



Toronto
Community
Housing

Conflict of Interest Policy

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References: Code of Conduct Computer, Internet and Email Policy Employees Seeking Political Office Employees Taking Part in Elections	

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Scope

The Conflict of Interest policy applies to all employees of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. It is especially important for employees who make or influence decisions, and those who have access to the corporation's information and resources. This policy extends TCHC's Code of Conduct to situations involving a conflict of interest, a potential conflict of interest, or a perceived conflict of interest.

Purpose

To define what conflict of interest is and advise employees of what to do if they think they might be in a conflict situation.

Employees of Toronto Community Housing Corporation are expected to carry out their jobs with honesty and diligence. They must avoid placing themselves in any situation where their own interests might conflict with the interests of TCHC.

Consequences of Failing to Comply

Breaking any of the rules and standards in this policy can lead to serious consequences, including disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Definition of Conflict of Interest

No employees may engage in any business, or any other outside interest, which creates an actual, potential, or apparent conflict of interest. Any employee obligation, interest or participation that would or could interfere with the best interests of TCHC, or the employee's independent judgment on behalf of TCHC constitutes an unacceptable conflict of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when an employee's personal interests affect their judgment and cause them to act in a way that is not in the best interests of TCHC, its tenants, or housing applicants. Employees are in a conflict of interest when they get, or hope to get, some personal gain by using:

- their position or influence,
- company information,
- corporate time, or
- TCHC material or facilities.

Personal gain does not just mean gaining something for yourself. Personal gain from a conflict of interest could include something gained for a friend, family member, or a business associate.

Avoiding a Conflict of Interest

To avoid a conflict of interest, employees should be aware of any advantage that their position at TCHC might give them, such as:

- power to get decisions made,
- privileged information,
- using company time for work not related to your job,
- access to the corporation's resources, such as materials, facilities or money.

Employees should avoid any situation that could take away from their ability to do their job properly and ethically, keeping the interest of TCHC as their top priority.

Rules and Standards

The following rules and standards apply to everyone covered by this policy. This is not a complete list of all possible conflict of interest situations, but it will help employees to recognize situations they must avoid.

Appointments to boards and agencies

Staff who hold positions on the boards of community agencies shall promptly inform the appropriate manager if the agency's mandate is related to their work at TCHC. If an issue arises at a community agency that places them in a real or potential conflict with TCHC policies or procedures, they shall promptly declare a conflict of interest to the community Board and TCHC.

Confidential information

No employee may use or give out confidential or privileged information about TCHC for personal gain. No employee may give confidential information about another employee without that employee's written permission.

Exception: Employees may give confidential information if they are required by law or by an investigation conducted by TCHC.

Financial interest

Employees who have a direct financial interest in a TCHC contract, sale or other business transaction must declare it. Employees must also declare any indirect interests they have through family members, friends or business associates. Employees with direct or indirect interests may not represent or advise the corporation in any such business transaction. They must not advise family, friends, or associates on any business activity that may give them unfair advantage.

Outside Activity

Employees may not take part in any outside work or business activity if:

- the outside activity conflicts with their duties as TCHC employees (for example, they use information from TCHC to train employees in other companies);
- they use confidential information about TCHC to further the outside activity (for example, working for a company that is seeking a contract with TCHC and giving inside information about a confidential project); or
- the outside activity could hinder their ability to carry out their duties for TCHC (for example, by demanding too much of their time during regular working hours).

Representing others

Employees may not appear before TCHC's Board or committees on behalf of a private citizen. Employees may appear for himself/herself, his /her spouse, his/her parents, or

his/her minor children, unless the employee is either being paid by, or is involved through his /her duties at TCHC in the issue/policy.

Exceptions: Any exceptions to this rule must have the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

Using TCHC Property

Employees must use TCHC resources only for activities related to their work. TCHC resources include property, facilities, supplies, and equipment such as phones, computers, tools, and machinery. They must not allow others, such as non-employees, contractors, and tenants, to use resources improperly.

Exceptions: Any exceptions to this rule must have the approval of the appropriate manager.

Witnessing documents

No employee may witness a will or any other sworn statement for a tenant or a housing applicant, or be the executor of a tenant or applicant's will. Taking on this role places the employee in a position of too much power, and opens a possible conflict of interest.

Exceptions: There are however areas where staff are "Commissioned " for taking Affidavits which include sworn statements.

Staff may also witness the signing of leases and other documents related to their work.

Resolving a Conflict of Interest

It is the responsibility of every employee to remove any uncertainty that might develop or exist with respect to the applicability of this Policy. Employees are encourage to obtain specific clarification regarding possible conflicts of interest from their supervisor or manager who will, if necessary, seek direction and guidance from more senior management. In circumstances where an individual is considering engaging in an outside activity, business or undertaking, and it appears that engaging in such activity could give rise to an actual, potential or apparent conflict of interest (including as outlined in this Policy), the employee is required to notify his or her supervisor or manager in writing in advance as to the nature of the outside activity, business or undertaking.

Actions to take that could resolve a conflict of interest situation include:

- declaring the conflict of interest situation
- removing yourself from the discussion and/or decision making process/panel related to the conflict of interest situation
- refrain from engaging in an outside activity while at work or using TCHC resources including computers, cell phones or faxes to engage in an outside activity.

Responsibilities of Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- ensuring that employees read, understand, and follow this policy;
- keeping records to show that employees have read and understood the policy;
- ensuring employees have access to the policy;

- discussing the policy with each employee and pointing out any rules and standards that are especially relevant to their work.

Responsibilities of Employees

All employees are responsible for making sure they understand and follow this policy. Any employee who is unsure of how to interpret this policy or if they could be in a possible conflict of interest situation should speak with their manager immediately.

It is also the responsibility of every employee to bring to the attention of TCHC knowledge of any conflict of interest situation which might adversely affect TCHC's reputation. All employees are required to report, verbally or in writing, any evidence of improper practices of which they are aware. As used here, the term "improper practice" means any activity that violates this Policy. Reports should be submitted to the employee's supervisor or manager.

Employees reporting potential conflict situation they are aware of and where the reporting is made in good faith, will be protected from reprisal by TCHC.

Training and Communication

All employees new to TCHC will receive a copy of the TCHC *Conflict of Interest Policy* during their orientation with their manager and sign the Acknowledgement form indicating that they have read and understood the policy. A copy of the Acknowledgement form will be kept on file with the manager and a copy forwarded to Human Resources to be placed on the employee's file.

Employees hired prior to the introduction of this policy will be provided with a copy of the policy in a meeting with their supervisor or manager. The supervisor or manager is responsible for making a record that the employee(s) were provided with a copy of the policy and that a discussion meeting took place.