**PARTICIPANT**

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**



For each of the following ethical dilemmas, participants are to identify the course of action they would take, the issues that are involved, and the potential consequences of each option.

DILEMMA #1:

A colleague whom you consider a friend has been taking petty cash. You have just learned about your friend’s actions. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Tell the appropriate authority what you know.

 \_\_\_\_ Keep quiet. You do not want your friend to be fired over such a small matter.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #2:

You have worked with a local government supplier for many years and have developed a good relationship with the sales representative. He mentions that he has some season tickets for the local professional basketball games that he cannot use. He suggests that you and your spouse accept them as a gift. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Accept the tickets and list the tickets on your financial disclosure form. The sales representative is a friend and is not asking for anything in return.

 \_\_\_\_ Turn down the offer of the tickets. You believe that the gift might compromise your objectivity or others’ perception of your objectivity in your relationship with this and other suppliers.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #3:

Your local government’s policy allows for a per diem for meals when employees travel on business. You have decided to stay with old friends rather than at a hotel and plan to eat dinner at their home. As you fill out your travel expense form, you reflect on the per diem. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Claim the per diem. After all, on some trips the per diem has not covered all of your expenses.

 \_\_\_\_ Claim only those expenses you incurred.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:



DILEMMA #4:

The governing body has just approved a staff recommendation to refurbish the community’s parks with the latest playground equipment. The manufacturer of this equipment has offered to pay for your trip to nearby resort town to see the layout of the equipment in use.

 \_\_\_\_ Accept the offer. The governing body has already approved the purchase, so having the company pay for your trip is merely part of a public-private partnership that will save the taxpayers money.

 \_\_\_\_ Insist on having the local government pay for the trip. You want to avoid any appearance of influence.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #5:

An employee whom you supervise is having personal problems that are affecting her work. The employee is frequently late and has failed to meet several important deadlines. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Document the problems carefully, tell the employee that her performance is unacceptable, and draft a performance improvement plan. Hold the employee accountable for any lapses.

 \_\_\_\_ Look the other way. Since the problems are due to personal issues, performance will improve once the employee resolves these issues. You sympathize with the employee and want to avoid adding to her problems.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #6:

You were recently promoted to a job as a building inspector. You have just learned that some of the inspections that your predecessor claimed to have completed were never undertaken. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Keep the problem to yourself. Your job is to do the inspections that are scheduled now, not to check up on someone else’s work. There is no way to hold the building official responsible, so there is no reason to risk word getting out to the media.

 \_\_\_\_ Inform your supervisor or the department head, even if it means that you have to “reinspect” the buildings.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #7:

The government recently purchased plants for several parks and has several left over after planting them. One of your best employees has approached you to ask if he can take the plants home. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Let the employee take the plants. Since they are going to be thrown away otherwise, you consider the plants a reward for good work.

 \_\_\_\_ Explain the employee that letting him take the plants could appear to be inappropriate. The press might make a big deal out of this type of thing.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #8:

Your spouse works for a small company that is building a new office. The company is considering hiring a consultant to help with the permitting process and the paperwork that is required. A colleague in the planning department has talked about getting some consulting work on the side and suggested that he might be a good candidate. He is not directly involved in the plan review or permitting process, but he has learned enough about these processes to be of great help to your spouse’s company. He has asked you to talk to your spouse; making this connection could be a real boost for your spouse’s career. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Give him your spouse’s phone number, and let them work it out. After all, it doesn’t really involve you.

 \_\_\_\_ Suggest to your colleague that such action represents a conflict of interest. Tell him that he should not be accepting jobs as a consultant when he still has a job with the city.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #9:

A prominent developer is about to put up a new housing development. You and your spouse would love to buy one of these premier homes, but you have just sold your house and need to move somewhere quickly—sooner than the homes will be ready. There is a waiting list on rental units in a nearby development. You know the developer well from past experience in the planning department; when you casually mention your dilemma, he offers to rent you a unit temporarily at a reduced price while he builds your home.

 \_\_\_\_ Turn down the offer. Although there are no legal barriers to this offer, it could be perceived by the public or press as unethical.

