As a supervisor, your employees will look to you for guidance covering a wide array of topics. Among those topics, ethics issues will be critically important. Your employees may ask a wide array of questions or make statements that will require your input, such as:

* “I want to help a local nonprofit file grants for federal programs.”
* “I wanted to let you know that I’m interviewing for another job, but still not sure I would take it. Just wanted to let you know so you aren’t surprised.”
* “Everyone is pitching in for our coworker’s wedding present, would you donate?”
* “Our contractor invited me to this weekend’s football game. It’s a box seat!”

***Are you ready to support your employees and help them avoid ethical dilemmas?***

Every day, employees at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are presented with seemingly simple circumstances. In some cases, your employees could volunteer for a nonprofit or continue working unimpeded while interviewing for another job. But they could just as easily violate criminal laws or administrative rules. There are also ethical obligations attached to giving gifts, including for significant events such as a wedding. And an employee who accepts box seats from a contractor will likely run into trouble with the ethics rules. The ethics program is available to help you and your employees navigate every day events to avoid ethical problems.

NIH fosters a work environment committed to government ethics. Through its ethics program, NIH seeks to prevent conflicts of interest on the part of executive branch employees. A conflict-free NIH allows its public servants to make impartial decisions based on the interests of the public when carrying out governmental responsibilities, to serve as good stewards of public resources, and to loyally adhere to the Constitution and laws of the United States. As a supervisor, you are expected to contribute to this environment.

**Your Role as a Supervisor**

Every supervisor in the executive branch has a heightened responsibility for advancing government ethics. It is imperative that supervisors serve as models of ethical behavior for subordinates. Supervisors have a responsibility to help ensure that subordinates are aware of their ethical obligations under the Standards of Conduct and that subordinates know how to contact agency ethics officials. Supervisors are also responsible for working with agency ethics officials to help resolve conflicts of interest and enforce government ethics laws and regulations, including those requiring certain employees to file financial disclosure reports. In addition, supervisors are responsible, when requested, for assisting agency ethics officials in evaluating potential conflicts of interest and identifying positions subject to financial disclosure requirements.

As part of your duty to advance government ethics, you should look to the 14 Principles of Ethical Conduct to help you understand your role. These Principles broadly require executive branch employees (1) to respect the rule of law, (2) not to misuse our public positions for our own or others’ private gain, and (3) to be responsible in the use of government time and resources. These principles can guide you through situations that are not directly covered by the rules laid out by the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, the criminal conflict of interest laws, or other ethics laws and regulations.

The [14 Principles of Ethical Conduct](https://www.oge.gov/Web/OGE.nsf/0/73636C89FB0928DB8525804B005605A5/%24FILE/14%20General%20Priniciples.pdf) are available online.

**Notification to Ethics Officials of Incoming and Departing Employees**

As a supervisor, you have an obligation under your PMAP to ensure your employees abide with the ethics rules, including post-employment restrictions. To ensure timely employee counseling, you are responsible for notifying your IC DEC about incoming and departing employees and assist your IC ethics officials to ensure your employees receive onboarding ethics information and Post-Employment counseling prior to leaving NIH. The current IC DEC contact information is available online on the [NIH Ethics Office website](https://ethics.od.nih.gov/contacts.html).

**The IC Ethics Program Is Available to You**

If you have any ethics concerns, you should contact you [Institute or Center Deputy Ethics Counselor (DEC) or Ethic Coordinator (EC)](https://ethics.od.nih.gov/contacts.html) for ethics guidance. You are encouraged to meet with your DEC and EC, as needed.

You are also encouraged to reach out to your IC ethics official regarding ethics training for you and your employees. You should help to promote these trainings as well as ensure you and your staff complete the mandatory Annual Ethics Training requirement.

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