



Grant County, Washington Policies & Procedures

POLICY NUMBER 200

General Standards for Employees

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POLICY NUMBER 200, GENERAL STANDARDS FOR EMPLOYEES

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201 – Code of Ethics

- 201.1 Grant County is committed to high standards of conduct by and among employees in the performance of their duties. Individual and collective adherence to high ethical standards is central to the maintenance of public trust and confidence in government.
- 201.2 While employees may agree on the need for proper conduct, they may experience personal conflicts or differing views of values or loyalties. In such cases, the principles contained in this Code of Ethics provide valuable guidance in reaching decisions which are governed, ultimately, by the dictates of the individual conscience of the employee and his or her commitment to the public good.
- 201.3 Certain of these ethical principles are best expressed as positive statements: actions which should be taken; courses which should be followed; goals which should permeate both public and private conduct.

Other principles are expressed as negative statements; actions to be avoided and conduct that will not be tolerated.

201.4 The Grant County Code of Ethics herein applies to the day to day conduct of all employees of County government.

201.4.1 The ethical County employee **must**:

- (a) Promote decisions which only benefit the public interest;
- (b) Promote public confidence in County government;
- (c) Keep safe all funds and other properties of the County;
- (d) Perform the work of the County diligently, promptly, and efficiently;
- (e) Maintain a positive image to pass constant public scrutiny;
- (f) Evaluate decisions so that the best service or product is obtained at a minimal cost without sacrificing quality and fiscal responsibility;
- (g) Maintain high standards of work every day in dealings with the public, employees, and associates;
- (h) Maintain a respectful attitude toward employees, public officials, colleagues, associates, and citizens; and
- (i) Comply with all laws, policies, rules, and regulations applicable to the County.

201.4.2 The ethical County employee **must not**:

- (a) Engage in outside interests that are not compatible with the impartial and objective performance of his or her duties;
- (b) Improperly influence or attempt to influence other employees to act in his/her own interest;
- (c) Accept anything of value from any source which is offered to, or could reasonably be expected to, influence his/her actions as a public employee; and
- (d) Use any County resource for personal or private benefit or gain.

201.5 The ethical County employee accepts the responsibility that his or her mission is that of servant and steward to the public.

202 – At Will Employment

Employment at Grant County is at will. This means that employees are free to resign their employment at any time, for any reason or no reason with or without cause, and with or without prior notice. The County retains the right to terminate an employee's employment at any time, for any reason or no reason with or without cause and with or without prior notice while adhering to Equal Employment Opportunity, Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment policies and/or applicable collective bargaining agreements. No agent or representative of Grant County, other than the Board of County Commissioners, has the authority to enter into an agreement for employment for any specified period of time, or to enter into any employment agreement that in any way modifies the at will status of employment at Grant County.

Nothing in any statement or policy shall be construed to create an employment contract, nor shall it be construed to alter the fact that employment is at will.

203 – Equal Opportunity

203.1 Specifics: Grant County is an equal opportunity employer and acts on its policy that every employee has the right to work in surroundings which are free from unlawful discrimination. The current Equal Employment Opportunity Plan is available on the County's intranet.

203.1.1 It is Grant County's policy to provide equal employment opportunity to qualified persons and that employees be treated fairly, without regard to race, color, gender, creed, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, political ideology, union activity, industrial injury, whistleblower activities, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, except as otherwise provided by law, veteran status, and other basis that is prohibited by local, state, or federal laws.

203.1.2 This policy relates to recruitment, placement, promotion, training, demotion, transfer, layoff, recall, termination, rates of pay, employee benefits, and participation in County sponsored activities.

203.2 Reporting Procedure

203.2.1 If employees believe they have not received equal opportunity as set forth in the preceding paragraph, they should report it to the Human Resources Director. He/she will take the necessary steps to initiate an investigation of discrimination. If the alleged action involves the Human Resources Director, the report should be made to the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners.

203.2.2 The County will conduct its investigation in as confidential a manner as possible. The County's goal is to reach a timely resolution of each complaint and communicate to the employee and the other parties involved on a "need to know" basis.

