

CODE OF ETHICS

In order to ensure that all community supervision officers maintain the highest level of professional standards, that the integrity of the criminal justice system is fully preserved, that the mission and goals of every community supervision and corrections department in this State are faithfully accomplished and that the people of this State and in each local community are served with honor and dedication, the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice proposes the following Code of Ethics to be adopted and implemented by every community supervision and corrections department in this State and by its officers and employees.

I. Community Supervision Employees are Servants of the Court

It is the primary duty and responsibility of every community supervision officer and all other employees of the department to faithfully serve the Court.

Community supervision officers shall not make any public statement which disparages the dignity of the Court, degrades or belittles any Court officer, or shows contempt or disregard for the criminal justice system. Instead, community supervision officers shall work diligently to preserve the integrity of our judicial system, work to improve the function and efficiency of our legal system and strive toward assuring that equal justice will be provided to all persons.

A community supervision officer has the duty and obligation to vigorously carry out the instructions and orders of the Court and to comply with the administrative procedures established by the department. A community supervision officer shall provide the Court and the department with accurate and objective information. As such, a community supervision officer shall exercise care to verify pertinent factual information presented to the Court, formulate an informed and unbiased judgment when making recommendations to the Court, and promptly inform the Court of any violation of or deviation from the Court's instructions and orders as directed by the Court.

A community supervision officer has the duty and obligation to endeavor to maintain the integrity and independence of the judiciary. As such a community supervision officer shall not use his or her official position for the furtherance of partisan political objectives; nor shall an officer, in an official capacity, treat any individual differently on account of personal animosities or biases; nor shall the officer discriminate against any person on the basis of religion, race, sex, creed, national origin, disability, health status, or age. Moreover, a community supervision officer shall not represent to any person that he or she can gain influence or access to anyone because of the officer's position as a community supervision officer or because of the officer's relationship with the Court.

A community supervision officer shall conscientiously obey the laws of the land and shall not counsel or encourage any individual to violate any law of this State, any other State, or any law of this nation.

II. A Community Supervision Employee has an Obligation to the Department with which he Serves

A community supervision officer or other employee shall not make any public statement that falsely or maliciously ridicules or disparages a fellow employee or the operations, policies, and practices of the department. Instead, all employees shall strive to strengthen the endeavors of the community supervision and corrections department while constantly upholding the interest of the public, shall offer constructive comments aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the department and shall work toward enhancing the quality of supervision and corrections in the community. Employees are, however, encouraged to report any misconduct by any department employee by using the department's chain of command or reporting the misconduct to the appropriate authorities.

A community supervision employee shall not engage in any activity which creates an actual or apparent conflict of interest or has the appearance of a conflict of interest which affects his or her duties as a department employee.

A community supervision officer shall accurately and timely document all significant interactions concerning the supervision of offenders and record all significant contacts with other agencies pertaining to the offender.

III. A Community Supervision Officer has an Obligation to the Public and to those Individuals whom an Officer Supervises

A community supervision officer shall exercise the utmost precaution to ensure that a defendant whom the officer is supervising does not pose a substantial and unjustifiable risk to the community. A community supervision officer should notify any individual or a law enforcement agency, within the proper bounds of the law, whenever a community supervision officer has a good faith belief that the life, safety or property of any member of the public may be endangered.

A community supervision officer shall supervise defendants with fairness and competency. A community supervision officer shall treat all individuals that the officer is supervising with the dignity and respect to which all human beings are entitled. A community supervision officer shall treat all persons with whom the officer comes in contact in his or her official capacity impartially. The officer shall neither treat some individuals more favorably than others; nor shall the officer treat some individuals more adversely than others.

A community supervision officer shall maintain a professional relationship with the individuals the officer is supervising. A community supervision officer shall not use his or her authority as a supervising officer or his or her position to extract any personal gain from a defendant or exert any undue duress or harassment of any defendant.

A community supervision employee shall not violate a defendant's civil and legal rights, including any right to the confidentiality of any communication or records. A community supervision officer shall disclose no personal information concerning a defendant other than in his or her official capacity and in accordance with any applicable law and administrative policy.

IV. A Community Supervision Officer has the Status of a Professional

A community supervision officer shall work toward improving and enhancing the profession. An officer shall maintain a high degree of proficiency in his or her employment. As such, a community supervision officer shall seek every opportunity to become aware of any changes in the law and be apprised of the latest developments in the field of supervision and corrections. A community supervision officer should seek to improve his or her skills and competence through training programs, seminars and self-study. In order to improve the profession, develop contacts with community supervision officers in other jurisdictions and parts of the country, and provide a network of resources and ideas, community supervision officers are encouraged to join and actively participate in professional organizations affecting corrections and supervision matters.