

TO: All IHS Employees

**FROM: Yvette Roubideaux, M.D., M.P.H.
Director**

SUBJECT: Employee Ethics

DATE: 8/12/09

It is a great honor to serve our President and the people of the United States as the Director of the Indian Health Service. I want to thank each of you for your contributions toward our shared goal of raising the physical, mental, social and spiritual health of our American Indian and Alaska Native communities to the highest level possible. In carrying out our critical mission it is imperative that we maintain the highest ethical standards. The faith and confidence of the American public are in our hands.

On his first full day in office, President Obama issued an executive order laying out his expectations for presidential appointees in the Executive Branch. The President also ordered the Office of Government Ethics to develop rules to apply the same standards to all Executive Branch employees wherever possible, effectively raising the standard for all public servants. I am writing today to express my own commitment to the President's goal, and to express my own belief that **it is critical that we honor President Obama's commitment to the highest standards of conduct and decision making.**

Accordingly, I expect **all employees** of the Indian Health Service to familiarize themselves with the ethics rules and regulations that apply to their position. This includes the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch as well as the Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Department of Health and Human Services. These regulations can be found at <http://intranet.hhs.gov/ethics/#law>. Although highly technical, the rules are based on a set of **14 core principles**, laid out below, which clearly establish the most fundamental obligations of Federal employment.

The Indian Health Service makes a positive impact in the lives of millions of Americans every day. Our resources are very limited. We cannot afford to be distracted from our goals or allow our many accomplishments to be diminished by allegations of unethical conduct, whether based on fact or appearance. Mere compliance with the technical aspects of our ethics program is not enough. Get to know the ethics rules, and when questions arise, seek the prospective advice of our ethics personnel. Before you look for an outside job, accept a gift, participate in tribal affairs or give a presentation to the membership of a

professional association, ask your ethics counselor. In this way you will protect yourself, our agency, and further our shared goals.

I reaffirm my commitment to the high ethical standards established by the President, and I trust that you will do the same. Working together we can continue to improve the health of First Americans across our nation. I thank you for the warm welcome you have shown, and I look forward to working with you in the years to come.

Please review the following, and I will be sending out more information and clarification on these core principles in the near future.

14 Core Ethical Principles for Executive Branch Employees

1. Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws and ethical principles above private gain.
2. Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. An employee shall not, except as provided by regulatory exception, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or non-performance of the employee's duties.
5. Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.
6. Employees shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the government.
7. Employees shall not use public office for private gain.
8. Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment for any private organization or individual.
9. Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

10. Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens including all just financial obligations and especially those—such as Federal, State, or local taxes—that are imposed by law.
13. Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
14. Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards.