

# **El Centro de la Raza**

## **Code of Ethics**

Our Code of Ethics is based on our core values and principles that define in detail how El Centro de la Raza's staff, volunteers, and representatives are encouraged to act, reflecting the unique trust placed in this organization to serve the public good. We are all responsible for maintaining the public's trust in our integrity, and without public trust, we cannot serve our mission.

### **1. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS, RULES and REGULATIONS**

Obedying the law, both in letter and in spirit, and behaving in a manner consistent with El Centro's principles and values is the foundation on which El Centro's ethical standards are built. All directors of programs, employees, managers and volunteers are expected to conduct all their business and affairs in full compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations, and shall encourage and promote such behavior for themselves, employees and volunteers.

### **2. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY**

A personal commitment to integrity in all circumstances benefits each individual as well as the organization. We strive to:

- Meet the highest standards of performance, quality, service, and achievement in working towards the El Centro's mission.
- Communicate honestly and openly and avoid misrepresentation.
- Promote an environment where honesty, open communication, and divergent opinions are valued.
- Show respect and fairness toward all those with whom we come into contact.
- Keep our promises.

### **3. ACCOUNTABILITY**

El Centro de la Raza is responsible to its members, which include donors, volunteers, El Centro providers, their clients, and other who share a common association or interest in developing a stronger community, and others who have placed faith in El Centro de la Raza. To uphold this trust we:

- Promote wise stewardship of El Centro resources that are used to invest in programs and initiatives and to cover operating expenses.
- Recognize that in our role of supporting programs that help people, the greatest help we can provide is empowerment. Programs alone do not change lives. We support programs that empower people to change their own lives rather than provide assistance that keeps people in need.
- Do not use organizational resources for non-El Centro purposes.
- Observe and comply with all laws and regulations affecting El Centro.

#### **4. SOLICITATIONS AND VOLUNTARY GIVING**

The most responsive contributors are those who have the opportunity to become informed and involved.

We

- Promote voluntary giving in dealing with donors and vendors.
- Do not condone any use of coercion in fundraising activities, including predicated professional advancement on response to solicitations

#### **5. DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

El Centro is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to the principle of diversity. We:

- Value and embrace diversity in all aspects of El Centro activities.
- Respect others without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, national origin, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, or status as a qualified disabled or handicapped individual.
- Provide equal employment opportunity programs throughout El Centro.
- Refuse to engage in any other form of discrimination or harassment.

#### **6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

To help maintain our integrity and the public's trust, we:

- Avoid any activity or outside interest which conflicts or appears to conflict with the best interests of El Centro, including involvement with a current or potential El Centro vendor, grantee, or competing organization unless disclosed to and not deemed to be inappropriate.

- Ensure that outside employment and other activities do not adversely affect the performance of El Centro duties or the attainment of El Centro mission and goals.
- Ensure that travel, entertainment, and related expenses are incurred on a basis consistent with the mission of El Centro and not for personal gain or interests.
- Decline any gift, gratuity, or favor in the performance of El Centro duties (except for promotional items of nominal value) and any food, transportation, lodging, or entertainment unless directly related to El Centro business.
- No member of the same family shall be allowed to report directly to a family member or to approve or evaluate pay raises, promotions, discipline, performance evaluations, or working conditions for another family member- please refer to policy 3.4 of El Centro de la Raza's Employee Handbook for full policy on Employment of Relatives.
- Do not knowingly take any action or make any statement intended to influence the conduct of El Centro in such a way as to confer any financial benefit on ourselves, our immediate family members, or any organization in which we or our immediate family members have a significant interest as stakeholders, directors, or officers.
- Disclose all known conflicts or potential conflicts of interest in any matter before the Board of Directors or any committee upon which we serve, and withdraw from the meeting room during any discussion, review, and voting in connection with such matter, as appropriate under the circumstances.

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY**

Confidentiality is a hallmark of professionalism. We:

- Ensure that all information that is confidential or privileged is not disclosed inappropriately.
- Respect the privacy rights of all individuals in the performance of their El Centro duties.

## **8. ETHICAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

El Centro strives for the highest ethical management. These include Board approved processes and procedures for the accuracy of the books, record retention, standards for expense reports, proper use of El Centro assets and protecting proprietary information.

## **9. WHISTLEBLOWER**

Staff, board members, consultants and volunteers are encouraged to report suspected violations of any law, rule, or regulation, or gross mismanagement, gross waste of funds

or abuse of authority fraudulent or dishonest conduct (i.e. to act as “whistle-blower”), without fear of retaliation pursuant to El Centro’s Whistleblower Policy.

## **10. POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND ENDORSEMENTS**

As a charitable corporation, El Centro is prohibited from making contributions to any candidate for public office or to any political committee. We:

- Refrain from making any contributions or endorsements to any candidate for public office or political committee on behalf of El Centro, including the use of El Centro facilities for political campaign activities.
- Refrain from making any contributions or endorsements to any candidate for public office or political committee in a manner that may create the appearance that the contribution is on behalf of El Centro.

In certain cases, limited lobbying/advocacy activity is allowed.