Appropriate corrective action will be administered against any employee engaging in discrimination. Retaliation against any employee for filing a valid complaint or participating in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

204 – Disability & Reasonable Accommodation

- 204.1 Grant County is committed to providing equal employment opportunity to employees and applicants, including those who have physical and/or mental disabilities, including life threatening illnesses.
- 204.2 Reasonable accommodation is used as a means of overcoming unnecessary barriers which prevent or restrict opportunities for otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities in these areas as they relate to employment: the application process, job performance; and benefits, privileges, or terms and conditions of employment.
- 204.3 In partnership with the applicant or employee, Grant County will evaluate a request for reasonable accommodation to the known physical and/or mental disabilities of an otherwise qualified applicant or employee with the disability.
- 204.4 Grant County may be unable to provide an accommodation if it would require a fundamental change in the nature of services or cause an undue financial or administrative hardship. Grant County is not obligated to provide the best accommodation available, as long as the accommodation is effective for the purpose.
- 204.5 An otherwise qualified applicant or employee with a disability has the right to refuse an accommodation. However, if the individual cannot perform the essential functions of the job with or without an accommodation, he or she may not be qualified for the job.
- 204.6 The Human Resources department will work with the Elected Official or Department Head in determining if, and what type of, reasonable accommodation may be made. If it is decided that the accommodation is not reasonable, the requesting individual will be notified in writing of the reasons.
- 204.7 Grant County will maintain reasonable confidentiality regarding an employee or applicant's disability according to all applicable local, state or federal regulations.

205 – Non-Discrimination

- 205.1 Specifics: It is Grant County's policy to maintain a workplace that fosters mutual employee respect and promotes harmonious, productive working relationships. Discrimination in any form constitutes misconduct. Therefore, the County prohibits discrimination based on race, color, gender, creed, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, national

origin, political ideology, union activity, industrial injury, whistleblower activities, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, except as otherwise provided by law, veteran status, and other basis that is prohibited by local, state, or federal laws. This policy applies to employees throughout the organization and non-employees including, but not limited to, contractors, volunteers, and board members who may have contact with employees as a result of their employment.

205.2 GINA (Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act): Within the Non-Discrimination policy of Grant County is the prohibition of discrimination against any individual on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment.

205.3 Reporting Procedure

205.3.1 Grant County's policy is that all employees act responsibly to establish a pleasant and friendly work environment. However, if employees believe they have been the subject of discrimination, employees should report it to their immediate supervisor, department head, or the Human Resources department. That person will take the necessary steps to initiate an investigation of discrimination. If the alleged action involves the Human Resources Director, the report should be made to the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners.

205.3.2 The County will conduct its investigation in as confidential a manner as possible. The County's goal is to reach a timely resolution of each complaint and communicate to the employee and the other parties involved on a "need to know" basis. Appropriate corrective action will be administered against any employee engaging in discrimination. Retaliation against any employee for filing a valid complaint or participating in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

206 – Anti-Harassment

206.1 Specifics

206.1.1 Harassment, based on race, color, gender, creed, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, except as otherwise provided by law, veteran status, or other basis that is prohibited by local, state, or federal laws, opposition to prohibited discrimination, or retaliation is a violation of federal and state law. Harassment is prohibited in all County workplaces. Appropriate preventative measures shall be used within this organization to promote respect for the rights of co-workers. Remedial measures and/or corrective actions, up to and including termination of employment of the offender, shall be utilized when acts of harassment occur.

206.1.2 Additionally, this policy applies to and protects any employee of Grant County and/or anyone who does business with Grant County (contractors, vendors, customers, non-employees, etc.). All harassment complaints, regardless of where reported or by whom, shall be taken seriously and assessed by management (the Department Head/Elected Official) and/or the Human Resources department.

206.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors and Managers

206.2.1 Supervisors and managers, through their actions, shall model respectful behavior by:

- (a) Pursuing preventative measures to ensure a supportive, harassment-free work atmosphere;
- (b) Encouraging reports of: (1) harassment; and/or (2) discrimination incidences;
- (c) Taking remedial measures to stop harassing behavior whenever reported or observed;
- (d) Notifying the Human Resources department of all allegations or incidences of harassment in the workplace; and/or
- (e) Ensuring that retaliatory behavior is not allowed.

206.2.2 Supervisors and managers should be evaluated on their performance review as to their conduct, responsibilities, and adherence to this policy.

206.3 Harassing Behavior

206.3.1 Harassment is any conduct that:

- (a) Degrades or shows hostility toward an individual because of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran or marital status, opposition to prohibited discrimination, or retaliation;
- (b) Creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment through written, graphic, or verbal communications including comments, jokes, slurs, or negative stereotyping, or interferes with an individual's work performance; and/or
- (c) Is sexual in nature and has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

