Every employee has the power to make Metropolitan a more ethical place to work.
Metropolitan’s Mission
Letter from the General Manager
Statement of Values
Circles of Influence
Employee as Family Member
Employee as Co-worker
Employee as Representative
Employee as Community Member
A Note on Ethical Conflict

what you’ll find inside…

Metropolitan’s Mission 4
Letter from the General Manager 6
Statement of Values 8
Circles of Influence 11
Employee as Family Member 13
Employee as Co-worker 19
Employee as Representative 25
Employee as Community Member 31
A Note on Ethical Conflict 36
Metropolitan Mission Statement

The mission of The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is to provide its service area with adequate and reliable supplies of high-quality water to meet present and future needs in an environmentally and economically responsible way.

Ethics Office Mission

Metropolitan is committed to the fulfillment of its mission in an ethical fashion. Ethical practice includes two levels: a level of compliance in which parties follow relevant laws, rules, regulations and policies, and a level of ethically ideal behavior in which parties strive to embody the spirit behind the rules, to incorporate the mission of Metropolitan in their daily work life, and to complete assignments with integrity and respect for all.

The Ethics Office provides leadership through enforcement of ethics-related laws, rules and mandates; education for Directors, employees and contractors about ethics as relevant to their work; and enhancement of the ethical culture of Metropolitan.
Dear Friends,

The essence of public service is an understanding that we are all part of something bigger than ourselves, and that our efforts are paving the way for those who will follow. Personally, I find this mission a rewarding one.

Being a public agency also means that our decisions and actions are open for review. That fact in itself serves as a kind of ethical splint to keep us on the straight and narrow.

As public employees, our personal ethics also feed into the culture of Metropolitan. This guidebook is meant only to remind us of what we already know, and to illuminate some areas that may be a little gray. As each of us helps to live out the core values that have made Metropolitan an exemplary agency for the past 76 years, we can be assured that its role as leader will proudly continue into the future.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Kightlinger
GENERAL MANAGER
In our pursuit of “Excellence” as responsible stewards, we are committed to the following values:

**Integrity**
We will conduct ourselves in an honest, fair, considerate and trustworthy manner as to demonstrate professionalism and ethical business practices.

**Stewardship**
We will be responsible for our actions and are accountable to the public and each other for providing service and value by demonstrating stewardship of:
- The public's health and safety
- The public's funds
- Our natural environment
- Our workforce resources
- Our region's water resources

**Diversity**
We value the differences that are derived from diverse backgrounds, experiences and cultures of the communities we serve, and we commit to actively seek and integrate that diversity into all levels of our workforce to ensure that our activities are based on creative and responsive viewpoints.
Open Communication
We will communicate in an open, timely, candid and shared manner, recognizing the value of diverse points of view. We will strive for continual improvement of all communication processes to inform, empower, build trust, create shared experiences and enable personal growth.

Teamwork
We value teamwork as a core philosophy in all our activities. Teamwork requires:

- Mutual respect and trust
- Participation of all individuals
- Sharing knowledge and information
- Support for one another

We will be successful as a Team when we succeed as individuals and we will be successful as individuals when we succeed as a Team.

Leadership
We value leaders and leadership skills. We encourage employees to be role models who inspire and motivate others. To foster an environment that develops skilled and satisfied leaders we need to:

- Be positive role models
- Walk the talk
- Encourage and reward leadership
- Support innovation/ remove barriers

- Foster teamwork
- Set clear goals, objectives and expectations
- Encourage open, honest and timely feedback

We will be successful as a Team when we succeed as individuals and we will be successful as individuals when we succeed as a Team.
The Metropolitan
employee as
family member
co-worker
representative
community member
Every employee has the power to make Metropolitan a more ethical place to work. Every employee has the power to make Metropolitan a less ethical place to work. The first step in acting ethically is in recognizing the power that we each have to affect the process and the people around us. Like a drop of water in the center of a pond, individual choices send out ripples whether we notice them or not.

Every employee at Metropolitan is more than a valued member of the Metropolitan team. We have families and friends, community activities and personal interests. This manual recognizes that employees have connections and commitments aside from the workplace. It explains the rationale behind rules and regulations that addresses employees’ multiple roles.