## **11. REPORTING ANY ILLEGAL OR UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR**

Directors should promote ethical behavior and encourage an environment in which El Centro encourages employees to talk to supervisors, managers or other appropriate personnel about observed illegal or unethical behavior and, when in doubt, about the best course of action in a particular situation. It is the policy of the El Centro not to allow retaliation for reports of misconduct by others made in good faith.

## **12. ENFORCEMENT OF THE CODE OF BUSINESS CONDUCT AND ETHICS**

The Board shall determine appropriate actions to be taken in the event of violations of this Code. Such actions shall be reasonably designed to deter wrongdoing and to promote accountability for adherence to the Code. In determining what action is appropriate in a particular case, the Board shall take into account all relevant information, including the nature and severity of the violation, whether the violation appears to have been intentional or inadvertent, and whether the individual in question had been advised prior to the violation as to the proper course of action.

## **13. GUIDANCE**

Any known or possible breaches of ethics should be disclosed using the following guidelines.

1. Board members and volunteers will contact the El Centro Executive Director.

2. Staff will contact their supervisor, El Centro Executive Director, board chair.

Reports of possible breaches will be handled in the following manner:

1. All reports of possible breaches will be treated in confidence as much as the organization's duty to investigate and the law allow. If confidentiality cannot be maintained, the individual disclosing the possible breach will be notified.
2. All reported breaches will be investigated and, if needed, appropriate action taken based on the policies of the organization. Retaliation against a person who suspects and reports a breach in good faith will be treated as an independent breach of the Code.

El Centro affirms prompt and fair resolution of all reported breaches.

While no document can anticipate all of the challenges that may arise, the Code of Ethics will assist El Centro volunteers, staff, and representatives in making good decisions that are ethical and in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

#### **14. CODE OF ETHICS EXAMPLES**

These examples are provided only to illustrate how provisions of the Code of Ethics may be applied under certain circumstances. The outcome of any particular situation depends on the facts presented, and in all cases, the language of the Code of Ethics is controlling.

##### ***a. Example: HARASSMENT***

Joe is continually teased by his younger co-workers for being an "old-geezer" and "out of touch" and not able to keep up with the pace of the office

This could be considered harassment and is, at least, contrary to maintaining a positive work environment. Joe should tell his co-workers that their behavior is unwelcome and ask them to stop. If it continues, he should bring it to the attention of his supervisor or El Centro executive director.

##### ***b. Example: CONFLICT OF INTEREST***

1. A firm that your father owns is interested in bidding on a contract to supply goods to El Centro.

You must notify your supervisor and the executive director of El Centro. It is important to avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest or favoritism, especially in situations that could appear to personally benefit you or your family. However, as long as you do not participate in, or are able to remove yourself from the decision making process, and do not have influence in the awarding of the contract, he will likely be allowed to submit a bid.

2. While at a conference you bump into a representative from a hotel who learns you are planning El Centro's next conference. He invites you to dinner and then offers you tickets for you and your spouse to attend the theater.

It is El Centro's policy that you cannot accept a gift, gratuity, or tip of more than a nominal value from anyone with whom you do business on behalf of the organization. The determination on whether or not a gift is nominal shall be at the discretion of Human Resources. Generally non-cash gifts and gratuities under \$10.00 in value would be considered acceptable. Similarly, you should not offer any entertainment or gift to a potential donor or supplier that could be interpreted as inappropriately influencing their decision about interaction with El Centro.

***c. Example: SOLICITATION***

Your daughter is in the school band and at your previous job you sold gift-wrapping paper for her to your colleagues at work. Can you do that at El Centro?

Unauthorized solicitation of funds, the sale of tickets or articles, posting of notices on El Centro Bulletin boards, and the distribution of notices or literature on El Centro time or in working areas is prohibited. This shall be permitted only during your non-working times such as authorized rest and lunch breaks. Any solicitation or distribution must have the prior approval of the Associate Director. Any distribution of notices or literature to be included with El Centro's pay envelopes must have prior approval of the Associate Director.

***d. Example: NEPOTISM/FAVORITISM***

Your sister-in-law is graduating at the top of her class from college this spring. You think she would be a great asset to El Centro.

The appearance of such favoritism is easily perceived, even when such situations are harmless. To avoid such an appearance, El Centro employees may not supervise or exercise management authority, directly or indirectly, over staff with whom they have a relationship that may adversely affect impartiality. Please refer to section 3.4 of El Centro de la Raza's full policy on Employment of Relatives.

***e. Example: CONFIDENTIALITY***

1. A reporter from a magazine calls and asks for your comments concerning El Centro's new fundraising strategy towards its largest donors.

It is important that you do not give out potentially proprietary or confidential information, including a donor list.

2. You have been asked by your child's sports team to help send out fundraising letters since you are familiar with El Centro and may have contact with generous givers.

Using the names of donors or amounts contributed to the El Centro to raise funds for another organization is a breach of confidentiality. Donor information is considered confidential and proprietary.

***f. Example: POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS***

I serve on the board of El Centro. I would like to make a personal donation to my Congressman. Is this something I can do under El Centro's political contribution policy?

El Centro, as a charitable corporation, legally cannot make political contributions. There is no legal restriction on our volunteers, staff, or other representatives making personal contributions.

I hereby acknowledge that I have Read, Understood and Agree to this Code of Ethics

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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