

## **Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy #20**

**Title:** Ethical Standards

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### 20.1 POLICY

The effectiveness of the Coroner's Office depends upon community respect and confidence. Conduct which detracts from this respect and confidence is detrimental to the public interest and is prohibited. The Coroner may direct an investigation into circumstances suggesting a Deputy Coroner has engaged in unbecoming conduct and impose disciplinary action, when appropriate. All employees shall read and understand the South Carolina Ethics Act acknowledgment form and be generally familiar with the Ethics Act in accordance with Charleston County Personnel Procedure found at the end of this policy.

### 20.2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Deputy Coroners, and other employees of this office, engaged in official duties, whether within or outside of the territorial jurisdiction of this county. Unless otherwise noted, this policy also applies to off-duty conduct as well. Conduct not mentioned under a specific rule, but which violates a general principle is prohibited. This policy is organized into eight principles governing the conduct becoming of a Deputy Coroner. The rationale explaining the principle will follow each principle.

### 20.3 PRINCIPLE 1

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1. Deputy Coroners shall conduct themselves, whether on or off duty, in accordance with the Constitution of the United States, the South Carolina Constitution, and all applicable laws, ordinances, and rules enacted or established under legal authority.

2. Rationale: Deputy Coroners conduct their duties according to a grant of limited authority from the community. Therefore, Deputy Coroners must understand the laws defining the scope of their duties. Deputy Coroners may only act in accordance with the powers granted to them.

### 20.4 PRINCIPLE 2

1. Deputies shall refrain from any conduct in an official capacity that detracts from the public's faith in the integrity of the criminal justice system.

2. Rationale: Community cooperation with this Office is a product of the public trust that Deputy Coroners will act honestly and with impartiality. Deputy Coroners must act in a manner that instills such trust.

### 20.5 PRINCIPLE 3

1. Deputies shall perform their duties impartially and without prejudice or discrimination.

2. Rationale: This Office's effectiveness requires public trust and confidence. Diverse communities must have faith in the fairness and impartiality of the Coroner. Deputy Coroners must refrain from fostering disharmony in their communities based upon diversity, and perform their duties without regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation, or age.

### 20.6 PRINCIPLE 4

1. Deputies shall not, whether on duty or off duty, exhibit any conduct that discredits themselves or this Office or otherwise impairs their ability or that of other Deputy Coroners or this Office to provide death investigation services to the community.

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2. Rationale: A Deputy's ability to perform his/her duties is dependent upon the respect and confidence communities have for the Deputy Coroner and the Coroner's Office in general. Deputies must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the integrity and trustworthiness expected of them by the public.

### 20.7 PRINCIPLE 5

1. Deputies shall treat all members of the public courteously and with respect.

2. Rationale: Deputies are highly visible to the public in the performance of their duties. Therefore, Deputy Coroners must make a positive impression when interacting with the public and each other.

### 20.8 PRINCIPLE 6

1. Deputies shall not compromise their integrity, nor that of this Office or profession, by accepting, giving, or soliciting any gratuity that could be reasonably interpreted as capable of influencing their official acts or judgments.

2. Rationale: For a community to have faith in this Office, Deputy Coroners must avoid conduct that does or could cast doubt upon the impartiality of the individual deputy.

### 20.9 PRINCIPLE 7

1. Deputies shall not compromise their integrity, not that of this Office or profession, by taking or attempting to influence actions when a conflict of interest exists.

2. Rationale: For the public to maintain its faith in the integrity and impartiality of the Coroner's Office, Deputy Coroners must avoid taking or influencing official actions where the Deputy's actions would or could conflict with the Deputy's appropriate responsibilities.

### 20.10 PRINCIPLE 8

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1. Deputies shall observe the confidentiality of information available to them due to their status as Deputy Coroners.

2. Rationale: Deputies are entrusted with vast amounts of private and personal information or access thereto. Deputies must maintain the confidentiality of such information to protect the privacy of the subjects of that information, and to maintain public faith in the Deputy Coroners and the Coroner's commitment to preserving such confidences.

### 20.11 PROCEDURE

In accordance with Charleston County Personnel Procedure 4.10 Code of Ethics, all employees shall read and adhere to the Ethics Reform Act summarized within and copied below:

#### *PROCEDURE:*

*A. The County strictly adheres to the provisions of the Ethics Act and expects that its employees be generally familiar with the Act's rules of conduct. The following is a summary of some of the requirements of the Act. In the event any public official or employee has questions concerning his or her conduct, it is their responsibility to seek guidance through their chain of command.*

#### *1. Section 8-13-700*

*No County employee is allowed to use the influence of his government employment to financially benefit himself, a member of his family, or a business with which he is associated.*

#### *2. Section 8-13-705*

*No County employee is allowed to provide anything of value to any public official with the intent to influence decisions made by that public official.*

#### *3. Section 8-13-715*

*No County employee is allowed to receive anything of value (money or item) for speaking before a public or private group as a county representative, except that the County can be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred by the employee during that*

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*speaking engagement.*

### 4. Section 8-13-730

*No County employee is allowed to serve as a member of any governmental regulatory group or agency that regulates any business with which that employee is associated.*

### 5. Section 8-13-775

*No County employee can have any economic interest in any contract with the State or County if that employee is authorized to perform an official function relating to that contract.*

## **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **A. Employee**

*1. Sign and understand the South Carolina Ethics Act acknowledgement form, and be generally familiar with the Ethics Act.*

## **20.12 SOUTH CAROLIA ETHICS ACT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

The following is supplied by the County HR Dept. and your electronic signature serves as compliance with the employee responsibility to sign the SC Ethics Act acknowledgement form referenced in Procedure 4.10 Code of Ethics.

*In order to acquaint you with the South Carolina Ethics Act and the special responsibilities of public employees, a summary of the main provisions is provided below. For additional information, you may reference the South Carolina State Ethics Commission's brochure.*

*As an employee of Charleston County Government, you are required to familiarize yourself with this law. Please read the summary below. In order to ensure that all of your actions are and appear to be correct during your employment with Charleston County, contact the Human Resources Department at 958-4726 if you have any questions. The summary below is taken from the Ethics Reform Act. For additional information, visit the South Carolina Ethics Commission website.*

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Section 8-13-705: *No County employee is allowed to provide anything of value to any public official with the intent to influence decisions made by that public official.*

Section 8-13-700: *No County employee is allowed to use the influence of his government to financially benefit himself, a member of his family, or business with which he is associated.*

Section 8-13-715: *No County employee is allowed to receive anything of value (money or item) for speaking before a public or private group, except that the County can be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred by the employee during that speaking engagement.*

Section 8-13-730: *No County employee is allowed to serve as a member of any government regulatory group or agency that regulates any business with which that employee is associated.*

Section 8-13-775: *No County employee can have any financial interest in a contract with any government if that employee's official job functions relate to that contract.*