

Do's and Don'ts

Ethics

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DO read your local Ethics Code and the State Ethics Law before anything else! Many ethical lapses are caused not by intentional acts but by unfamiliarity with Ethics law and a lack of attention to detail.

DON'T take any gift before checking your code or consulting your jurisdiction's legal counsel. The law is always not so obvious. For example, some jurisdictions allow for food and beverage consumed in the presence of the donor, while others have unrealistically low dollar limits on such items.

DO keep confidential that which is intended to be so. Privileges often attach to matters presented to members of legislative bodies and the right to release or disclose such matters belongs to the body as a whole, not individual members.

DO disclose any related interests such as familial, business, etc. in a matter early to avoid claims of favoritism, partiality, bias, cronyism, and the like. All codes have (or should have) provisions dealing with such matters.

When in doubt, DON'T! If a transaction, gift, etc. gives you pause for second thoughts or otherwise raises a question in your mind, take the time to investigate and get advice before you take an action. *Remember, trouble is much easier to get into than get out of!*