This manual does not repeat the policies that can be found in the State of California’s Political Reform Act of 1974, the regulations of the Fair Political Practices Commission, the Metropolitan Administrative Code and the Metropolitan Operating Policy. But, references to these documents are provided so that employees can easily find the rule, regulation, or policy that relates to the topic being discussed.

Scenarios that are included in this manual are meant to illustrate some of the questions and concerns received by the Ethics Office. In some cases, they are composites. In all cases, identifying information has been changed.
family member

circles of influence
It is a mark of *integrity*, one of Metropolitan’s core values, when people are able to recognize that they ought not be involved in a decision if there is even the appearance of a conflict of interests.
Metropolitan respects that employees have loyalties to their families, but employees’ family relationships almost always need to be kept separate from work relationships. When family members work together, and they get along well with one another, other employees can feel outnumbered by the double influence of the partnership. When family members work together, but have tension in their personal relationship, the strain can create difficulties for other employees.

Metropolitan addresses these concerns by having policies relating to nepotism. Members of the same family may work at Metropolitan. In fact, Metropolitan has a rich tradition that involves children and siblings and life partners of employees working for Metropolitan. However, there are limitations in how family members may work at Metropolitan.

Family members are not allowed to supervise one another, have the same immediate supervisor or work together if the placement has the potential of creating problems for other employees or for the relatives. Family members may not be involved in an evaluation or an audit of one another.

---

Scenario 1

Sally works as an engineer in Water System Operations. She hears that External Affairs is looking for a Landscape Architect Consultant to work with the California Friendly Outdoor Conservation Program. She thinks that her brother, Bob, would be perfect. Bob finds the Request for Proposal on the Metropolitan Web site and submits his proposal. Is it a conflict of interest for Sally if Metropolitan awards the contract to her brother?

As Sally has no involvement in the selection, negotiation or award process, there is no conflict of interest.

---

Scenario 2

Tanya’s ex-husband is applying for a supervisory job in Tanya’s workgroup. Tanya is, not surprisingly, nervous about her ex-husband becoming her boss. She realizes that the nepotism policy, which prevents relatives from supervising one another, makes no mention of previous spouses.

This is one of those occasions where management has to weigh the best interests of the workgroup and the company because policy is not explicitly clear. Managers may consider a number of factors regarding hiring and job placement, including how the choice of a particular person will impact co-workers and their supervisory performance. In this case, it is in the best interest of the workgroup, including Tanya and her ex-husband, that the two not be in a supervisory relationship.
In addition, Department Heads may change job assignments of related employees to protect the safety and morale of the workforce. These rules recognize that the best person to decide if a family-work partnership is serving the best interests of Metropolitan is someone outside of that partnership.

In addition, employees are not allowed to use their work connection at Metropolitan as a way of helping out their family members. Metropolitan may contract with or award a grant to an immediate relative of an employee, but only if that employee has not had any influence over the award or will have any influence over the administration of that contract or grant. Employees may not receive any grant or contract from Metropolitan.

Metropolitan employees may not recommend their relatives for employment with Metropolitan contractors or by others who they deal with on behalf of Metropolitan.

Of course, family relationships are not the only personal connections that can get in the way of an employee’s good work. Our individual likes and dislikes should not get in the way of doing our jobs. Employees are expected to treat everyone fairly and not give special treatment to any person or group.

---

1 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 9. Nepotism
2 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 2. Conflict of Interest
3 Admin. Code § 7105
4 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 1. Conflict of Interest
5 Admin. Code § 7103
6 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 1. Conflict of Interest
7 Admin. Code § 7103.
Immediate relatives under the Metropolitan Administrative Code §7105(b) include: Spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, parent-in-law, brother, sister, stepparent, stepchild, grandparent or grandchild.

Employees are expected to be aware of any time in which their personal interests and Metropolitan’s interests might be in conflict or might be too closely aligned for them to put self-interest aside. Employees are required to notify their supervisors and not take any action with respect to decisions that involve conflicts or overlapping interests. Employees may not exercise any decision-making power with respect to any transaction, contract, grant or sale to which Metropolitan is a party and in which the employee or an immediate relative has a financial interest or is an officer or employee. It is a mark of integrity, one of Metropolitan’s core values, when people are able to recognize that they ought not be involved in a decision if there is even the appearance of conflict.

