ETHICS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

A PRESENTATION TO THE
SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

MARCH 30, 2017

LeeAnn Pelham, Executive Director
San Francisco Ethics Commission
sfethics.org
FIRST THINGS FIRST.

Ethics Czar(ina) - Free Zone
Public office is a public trust and all officers and employees of the City and County shall exercise their public duties in a manner consistent with this trust.”

SF Charter Section 15.102
Standards of behavior that tell us what humans ought to do in their personal and professional lives.
“...is not interested in the notion of ‘being good,’ rather it is concerned with decision-making conflicts between public and private obligations.”

Orange County Grand Jury “Ethics in the County,” April 2013
Ethical dilemmas are often described as slippery slopes; unseen until one falls and is unable to regain sure footing.
SURE FOOTING: PRINCIPLED ACTION

STEWARDSHIP  TRANSPARENCY  ACCOUNTABILITY

“...independent, impartial, and responsible to the people ...” SFC&GCC Sec 3.200
Political Reform Act of 1974

Govt Code Sec.1090

SF Campaign & Governmental Conduct Code

Dept’l Statement of Incompatible Activities (SIA)
ACCOUNTABILITY

Engaging in the activities that are prohibited may subject an officer or employee to discipline...up to and including possible termination of employment or removal from office, as well as to monetary fines and penalties.

SFC&GC Code § 3.242; Charter § 15.105
ETHICS COMMISSION

advice
resources to increase awareness
compliance information and tools
public disclosure
policy role for strong, clear, workable laws
whistleblower retaliation protections

sfethics.org
SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

- accessible public disclosures
- strong, workable, enforceable laws
- practical compliance tools
- clear and timely guidance
- confidential, fair & thorough inquiries
- Impartial, timely resolution of cases

Individually
- act with impartiality
- avoid conflicts of interests
- be familiar with the laws
- comply with their letter and spirit
- ask for guidance
- report wrongdoing

Ethics Commission
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WHAT’S AT STAKE?

“Vibrant democratic institutions depend upon the consent and support of the governed. Public confidence is necessary for democratic institutions to be healthy and flourish.”

Stephen D. Potts, Former Director, U.S. Office of Government Ethics
“Moments of Truth”

“Decisions...will never be easy, precisely because they involve...difficult choices, balances, and the reconciliation of competing goals and values.

But they are moments of truth, in which the public good is defined and achieved - or not achieved - in specific, concrete circumstances.”

Ralph Heintzman, Canadian Public Service Management Agency