



Katherine Weinstein Miller
Chief Probation Officer

Verónica Martínez
Deputy Director of Administrative Services
DIRECT DIAL: (415) 680-8451
EMAIL: veronica.martinez@sfgov.org

Statement of Incompatible Activities for Employees

Staff of the San Francisco Department Juvenile Probation (SF-JPD) are expected to avoid activities that are incompatible with public service and prohibited under [Section 3.218 of the San Francisco Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code](#). On its website, the City and County of San Francisco's [Ethics Commission](#) offers a summary of the code's principles. Peace Officers must also behave in accordance with the [Law Enforcement Code of Ethics \(California Code Regs. Title 11, § 1013\)](#). Our work is often complex, though, and this memo underscores several specific activities that are inconsistent with our [mission](#). To be helpful, we are providing instructive examples of situations that may be murky. If you have questions, please consult with your supervisor.

Personal Relationships

SF-JPD staff often form intensive relationships with juveniles and their families. The following examples illustrate situations that staff must be mindful of.

Example One: A Juvenile Justice Center counselor discovers that the child of a neighbor (or a relative) has been brought into custody. The counselor should notify the supervisor of the relationship. While counselors can talk with known children and offer informal support, they cannot provide preferential treatment or privileges. (See Ethics Commission guidelines - Selective Assistance, Decisions Involving Family Members).

Example Two: In the course of a minor's case, a Deputy Probation Officer grows close with the youth's family and wants to continue the relationship. While acting as a mentor to the youth or as a friend to the family after a case is closed may be well-intentioned, officers should notify their supervisors of the relationship and seek formal approval. This protects both the officer and SF-JPD in what might become an ambiguous situation. (Ethics Commission - Selective Assistance, Confidentiality.)

Financial Transactions

Like all City and County of San Francisco staff, SF-JPD employees cannot use their positions for personal gain or for the advantage of acquaintances.

Example: A SF-JPD staff-person previously worked at a youth-serving non-profit organization. After the Department issues a request for proposals (RFP), a friend and former colleague from the non-profit organization contacts him seeking tips for an application. The SF-JPD staff-person should not engage in this conversation because it may provide the applicant with a competitive advantage, or the appearance of one. In this scenario, the staff-person should direct his former colleague to contact the solicitation administrator listed on the RFP for assistance. (Ethics Commission - Selective Assistance, Acting as an Unauthorized City Representative, Referrals.)

Example: The mother of a youth in the Juvenile Justice Center gives a counselor money to order pizza for the kids. With the youth in mind, counselors may want to agree as an act of kindness, but accepting money places them in a compromising position that could be misunderstood. In uncertain situations, counselors should consult with their supervisors, who might suggest an alternative like having the mother order pizza to be delivered. Employees cannot enter into any financial transaction with a person under the care or supervision of SF-JPD. (Ethics Commission - Selective Assistance, Compensation for City Duties, Referrals.)

Example: Needing extra income, an employee is considering working for a youth-serving non-profit organization that receives funding from SF-JPD. This would be a conflict of interest and is not allowable. Nor are staff allowed to serve as uncompensated board members of any contracted organization. (Ethics Commission – Dual Office Holding.)

Use of City Resources

Employees cannot use SF-JPD-issued badges, business cards, letterheads or titles for any private gain or advantage, or for the benefit of any organization they volunteer for or otherwise support.

Confidentiality

Employees have a legal obligation to keep information about minors confidential, including whether they have had contact with SF-JPD. This includes young people who have had their cases closed or are no longer minors. In the course of our work together, we sometimes encounter situations that are disturbing and even traumatic for us, and we naturally want to talk about them, but those conversations should be with one's supervisor, and not with friends or family in any way that might reveal the youth's identity. Staff should bear in mind that others may have unknown connections and be able to recognize the youth being discussed.

Example: An employee is at a party, and a friend asks about a case that has been in the news. In these situations, the best response is to tell the friend that any information about the case is confidential, and you cannot discuss it. (Ethics Commission – Confidentiality.)

Our work is crucial to the lives and well-being of youth, families, and the community. This places a special responsibility on us. Given the personal and public nature of our roles, it is natural that employees may encounter situations that give them pause. At those times, staff should consult with their supervisors and figure out the best course together.