Scenario 3

Bridget’s domestic partner is president of Stuff R Us, which sells office supplies. While negotiating a contract with Metropolitan, the representative from Quality Construction Company mentions to Bridget, a buyer in Metropolitan’s Purchasing Department, that Quality needs office supplies. Bridget thinks that Stuff R Us is just what Quality needs.

Bridget is prohibited from recommending Stuff R Us to Quality because her domestic partner is the supply company’s president. The Quality representative may reasonably wonder if his decision whether or not to do business with Stuff R Us will impact his relationship with Metropolitan. The conflict of interest prohibitions are intended to protect employees and contractors from difficult dual relationships.

Scenario 4

Joe’s stepbrother has been assigned to his workgroup. They have different team managers and different section managers, and even different shifts. Nevertheless, they occasionally find themselves working on the same job at the same time.

This job assignment may be approved as long as the stepbrothers working together do not have the potential to create an adverse impact on supervision, safety or morale, and as long as the work relationship does not create potential conflicts of interest or hazards for the relatives. This is the kind of situation in which the relatives or others involved in their workgroup need to let management know if there are any issues of concern.
The employee as co-worker

Metropolitan values the diversity of our workforce. Metropolitan’s commitment to diversity as a core value encourages us to recognize the strength that all differences bring to our choices and process.
Lee’s team had more than enough work and this was the second week that his co-worker, Bob, was missing in action. Bob and the Team Manager were good friends. Why should Bob get time off when the rest of them were stretched to the limit? Lee e-mailed the Ethics Officer about his concern.

It took just a phone conversation for the Ethics Officer and Team Manager to determine that the Team Manager had staggered work and vacation times to meet a current need. Unfortunately, she hadn’t explained her decision to the team, which lead to the perception of special treatment. The Team Manager met with the team to explain the staggered schedules. That settled, they turned their attention to how they could best cope with the increased workload.

An employee knew that a co-worker violated Metropolitan policies, but saw that she was transferred with no apparent disciplinary action taken. As a result, some members of the workgroup believed that rules were applied selectively.

In this particular case, the transfer, along with a week’s unpaid leave, was part of the disciplinary action. As personnel matters are confidential, it is rare that co-workers really know the extent of managerial action or the extenuating circumstances that are considered in determining which disciplinary actions are appropriate. Employees who are privy to just part of the story may jump to conclusions. Metropolitan is committed to fair and consistent treatment of employees regardless of position.

Scenario 1

Lee’s team had more than enough work and this was the second week that his co-worker, Bob, was missing in action. Bob and the Team Manager were good friends. Why should Bob get time off when the rest of them were stretched to the limit? Lee e-mailed the Ethics Officer about his concern.

It took just a phone conversation for the Ethics Officer and Team Manager to determine that the Team Manager had staggered work and vacation times to meet a current need. Unfortunately, she hadn’t explained her decision to the team, which lead to the perception of special treatment. The Team Manager met with the team to explain the staggered schedules. That settled, they turned their attention to how they could best cope with the increased workload.

Scenario 2

An employee knew that a co-worker violated Metropolitan policies, but saw that she was transferred with no apparent disciplinary action taken. As a result, some members of the workgroup believed that rules were applied selectively.

In this particular case, the transfer, along with a week’s unpaid leave, was part of the disciplinary action. As personnel matters are confidential, it is rare that co-workers really know the extent of managerial action or the extenuating circumstances that are considered in determining which disciplinary actions are appropriate. Employees who are privy to just part of the story may jump to conclusions. Metropolitan is committed to fair and consistent treatment of employees regardless of position.
Metropolitan’s Board of Directors makes policy. The General Manager, General Counsel, General Auditor and the Ethics Officer are responsible for implementing policy in the day-to-day operations. Except for statements in public meetings, Directors are prohibited from communicating with employees regarding the selection of vendors, contractors, consultants, or other business entities for specific procurement of goods or services. However, Directors and employees are free to communicate with one another on policy and general matters.

The Ethics Office exists to answer questions as well as to receive expressions of concern. Employees are strongly encouraged to use the Ethics Office as a sounding board when they are concerned about their intended or past actions or the actions of others. Policy forbids employees from doing anything to interfere with someone reporting a concern to the Ethics Office or other appropriate agency. No one may retaliate or threaten a reprisal against an employee who reports a concern. Retaliation itself is a violation of the Ethics Policy.

