and also to avoid conducting personal business during working time. You therefore should not directly solicit those members of the staff over whom

you exercise supervisory authority. You may however solicit in a manner which is non-personal such as posting your request on a bulletin board.

### **Nepotism/favoritism**

**Situation:** Your sister-in-law is graduating at the top of her class from college this spring. You think she would be a great asset to your department at UWOC.

**Solution:** Favoritism based on family or close personal relationships are unfair to other employees. The appearance of such favoritism is easily perceived, even when such situations are harmless. To avoid such an appearance, UWOC employees may not supervise or exercise management authority, directly or indirectly, over staff with whom they have a relationship that may adversely affect impartiality. While it may seem like a mutually beneficial situation to bring your sister-in-law into your department, this may create an awkward or unfair situation for co-workers or other potential employees.

### **Confidentiality**

**Situation:** A reporter from a magazine calls you and asks you for your comments concerning UWOC's new fundraising strategy towards its largest donors.

**Solution:** Although you may want to be helpful, it is important that you do not give out potentially proprietary or confidential information. For your protection and that of the organization, it is necessary that you refer the call to the Marketing and Communications Team Leader.

### **Political Contributions**

**Situation:** I serve on the board of my local United Way organization. I would like to make a personal donation to my Congressman. Is this something I can do under UWOC's political contribution policy?

**Solution:** UWOC, as a charitable corporation, legally cannot make political contributions. There is no legal restriction on our volunteers, staff or other representatives. However, in making contributions in an individual capacity, volunteers, staff and representatives should refrain from actions or representations which may imply or create the appearance that the contribution is on behalf of UWOC such as use of UWOC stationery, name or logo.

# CODE OF ETHICS

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## CERTIFICATE

I acknowledge that I have received and read my personal copy of the United Way of Olmsted County Code of Ethics. I understand that each United Way of Olmsted County volunteer, staff member and representative is responsible for adhering to the principles and standards of the Code, and I confirm that I have conducted myself in accord with the principles and standards of the Code. The certification process is mandatory for all UWOC staff and members of the Board of Directors.

Potential Conflicts:

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PRINTED NAME

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SIGNATURE

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DATE