



## Human Resource Policy

### STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 24, 2014

**REFERENCES:** O.C.G.A. §45-2-1  
Governor's Executive Order  
State Personnel Board Rule 478-1-.03 - Antidiscrimination  
State Personnel Board Rule 478-1-.21 – Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace  
State Personnel Board Rule 478-1-08 – Political Activity  
SAO Dress Code Policy

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#### PURPOSE

All employees of the State Accounting Office (SAO) are expected to maintain and exercise the highest moral and ethical standards in carrying out their responsibilities and functions. Employees must conduct themselves in a manner that prevents all forms of impropriety, placement of self-interest above public interest, partiality, prejudice, threats, favoritism and undue influence.

Employees must be alert in conducting business with employees and non-employees to avoid even the appearance of misconduct, personal or financial gain or conflict of interest. While performing Agency duties, employees are required to comply with Federal and State laws, the Code of Ethics for Government Service, the Governor's Executive Order and SAO policies.

#### POLICY

##### 1. General Provisions

- I. Written guidelines which cover all phases of employee conduct are not possible. This policy provides general guidance and some specific examples which establish a framework of principles to assist employees in performing their jobs in a professional manner.
- II. In general, the Agency is not concerned as an employer with non-work time of employees. Off-duty conduct becomes a legitimate concern, however, when it affects SAO operations or reflects discredit on the Agency. Such off-duty conduct may result in appropriate disciplinary action up to and including separation from employment.
- III. Employees shall continually monitor, evaluate and manage their personal, financial and professional affairs to ensure the absence of conflicts of interest and appearance of conflicts.
- IV. The Agency reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary action, to decline to appoint or promote an applicant/employee, and to reassign an employee in order to avoid or eliminate the appearance of conflict of interest based on employer/employee, employee/vendor, customer or other relationships.

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#### **2. Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest may exist where employees engage in activities which may financially or otherwise enhance themselves, their relatives or individuals with whom they are personally or financially involved as a result of knowledge, information or action taken in an official capacity as SAO employees. All employees have a duty of trust to the State and its citizens, and no one is permitted to make an improper profit from the exercise of duties and responsibilities.

- I. A conflict of interest may exist where no actual profit is made by the employee; the opportunity for profit or benefit alone may create the conflict.
- II. No promise of restraint or waiver by the affected employee will be sufficient to avoid a conflict or the appearance of a conflict.
- III. A conflict of interest may arise from a circumstance or situation, and not an activity. Its elements are the opportunity for enhancement by a transaction, and opportunity to influence that transaction as an employee.

A conflict of interest may also arise where an employee engages in an outside activity which, while not necessarily incompatible or inconsistent with official duties, nevertheless is or becomes so extensive that it interferes with the proper and full-time performance of official SAO duties. Decisions regarding the existence of a conflict and its remedy are to be made by an authorized official of SAO.

Employees are to make every reasonable effort to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. An appearance of conflict exists when a reasonable person would conclude from the circumstances that the employee's ability to protect the public interest, or perform public duties, is compromised by personal interests. An appearance of conflict could exist even in the absence of a legal conflict of interest.

Employees shall disqualify themselves from participation in any official proceeding in which impartiality might reasonably be questioned due to the employee's personal or financial relationships with participants in the proceeding.

Employees shall not directly or indirectly ask, accept, demand, solicit, seek or receive a financial or other benefit for themselves or for others in return for being influenced in the discharge of their official responsibilities.

#### **3. Use of Privileged or Confidential Information**

Many employees are exposed to privileged or confidential information through their knowledge of official plans and programs which may be of significant interest to the public. Employees shall not knowingly use their positions in any manner which will result in financial or other benefit, directly or indirectly for themselves, their relatives, or individuals with whom they are personally or financially involved.

Privileged or confidential information (e.g., contract bids, certain financial, personnel or vendor information, etc.) is to be released only by authorized SAO officials.

- I. The release of any privileged or confidential information, financial or otherwise, is not



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authorized to any person who does not have a legitimate need to know.

- II. Employees shall not disclose information gained in the course of, or by reason of, their official responsibilities in a way that would affect a personal financial interest for themselves, their relatives, or individuals with whom they are personally or financially involved.