Employees should come to the Ethics Office with concerns even if they are not completely certain that a violation of policy has taken place. Sometimes a concern expressed to the Ethics Office is a misunderstanding or a mistake. These are easily resolved. However, malicious or fabricated allegations are not tolerated. Intentional false allegations can cause harm to another person’s reputation and/or feelings, and may result in disciplinary action.

---

14 Admin. Code § 7106
15 Admin. Code §§ 7109 and 7113
16 Admin. Code §§ 7109 and 7110
17 HR Operating Policy, H-03, Responsibilities and Admin. Code § 7110
18 HR Operating Policy, H-03, Responsibilities
Roger felt unfairly blamed when his subordinate acted inappropriately. He didn’t think that he should be in trouble for an act he could not control.

Roger called the Ethics Office. The Ethics Office checked in with Roger’s supervisor who then really read Roger the riot act. “We handle our own problems,” the supervisor said.

The supervisor was wrong in objecting to Roger contacting the Ethics Office, regardless of the situation. No one should ever interfere with an employee who goes to the Ethics Office with a concern. Preventing employees from reporting concerns or retaliating against them for contacting the Ethics Office is, in itself, a violation of the Ethics Policy. The group manager made this policy clear to Roger’s supervisor. The supervisor apologized and Roger felt that no retaliation took place.

Maria thought about calling the Ethics Office for weeks. She was uncomfortable with what was going on in the facility, but couldn’t decide if the problem really counted as an ethics concern. Maybe she was just being too sensitive. Finally she called and talked to the Ethics Educator. She left that conversation with new ideas of how to discuss her concerns with her supervisor and co-workers.

Employees don’t have to be certain that an ethical violation has taken place to call the Ethics Office. The Ethics Office staff are available for informal conversations to help employees decide how best to deal with their uncertainties and to assist employees who decide to file ethics concerns.
Stewardship, one of Metropolitan’s core values, encourages all employees to take responsibility for Metropolitan and all of the varied components that make up the Metropolitan Water District.
As employees perform their duties, the quality of their work ripples out to influence Metropolitan’s mission and its reputation. Whatever the job description, employees of Metropolitan share in a responsibility to protect Metropolitan, its property and resources. Stewardship, one of Metropolitan’s core values, encourages all employees to take responsibility for Metropolitan, and all of the varied components that make up the Metropolitan Water District. We all have a stake in Metropolitan’s success in fulfilling its mission; we all have the responsibility to protect the process that leads to that success.

Nothing belonging to Metropolitan should be used for personal convenience or profit. Employee time should be protected as well. No one may use Metropolitan’s seal, trademark, stationery, or other representation of Metropolitan unless that use is related to official business. However, employees must also make clear when they are representing Metropolitan. It is never okay to mislead the public regarding Metropolitan’s identity, funding, or purpose.

Scenario 1

Carlos noticed a Metropolitan fleet car parked in several locations near his home. He didn’t know who the car was assigned to, but he saw it at the grocery store, the train station, and even at the casino. He didn’t think this was an appropriate use of Metropolitan’s resources. Besides, it didn’t look good to see a government car in the casino parking lot. He contacted the Ethics Office.

The Ethics Officer reviewed the car assignment with the Fleet Manager and Group Manager. The user had a long-term vehicle assignment. Nevertheless, Metropolitan vehicles are intended for approved use only. They are not to be used for the personal convenience of the employee. This was communicated to the employee.

---

19 Admin. Code § 7104
20 Admin. Code § 7108
21 Admin. Code § 7112
All employees have the responsibility of making sure that the policies are followed.

Employees may handle confidential information through their work at Metropolitan. Confidential information may not be used for personal advantage or profit or be disclosed without permission from the Board of Directors or General Counsel.

When employees spend their own money doing Metropolitan work, they are eligible for reimbursement. However, all expenses, including meals, must be accompanied by a receipt and submitted in a timely fashion.

As representatives of Metropolitan, employees work to achieve Metropolitan’s interest, never their own or another’s special interest. Employees may not accept a reward or gift in exchange for doing Metropolitan’s work. Employees who are required to file statements of economic interest have further limitations on the receipt of gifts.