 \_\_\_\_ Accept the unit. You have no influence on zoning or permit decisions, and you don’t expect any issues involving the developer to come before the council in the near future.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:



DILEMMA #10:

You are on a self-directed work team that has been in place for three months. The team has no “official” leader, but you have emerged as a leader of sorts, partly because you have more experience than some of the other team members. Lately, you have noticed that one of the members of the team has been absent quite a bit, and the team is struggling to figure out how to catch up on the work that has lapsed as a result. One of the other members of the team confided in you yesterday that this employee has been taking “mental health days” to use up some of her sick leave. Your colleague asked you to keep the conversation confidential. What should you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Nothing. You are not in charge, and saying something would betray your colleague’s confidence.

 \_\_\_\_ Bring up the employee’s continued absence at your next team meeting. The employee is misusing sick leave, and the team is suffering as a result. You should decide as a team what to do.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #11:

You have been interviewing candidates for several summer jobs. The application deadline was last week, and you expect to finish your interviews by next Friday. The mayor called you this morning to tell you that her niece’s completed application was on the way and to ask you to squeeze her into the interview schedule. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_Tell the mayor that the deadline for applications has already passed, so it would be unfair to interview any additional candidates.

 \_\_\_\_ Schedule a meeting with the mayor’s niece, but hold her to the same standards as all the other candidates. The important thing is to hire the best people for the job.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:



DILEMMA #12:

One of your employees has just received a promotion that will require him to spend significant time out in the field. The government has strict rules about the use of cell phones: They are to be used sparingly to call supervisors and colleagues only. You have become aware that this employee is using the phone to check in with his son, who is alone in the afternoons after school. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Remind the employee of the policy regarding cell phone use and demand that he stop using it for any other purpose.

 \_\_\_\_ Ignore the calls. You respect the employee’s commitment to his family, and a short call every afternoon has no impact on his ability to get the job done.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:

DILEMMA #13:

You are a supervisor in the parks department. During a recent storm, one of your employees experienced significant property damage. More than a dozen trees were knocked over, and one tree hangs precipitously over his house. Several of the employees on your work team are planning to work this weekend to help the employee cut up and haul away the damaged trees. The employees have asked you if they can borrow a chainsaw from the department to use over the weekend. What would you do?

 \_\_\_\_ Let them use the chainsaw, but remind them that it needs to be returned first thing Monday morning.

 \_\_\_\_ Decline their request. The chainsaw is government property.

 \_\_\_\_ Other:



DILEMMA #14:

Because your job requires you to work on utilities projects all over the city, you have the use of a marked city car, which you park at your home overnight. Your son’s preschool is next to the public works office where your workday always begins. He is small enough to need a car seat, which you have secured in the back seat of this vehicle. This short time together is enjoyable to both you and your son, and you make sure to leave plenty of time to drop him off, so that you are never late for work. One morning you suddenly realize that you were supposed to bring breakfast treats to the preschool today. If you hurry, you can load up your son, stop by Target on the way, and still get him and yourself where you need to be. What should you do?

 \_\_\_\_ You should not be driving your son around in a city car in the first place.

 \_\_\_\_ The morning trip to preschool is okay because it does not involve any further driving and thus does not cost anyone anything. However, you should not make that detour to Target.

 \_\_\_\_ The well-being of the community’s children—yours and the others at the preschool—is something this city prides itself on and seeks to encourage in every way. Within limits—for instance, if Target is not too far out of the way—it is fine to use the car in all these ways.

DILEMMA #15:

Your city has a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media outlets. Your job is in the parks department and you have no interaction at work or outside work with the people responsible for the city’s work in social media. However, you enjoy spending personal time outside of work checking out social media and you sometimes check the city’s pages. One day you notice that a number of negative citizen comments have been posted about “the kind of kids” who hang out in one of the city parks. You sense racial overtones in these comments and angrily post a comment charging these citizens with racism. The next morning you tell your supervisor what you have seen and written online. Have you acted ethically?

 \_\_\_\_ No. Because you work for the parks department, you should not post comments related to parks department business, even on your own time.

 \_\_\_\_ Yes. You spoke out against racism, expressing a strongly held value of your city government, and you were honest with your supervisor about what you had done.

 \_\_\_\_ Other: