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DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES & PUBLIC PROTECTION

# COMMISSIONER RONNELL A. HIGGINS

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## ETHICS POLICY

*Revised January 2024*

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This policy is adopted pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-83(a)(2), which mandates that each state agency develop an ethics statement relating to its operations. Ethical conduct is of critical importance to our relationship with the public, other agencies, our peers, and persons regulated by or doing business with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection ("DESPP").

### APPLICATION

The provisions of this policy apply to all employees of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. All current and future DESPP employees shall be given a copy of this policy. It will be the responsibility of each employee to become familiar with the policy and comply with its provisions. This policy is intended as a guide to ethical conduct for DESPP employees. It is not intended to supersede the State Ethics Code, other applicable statutory provisions or Executive Orders. Please note that under state law, compliance with the Code of Ethics is the responsibility of each employee.

To meet their obligation to comply with the Codes of Ethics, DESPP employees shall:

1. Comply in every aspect with the Code of Ethics for Public Officials (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-79 et seq.);
2. Act in a professional, patient, dignified and courteous manner to all persons with whom such employees deal in their official capacities;
3. Respect and comply with all laws, rules and regulations governing the functions and services of the DESPP and conduct themselves at all times in a manner which promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the DESPP;
4. Act in the best interest of the DESPP and the State of Connecticut, without influence of personal or partisan interests, public clamor or fear of criticism;
5. Preserve the fairness and integrity of all decision-making processes;

6. Avoid all appearances of impropriety in job performance, including, without limitation:
  - (a) Disclosure of any and all conflicts of interest (or potential conflicts of interest) as soon as such conflicts (or potential conflicts) are identified to either a supervisor or the ethics liaison;
  - (b) As appropriate, recusal from the decision-making process whenever a conflict is identified;
  - (c) Avoid showing, through word or deed, any preferential treatment or attitude toward any person, group or other entity in the performance of official duties.

## **PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES**

### **A. Outside Employment**

DESPP employees may not accept outside employment that is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of their official duties or employment, that will impair independence of judgment as to official duties, or that will require or induce disclosure of confidential information gained in state service. All employees are required to submit a Request to Engage in Outside Employment form (DESPP-259-C) and receive authorization from the Commissioner or his designee prior to accepting outside employment or engaging in any private business operation.

All DESPP employees are expected to comply with Human Resources policies concerning outside employment. DESPP employees who are within the Division of State Police must also comply with all applicable Administrative and Operations Manual (the "A & O Manual") provisions.

### **B. Use of Position**

No DESPP employee may, for the financial gain of him or herself, spouse, child, child's spouse, parent, brother, sister or a business with which he or she is associated; use his or her public office or position.

DESPP employees may not use their official authority, directly or indirectly, to coerce, command, or require another state employee to improperly obtain an appointment for any person to a position within state service or to act in violation of the state personnel rules and regulations with respect to appointment and promotion.

Family members or others having special relationships with current employees are not prohibited from seeking employment with DESPP, but influence may not be exerted to give such person an advantage. DESPP employees also may not supervise relatives.

### **C. Political Activities**

A DESPP employee seeking to or holding political office shall notify the Commissioner in writing through their supervisor or chain of command. Such employee shall comply with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes § 5-266a. Employees of the Division of State Police shall also comply with Sections 4.9.2 and 14.2.4 of the A & O Manual.

A DESPP employee may not engage in partisan political activities while on state duty time, nor shall state materials, equipment, vehicles or facilities be used for the purpose of influencing a political election.

Any employee who needs guidance on the application of this policy or a provision of the State Ethics Code should contact the agency's Ethics Liaison Officer, Cynthia Isaacs (Agency Legal Director), at (860) 685-8150 or the Office of State Ethics ("OSE") at (860) 263-2400.

BY ORDER OF:

DATED:



3/20/24

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Ronnell Higgins  
*Commissioner*