206.3.2 Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Demeaning and/or derogatory harassment toward one's gender;
- (b) Demeaning behavior, staring, pinching, touching or other physical contact, or blocking the movements of another person;
- (c) Unwelcome sexual comments, innuendoes, jokes, abuse, personal remarks, etc.
- (d) Graphic sexual or degrading verbal comments about an individual's body or words used to describe an individual;
- (e) Sexually explicit displays or distribution of pictures, materials, or objects in the workplace;
- (f) Verbal or physical conduct directed at a person's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, mental or physical handicap and/or marital or veteran status;
- (g) Offering or implying a reward or threat concerning work assignments, performance reviews, discipline, promotions, or other terms or conditions of employment in exchange for sexual favors;
- (h) Unwelcome sexual advances or propositions, sexual flirtations (verbal or non-verbal), obscene gestures;
- (i) Obscene letters, phone calls, e-mails, or unwelcome words or comments with sexual or otherwise discriminatory meanings;
- (j) Unwelcome request for sexual favors or repeated social contact;
- (k) Sexual assault or other unwelcome sexual contact; and/or
- (l) Foul language.

206.4 General Harassment

206.4.1 General workplace harassment is a form of offensive treatment or behavior which, to a reasonable person, creates an intimidating, hostile or abusive work environment.

206.4.2 Examples of general harassment include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Verbal or physical behavior which is derogatory, abusive, bullying, threatening or disrespectful;

(b) Ridiculing or undermining an individual with vindictive or humiliating words or acts.

206.4.3 These behaviors can constitute harassment as defined by Grant County policy even if unrelated to a legally protected status.

206.5 Reporting Procedure: If an employee feels he/she is being harassed and/or retaliated against, immediate notification to his/her supervisor or the Human Resources Director is encouraged. If the harassment involves the supervisor or the employee does not feel comfortable bringing the matter to the attention of his/her supervisor, the incident should be reported directly to the Elected Official/Department Head or to the Human Resources Director. Employees can explore concerns and options related to harassment with the Director of Human Resources. If the alleged action involves the Human Resources Director, the report should be made to the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners.

206.6 Additional/Other Harassment Complaint Reporting Options

206.6.1 Depending on the harassment complaint, other state and federal agencies, and specific time frames for filing charges may be utilized for reporting harassment.

206.6.2 The following lists the agencies and the time frames by which a complainant must notify the agency of harassment. Most deadlines run from the last date of alleged unlawful harassment or retaliations:

- (a) Human Rights Commission: 365 days
- (b) Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: 300 days

206.7 Harassment Complaint Investigations

206.7.1 Whenever any supervisor or manager becomes aware of harassment, immediate remedial measures shall be taken to stop the behavior.

206.7.2 All allegations, regardless of where reported, shall be forwarded to the Human Resources department. The complaint shall be reviewed to determine whether a detailed fact-finding investigation is appropriate.

206.7.3 If a fact-finding investigation is determined to be appropriate, the investigation shall begin within a short period of time based on the circumstances and dependent on the investigative process used by the employer. A qualified investigator shall be appointed to gather and consider the relevant facts. Employees must be ethical and honest throughout all proceedings. This qualified investigator may be from the Human Resources department or may be contracted or brought in from the outside. The

confidentiality of all parties who are involved, those who present information and information about the harassment allegation(s), shall be disseminated only on a "need to know" basis or as required by law.

206.7.4 The individual who has allegedly harassed an employee shall not have supervisory authority over the individual who conducts the investigation and shall not have any direct or indirect control over the investigation.

206.8 Corrective Actions: If the findings of the investigation indicate that a violation of the harassment policy has occurred, immediate and appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, shall be administered to the offender. Corrective actions shall be proportional to the seriousness or repetitiveness of the offense. Affected parties shall be informed as to corrective actions, as allowed by law.

206.9 Awareness/Training: County-wide notices will go out when updates occur to the County's anti-harassment policies. Additionally, the complaint reporting procedures and other information regarding anti-harassment shall be posted under the Human Resources tab on the County's intranet. Appropriate training on a periodic basis will be provided so that employees have an additional tool for understanding their rights and responsibilities.

207 – Whistleblower Act

207.1 Specifics

It is the policy of Grant County to provide an avenue for employees to report suspected improper governmental actions, to provide a mechanism for investigating such reports, and to provide those employees protection from retaliation for making such reports.

207.2 Definitions

207.2.1 Improper governmental action:

- (a) For the purpose of this policy, improper governmental action means any action by a Grant County official or employee:
 - (1) That is undertaken in the performance of official duties, whether or not the action is within the scope of the employee's employment; and
 - (2) That: (a) is in violation of any federal, state or local law or rule; (b) is an abuse of authority; (c) is of substantial and specific danger to the public; or (d) is a gross waste of public funds.

- (b) For the purpose of this policy, improper governmental action does not include personnel actions, which include employee grievances and complaints, appointments, promotions and transfers, reductions in pay, dismissals, suspensions, demotions, and violations of collective bargaining or civil service laws, alleged violations of labor agreements or reprimands, among others.

