

North West Residential Support Services Inc.
Policies & Procedures
CONFLICT OF INTEREST

NWRSS recognizes that a conflict of interest is any situation in which a person's personal interests, or interests which they owe to another party or person, and those of the organisation arise simultaneously or appear to clash.

It is inevitable that conflicts of interest occur and it is important to manage these in a proactive way. A conflict of interest is not about the integrity of the person concerned but about how we manage any potential to profit from a person's position, or for the person to be influenced by conflicting loyalties. NWRSS staff must not only behave in principled manner, but be seen to behave that way.

The perception of a conflict of interest can be just as damaging to the organisation's reputation so conflicts must be managed carefully.

The NWRSS Board, Management Team, staff and volunteers need to be alert to possible conflicts of interest that might occur and how they can minimise the effects. A key aspect of minimising the effects of conflicts of interest is to be open and transparent about possible situations when they arise.

Identifying a Conflict of Interest?

Defining what personal interest is can be a difficult. However, the key to this is the size and nature of the proposed transaction/conflict in relation to the number of people who will benefit. Essentially, the question is whether the decision to be taken will confer a direct tangible benefit to a specific staff member, specific group or volunteer which is exclusive to any one of them and which is not shared with others.

A conflict of interest can result in a range of potential inappropriate benefits flowing to a person, these can include:

- Direct financial gain or benefit, such as the award of a contract to another organisation in which the employee or volunteer has an interest and from which they will receive a financial benefit
- Indirect financial gain, such as employment by the charity of a spouse or partner of the employee or volunteer, where their finances are interdependent
- Conflict of loyalties, when an employee or volunteers' loyalty conflicts with a loyalty to another body or to a member of their family. For example, where an employee or volunteer is appointed by the local authority

If you have access to confidential information this might also create a potential for conflict of interest. Staff cannot use confidential information for personal gain.

Staff need to consider all transitions in their workplace and assess if they think that there might be a conflict of interest.

If someone lets their decision making be influenced by a conflict of interest, NWRSS might not get the best products/services at the best cost.

Sometimes a conflict will arise between the interest of a client and the organization (or a staff member). These conflicts are difficult and must be managed sensitively, but NWRSS is client focused so the interest of the client should take precedence in all situations.

Reporting Conflict of Interests

It is essential that all employees and volunteers are aware that conflicts of interests may exist and, if a situation arises where a conflict may develop, this must be disclosed to the General Manager immediately, and in turn to the Board, depending on the level of conflict and the potential gain to the person. In the case of the General Manager, disclosure should be made directly to the President of the Board.

When a conflict of interest is identified, the General Manager will determine the best course of action. For example, it might be necessary for the person in question to remove themselves from the decision making process when discussions concerning the interest in question occurs, or the person may no longer be able to work on a particular project if the conflict will remain.

Responsibilities

NWRSS is committed to developing and maintaining a culture of openness, honesty and accountability, and as such all employees and volunteers bear the responsibility of striving to be as transparent as possible. All employees and volunteers have the responsibility to inform the General Manager as soon as a conflict of interest or loyalty is identified.

Failing to disclose a potential conflict of interest could result in disciplinary action.

The management of conflicts of interest will ultimately lie with the General Manager, and all employees have a responsibility to inform the General Manager if a conflict of interest or loyalty arises, or is disclosed to them by another member of staff.

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