Use of computers to obtain information concerning customers, other employees or third parties for nonwork-related reasons is prohibited.

#### 4. Disclosure of Information

All applicants/employees are required to disclose felony convictions on Applications for Employment and convictions and/or pending charges on State Security Questionnaire / Loyalty Oath Forms.

- I. Falsification or misrepresentation of information, including criminal history, is prohibited and may result in an offer of employment being withdrawn from an applicant or separation of an employee.
- II. Material falsification or misrepresentation of any information, including criminal history, will result in an offer of employment being withdrawn from an applicant or separation of an employee.

**NOTE:** "Material" refers to information which directly influences and/or impacts the hiring decision based on records, credentials and/or qualifications.

- III. Applicants whose offer of employment is withdrawn or employees who are separated due to falsification or misrepresentation of information are not eligible for consideration for reemployment with SAO for a minimum of six (6) months from the date of withdrawal or separation, whichever is applicable.

Employees are required to notify their supervisor or human resources representative of any arrests and/or convictions within five calendar days of the date of arrest or conviction. A determination of appropriate action will be made on a case by case basis.

#### 5. Activities and Relationships with Non-Employees & Organizations

Employees must be alert in conducting business with non-employees to avoid even the appearance of misconduct, personal or financial gain or conflict of interest.

Employees are prohibited from membership on the Board of Directors of any organization with which the State Accounting Office contracts.

Employees are prohibited from accepting personal favors or benefits under circumstances which may influence or give the appearance of influencing their official activities. Such favors and benefits may not be accepted by employees on behalf of other individuals.

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Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a vendor, or customer is a relative, or in-law. Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a client or customer is a personal acquaintance when the relationship creates a conflict or perception of conflict of interest.

- I. Employees are required to report such circumstances to their supervisors to avoid the appearance of giving unjustified preference or conflict of interest.
- II. Employees are encouraged to discuss the above circumstances with their supervisors if there are any questions concerning relatives, in-laws or personal acquaintances.

#### 6. Conditions of Employment

Employees must comply with the conditions of employment specified in laws, rules, policies, Code of Ethics and the Governor's Executive Order referenced previously. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Dressing appropriately and presenting a neat and clean appearance. (See Section I)
- Maintaining professional relationships with co-workers and supervisors. Maintaining a courteous, professional demeanor in the presence of the general public and other employees. Giving clear and accurate information in a professional manner.
- Reporting for work on time. Observing appropriate call-in procedures for late arrival and/or absence. Observing provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Observing policies on break and meal periods. Using work time for work-related activity.
- Using leave appropriately, including submitting timely requests and providing documentation for use of leave when required.
- Observing established policies on health, safety, security and sanitation. Notifying supervisors of circumstances or situations that present potential health hazards.
- Complying with instructions from all supervisors and managers.

#### 7. Activities and Conduct During Working Hours

Employees are expected to maintain a professional and businesslike relationship with fellow employees. SAO will not tolerate acts or threatened acts of violence in the workplace. Reports of threats or acts of violence will be thoroughly reviewed and appropriate action will be taken.

Examples of prohibited behavior are:

- Threatening, abusive, or profane language, behavior or written material;
- Argumentative behavior, whether directed toward a supervisor, customer, co-worker or any other party while on duty or while acting under color of office;
- Fighting;
- Unprofessional behavior such as sexual-related conversations, inappropriate touching of

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another employee (e.g., kissing, hugging, massaging, sitting on laps), racial or ethnic jokes and slurs, and other verbal or physical conduct of an offensive nature; and,

- Intimate relationships between managers or supervisors and their subordinate staff members, through any line of authority, based on the significant potential for such relationships to present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Employees who enter into such relationships are expected to notify higher management of the need for one or both of the employees in the relationship to be reassigned, so that a line relationship no longer exists between the employees.

Employees are required to cooperate fully and truthfully and provide assistance, when appropriate, with any type of investigation regarding alleged criminal or administrative misconduct. This includes activities such as cooperating in interviews, answering questions related to the performance of official duties, and producing requested documents.

