

Ethics and Professional Conduct

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Introduction

Ethical behavior has been part of my everyday work for more than 25 years, because the systems I manage hold sensitive personal data and process public money. As an application development manager for the State of Delaware, I have handled child support records, insurance licensing applications, and more than \$50 million a year in tax payments. In that setting, a single careless or dishonest decision could harm families, businesses, and public trust.

This reflection gives examples of how I practice confidentiality, respect, responsibility, dependability, and integrity at work, and explains how I would handle an ethical situation if one came up.

Examples of Ethical and Professional Behavior

Confidentiality

As team lead for the Delaware Electronic Child Support System (DECSS), I had access to highly sensitive information about parents, children, income, and court orders. I looked at records only when a support issue or data review required it, and I never discussed case details outside the people who needed to know. When reviewing data files from state partners, I followed the agency's security rules for how files were stored, shared, and deleted. Families trust the state with this information, and protecting it is a basic duty.

Respect

In every role, I have worked with people who see the same project very differently, from developers and vendors to agency leaders and front-line staff. I make a point of listening to users before changing the systems they rely on every day. When we replaced the Department of Insurance's old Access 97 check-receiving system, I treated staff concerns about learning a new tool as valid and built training and support into the rollout. Respect also means giving credit to my team and treating vendor partners professionally, even when I must hold them to their commitments.

Responsibility

As the Department of Insurance's primary data architect, I was responsible for backups, archives, and the integrity of financial records. I took that seriously by setting regular backup schedules and keeping records retained and recoverable. At DHSS, I reviewed federal certification and disaster recovery documentation so the system would keep running and stay compliant if something went wrong. Being responsible means planning for problems before they happen, not just reacting after.

Dependability

Other agencies and the public depend on the systems I manage, so meeting deadlines matters. At DelDOT, I directed the migration of every DMV application and database server before Windows 2003 reached end of life, which protected the systems from security risks. In November 2024, I delivered the relaunch of the Delaware State Parks website, a site the public uses daily for reservations and park information. People can count on me to finish what I commit to.

Integrity

The tax payment system I rebuilt applies more than \$50 million a year to Delaware's general fund. Integrity in that work meant every payment was recorded accurately, traceable, and reconciled, with no shortcuts to meet a deadline. Integrity also guides how I report project status. If a project is behind schedule or over budget, I tell leadership the truth early so they can make good decisions, instead of hiding the problem until it gets worse.

Handling a Workplace Ethical Situation

The situation

While managing the Delaware State Parks website redesign, I worked closely with an outside vendor. Suppose that, near the end of the project, a vendor representative offered me tickets to a sporting event, hinting that it would help with a future contract renewal. The project was going well, and the offer might seem harmless, but accepting it would create a conflict of interest. State employees must make vendor decisions

based on cost and quality alone, not personal benefit. The State also has guidelines for employees to follow with regards to accepting gifts.

How I would handle it

1. **Decline politely and clearly.** I would thank the vendor but explain that state ethics rules do not allow me to accept gifts from contractors. Saying no right away keeps the relationship professional and leaves no room for misunderstanding.
2. **Check the rules.** I would review Delaware's state employee code of conduct and my division's gift policy to confirm what applies.
3. **Report it to my supervisor.** Even though I declined, I would tell my supervisor so there is a record, and the agency can decide whether any follow-up is needed. Being open protects both me and the agency.
4. **Keep decisions objective.** When the contract came up for renewal, I would base my recommendation on documented performance, cost, and requirements, and I would ask a second person to review it.
5. **Stay professional with the vendor.** I would keep working with the representative respectfully. The goal is to protect the process, not to punish anyone.

What this shows

I would handle the situation this way because public employees are responsible for taxpayer money, and even the appearance of favoritism can damage trust. Acting quickly, being open, and following policy are the same principles I have used throughout my career in confidentiality, accuracy, and honest reporting.

Conclusion

Confidentiality, respect, responsibility, dependability, and integrity have guided my work in state government, and they will guide my own business too. When I launch my BBQ sauce company, ethics will mean honest labeling, accurate ingredient and allergen information, safe food handling backed by my ServSafe training, and fair dealings with

suppliers and customers. It will also mean keeping my business separate from my full-time job by doing it on my own time and with my own resources.

A good reputation takes years to build and one bad decision to lose. My experience has taught me to protect it in every choice I make.