207.2.2 Retaliation: For the purpose of this policy, retaliation means any adverse change in the terms and conditions of a Grant County employee's employment from a Whistleblower complaint.

207.2.3 Emergency: For the purpose of this policy, emergency means a circumstance that, if not immediately changed, may cause damage to person or property.

207.2.4 Employee: Any individual employed or holding office in any office or department of Grant County government.

207.3.5 Good faith: For the purpose of this policy, good faith means a reasonable basis in fact for the report. Good faith is lacking when the employee knows or reasonably ought to know that the report is malicious, false, or frivolous.

207.3.6 Commissioner's Designee: For the purpose of this policy, Commissioner's Designee means the Administrative Services Coordinator unless substituted.

207.3 Implementation of Policy

207.3.1 The Commissioner's Designee is responsible for implementing Grant County's policies and procedures regarding reporting improper governmental action and protecting employees against retaliatory actions. This includes ensuring that policies and procedures are:

- (a) Posted where employees will have reasonable access to them;
- (b) Made available to any employee upon request; and
- (c) Provided to all new employees.

207.3.2 Elected Officials, Department Heads, managers and supervisors are responsible to ensure that the policies and procedures are fully implemented within their areas of responsibility.

207.4 Procedures for Reporting

207.4.1 The County safeguards legitimate employer interests by encouraging employees to report first to Grant County.

- (a) Employees should raise the issue first with their supervisor, providing in detail the basis for the belief that an improper governmental action has occurred.
 - (1) The supervisor to whom the report is made shall immediately inform the Board of County Commissioners or the Commissioner's Designee and request prompt action to properly investigate the report.
- (b) Where the employee reasonably believes the suspected improper governmental action may involve his/her supervisor, the employee may raise the issue directly with the Board of County Commissioners or the Commissioner's Designee.

207.4.2 Employees may report the suspected improper governmental action directly to the Office of the State Auditor for any reason.

207.4.3 No employee shall interfere with the right of any other employee to report or cause to be reported a suspected improper governmental action.

207.5 Procedures for Investigating

207.5.1 Grant County will investigate, or cause to be investigated, any report of suspected improper governmental action.

- (a) All employees involved in the investigation shall keep the identity of the reporting employee(s) confidential to the extent possible under law, unless the employee authorizes the disclosure of his/her identity in writing.
- (b) After an investigation has been completed, the employee reporting the improper governmental action shall be advised of a summary of the results of the investigation; personnel actions taken as a result of the investigation may be kept confidential.

207.6 Protection from Retaliation

207.6.1 Employees who report suspected improper governmental action in accordance with these policies and procedures are protected from retaliation by an employee of the County.

- (a) Employees who believe that they have been retaliated against for making a report should advise their supervisor, the

Board of County Commissioners, or the Commissioner's Designee. Grant County officials and supervisors shall take immediate and appropriate action to investigate and address complaints of retaliation.

- (b) If the employee does not believe that the complaint of retaliation has been properly investigated or resolved, the employee may obtain protection under this policy and pursuant to state law, by providing written notice to the Board of County Commissioners that specifies the alleged retaliatory action and specifies the relief requested.
 - (1) Employees shall provide a copy of their written notice to the Board of County Commissioners no later than thirty (30) days after the occurrence of the alleged retaliatory action. The Board of County Commissioners shall respond within thirty (30) days to the charge of retaliatory action.
 - (2) After either receiving the response of Grant County or thirty (30) days after the delivery of the charge to Grant County, the employee may request a hearing before a state administrative law judge to establish that retaliatory action occurred and to obtain appropriate relief provided by law.
 - i. An employee seeking a hearing should deliver the written request for hearing to the Board of County Commissioners within the earlier of fifteen (15) days of delivery of Grant County's response to the charge of retaliatory action or forty-five (45) days of delivery of the charge of retaliation to the Board of County Commissioners for response.
 - ii. Upon receipt of a request for hearing, Grant County shall apply within five (5) working days to the State Office of Administrative Hearings for an adjudicative proceeding before an administrative law judge. Grant County will consider any recommendation provided by the administrative law judge that the retaliator is suspended with or without pay, or dismissed.

207.6.2 Violations of the policy prohibiting retaliation may result in personal liability against the retaliator as set forth in RCW 42.41.040(8) and/or the imposition by the administrative law judge of the relief as set forth in RCW 42.41.040(7).

207.7 Additional Resources

A list of agencies responsible for enforcing federal, state and local laws and investigating other issues involving improper governmental action is available by request from the Human Resources department.