Employees are not to engage in activities other than official business during working hours. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:

- Lending or borrowing money (occasional voluntary loans of nominal value may be acceptable);
- Gambling; Conducting an outside business while on duty by any means of communication, such as wearing beepers, operating fax or copier machines, computers, telephones, etc.;
- Use of computers for non-work related reasons;
- Being on call for other employment;
- Soliciting, selling products or fund raising on the work premises for personal profit or for an organization unless specifically authorized (e.g., the State Charitable Contributions Program, personal events such as retirements); and,
- Distributing advertisements, pamphlets, or similar literature or soliciting memberships.

Employees are not authorized to tape record conversations at work unless work-related and specifically approved by the supervisor of the organizational unit. Supervisors are not to tape record conversations, meetings, etc. unless there is a specific work-related reason for doing so. Supervisors should consult with Human Resource prior to taping or authorizing the taping of conversations.

Employees are prohibited from falsifying records or any other documents prepared during the course of business. Employees who conduct research are specifically prohibited from falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those practices that are commonly accepted within the research community.

Employees are not authorized to carry weapons (e.g., knives, firearms or explosive devices) while at work.

Possession or consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs; and/or reporting to work or being on duty

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under the influence or with the presence of drugs or alcohol is prohibited.

In order to minimize interference with normal operations and to avoid potential hazards and liability for the Agency, babysitting of children by employees while on duty is prohibited.

Offices, work stations, and office furniture are State property and are reserved for work-related activities. If approved, employees may have personal items in the office or work station, if suitable for the work area and reasonable.

- I. Examples include family photographs; certificates; diplomas; and small, discreet, decorative or inspirational items intended for the comfort and enjoyment of the employee.
- II. Such items must not be offensive or inflammatory, or otherwise inconsistent with the SAO work setting.
- III. Employees may be required to remove items determined to be inappropriate from work areas at any time.

#### **8. Use of State Property**

Employees are responsible for reporting suspected criminal or administrative misconduct including fraud, waste, and abuse relating to any State program or operation. Negligent use and/or destruction of State property are prohibited.

Employees are not to use or permit the use of State property for other than official activities.

- I. Voice mail and fax transmittals should convey professional, business-like messages.
- II. E-mail, Internet and other computer searches and communications should be professional and used for work-related reasons only. The display or transmission of sexually oriented material is prohibited. Other misuse includes, but is not limited to, ethnic slurs, racial comments, off-color jokes, or anything that may be considered harassment.

State property includes but is not limited to:

- Office equipment (e.g., computers, telephones, copiers, fax machines, etc.),
- Automobiles, and
- Supplies of all kind.

Employees are prohibited from making or charging long-distance telephone calls to the Agency, unless work-related. Local telephone calls of infrequent, short duration may be permitted. This privilege may, however, be withdrawn if abused.

#### **9. Personal Appearance During Work Hours**

Business casual is the SAO dress code for all employees Monday through Thursday, with Friday a designated casual day. The business casual dress code supports traditional professional attire, but



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provides flexibility for comfort and dress-down during routine workdays. SAO employees are expected to be clean, neat and non-offensive to fellow employees and the public every work day.

Employees who do not comply with established dress code standards may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

For more information please refer to the SAO Dress Code.

#### 10. **Gifts**

SAO employees are prohibited from knowingly accepting any "gift" as defined in the Governor's Executive Order (which is attached and hereby incorporated into this Policy), from any manufacturer, vendor, or person representing or employed by a manufacturer or vendor. The receipt and reporting of the receipt of a gift or gifts shall be governed by the provisions of Section 2(a) of the Executive Order.

SAO employees must obtain approval in writing from their Division Director prior to attending a seminar, course, lecture or similar function conducted or paid for, by a vendor.

SAO employees visiting the facilities or attending a function of a vendor as part of a formal procurement of goods and services are not required to obtain prior approval. However, all prohibitions on accepting gifts, including meals and travel expenses, remain applicable.

#### 11. **Political Activity**

Employees are encouraged to exercise their right to participate in political activities such as the right to vote. SAO employees, however, are prohibited from engaging in certain political activities as outlined in State Personnel Board Rule 478-1-08.

Each employee of the State Accounting Office is responsible for knowing and adhering to the standards set forth in this policy and for asking questions if you are uncertain about company policy. If you are concerned whether the standards are being met or are aware of violations of the policy, you must notify your supervisor or human resources.

SAO takes seriously the standards set forth in this policy, and violations are cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.