208 – Non-Fraternization

While Grant County encourages amicable relationships between its management and their subordinates, it recognizes that involvement in a romantic relationship may compromise or create a perception that compromises a member of management's ability to perform his/her job. Any involvement of a romantic nature between management and/or supervisory personnel of the County and anyone he/she supervises, either directly or indirectly, is prohibited. Violation of this policy may lead to corrective action, up to and including termination of the management individual involved in the relationship. If these types of problems arise, they will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

209 – Conflict of Interest

209.1 Specifics

Grant County requires certain safeguards from potential conflicts of interest for the protection of the individual as well as of the County. The County expects that all officials and employees will comply with the *Code of Ethics*.

209.2 Prohibition Against Conflicts of Interest

Employees have a duty and responsibility to conduct County business matters solely for the benefit of the County, and to avoid potential conflicts of interest. Violations of this policy may be treated with corrective action, up to and including termination.

209.3 Personal Interest Conflict

209.3.1 No employee may derive a private or personal benefit from a County transaction to which the employee has some degree of influence or control over the outcome. For example, a potential personal interest of conflict may arise when:

- (a) An employee who has responsibility or influence over the County's purchase of goods or services influences a direct purchase from an organization in which he, she, or a member of his or her family has an interest;
- (b) An employee accepts gratuities or special favors from any organization doing business with the County where the offering or acceptance of such gratuities or special favors

could be viewed as potentially interfering with the employee's proper discharge of his or her responsibilities to the County.

209.4 Conflict of Commitment

The County expects that an employee's outside activities and interests will not interfere with his or her obligations to the County. Employees must eliminate conflicts of commitments where competing demands upon the time and energy of an employee as a result of his or her outside activities and interests interfere with the employee's ability to meet his or her responsibilities to the County.

209.5 Inappropriate Use of County Name or County Resources

Employees are prohibited from using the County's name or resources, such as County facilities or equipment, to advance his or her own private interests. The County's name, facilities, and equipment are to be used only for the furtherance of County goals and business and not for the benefit of, or to imply the County's support of any other activity.

209.5.1 Use of County Name, Department Name, Employee Title. No employee shall use the official title of the County, or any of its parts, in whatever form that title may appear except in connection with legitimate County purposes. For example, County letterhead may not be used by any employee for any other use except County business.

209.5.2 Use of County Facilities and Equipment. County materials, supplies, facilities, or personnel must not be used by an employee for personal use or to promote an outside activity or private interest. For example, County copying machines may not be used to duplicate personal announcements or invitations.

209.6 Use of Confidential Information

209.6.1 An employee shall not use or disclose confidential information acquired in connection with County-related activities for personal gain, for another's gain, or for other unauthorized purposes.

209.6.2 An employee shall not accept employment or engage in any business or outside activity which might require or induce the disclosure of confidential information acquired by reason of the employee's County position.

210 – Suggestions

Grant County relies on its employees for suggestions regarding improvements in all aspects of the work process. Employees are encouraged to direct their suggestions to their supervisors in a positive manner for discussion.

211 – Communication

- 211.1 In addition to encouraging healthy spoken communication between co-workers, leaders, and management, Grant County also communicates regularly with employees through e-mail, the County's intranet site, as well as its website. Comprehensive employee information is located outside of the Human Resources department. Other boards throughout County facilities contain various announcements, job postings, benefits information, important dates, community information, and/or County information. Employees should check communication resources regularly to keep informed of important County information and updates.
- 212.2 Grant County Policies & Procedures updates and information is sent to employees on a County-wide basis *via* e-mail, with the request that employees without e-mail access be advised of the information being transmitted.

212 – Problem Resolution

- 212.1 Grant County believes that each employee deserves to be treated fairly and with respect. Occasionally, problems may arise and Grant County recognizes the importance of resolving employment concerns in a timely manner. In order to accomplish this, we must be made aware of any problems or concerns. We encourage honest and informative communication.
- 212.2 We suggest employees talk first to their immediate supervisors about any problem. If the problem concerns the employee's immediate supervisor, or if he/she cannot resolve the problem, the employee should talk to the next level supervisor, moving up the reporting structure as necessary.
- 212.3 If employees are not able to resolve the situation within their office or department, employees are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Director.

213 – Other

- 213.1 Employee Lounges: Employee lounges are located throughout County facilities. Employees are welcome and encouraged to use these facilities and all appliances, and expected to keep them clean after use. Employees should be considerate of others by leaving counter areas, refrigerators, and tables clean by properly disposing of trash and taking any other reasonable measures necessary to clean up after themselves.