Employees may not use their positions with Metropolitan to reward friends or give others special access. Policies are in place to make sure that the procurement of goods, services, and contractors, as well as the hiring of personnel, is completed with fairness to everyone involved. All employees have the responsibility of making sure that the policies are followed.

Scenario

Cynthia was glad to see that Mary’s contract was renewed. She was not involved in the contract approval process, so the renewal was a nice surprise for both of them. The two had worked together on so many projects that they had become friends. They got together sometimes on the weekends in addition to the time that they spent during the workweek.

It’s not unusual for people who share professional interests or work experiences to become friends. There is nothing wrong with employees becoming friends with contractors. Nor is there anything wrong if Metropolitan contracts with people who share professional interests and work experiences.

As representatives of Metropolitan, employees work to achieve Metropolitan’s interest, never their own or another’s special interest. Contractors are not ‘on the clock’ when they are socializing with employees and employees may not accept gifts from contractors or anyone else for doing Metropolitan’s work.
Scenario 3

John, who serves on the program committee of a national professional association, was impressed with the in-depth understanding of computer security that Doug, an Metropolitan employee, demonstrated. John suggested that Doug would be a good speaker for the upcoming conference. Doug received an invitation to speak at the conference in Hawaii, with all expenses paid by the professional organization.

As long as Doug can work out the scheduling with his supervisor, this is an opportunity for him to share his expertise with his peers and might well be an opportunity for him to gain professional development that would be beneficial to Metropolitan. His expenses may be paid by the professional organization. He may not receive an honorarium for his speech because the topic relates to his work at Metropolitan. However, if his supervisor determines that Doug’s participation in the conference does not provide value to Metropolitan, Doug would need to take annual leave to participate, as he would be required if he wanted to participate in other community activities. (Note: Under Metropolitan’s Conflict of Interest Code, Doug cannot receive an honorarium for his speech if he is a designated employee. If he is not a designated employee, he can receive an honorarium for a speech given on his personal time.)

Scenario 4

Louis and Lynn attended a software demonstration on behalf of Metropolitan. Other agencies and corporations had representatives there to listen to the software company’s spiel as well. As they flipped through the written materials, waiting for the presentation to begin, they saw that each of them had received a $100 gift card for Home Depot. They discussed whether to keep the gift cards personally or to hand them over to their supervisor when they returned to the office.

Lynn and Louis should return the gift cards to the software company representative immediately. Metropolitan employees are never allowed to accept gifts for doing Metropolitan’s work. Even accepting the gift cards to use on behalf of Metropolitan is problematic. When it comes time to decide if Metropolitan should purchase this software, it must be clear to the company as well as to everyone involved in the decision that there is no influence aside from the quality of the product.
The employee as community member

Employees demonstrate leadership, one of Metropolitan’s core values, in their commitment to society on and off the job.
Paul, a Metropolitan employee, was taking classes to finish his engineering degree. He was required to pose an engineering dilemma as a final project for the class. As luck would have it, his team at Metropolitan had been struggling with just the kind of problem that he needed for class. He decided to pose the dilemma as a final project for his class. He interviewed each of his co-workers to make sure that he understood how each person had reasoned out the problem.

Working at a public agency is a good reminder that, as community members, we all have the power and the responsibility to promote the public good.

Employees may be compensated for work outside of Metropolitan, but the outside work must be done on the employees’ own time and should not affect their job performance for Metropolitan. All employees are held to the same performance standards regardless of outside activities. 47

47 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 12.

Involvement in Community or Political Activities

Scenario 1

Paul, a Metropolitan employee, was taking classes to finish his engineering degree. He was required to pose an engineering dilemma as a final project for the class. As luck would have it, his team at Metropolitan had been struggling with just the kind of problem that he needed for class. He decided to present the real-life problem and give his classmates and instructor a taste of how these issues are handled in the real world. He interviewed each of his co-workers to make sure that he understood how each person had reasoned out the problem.
Their outside work should not create, or appear to create, a conflict of interests with Metropolitan.28 For example, employees should be careful when their external activities overlap with their Metropolitan duties. Metropolitan employees may not separately perform any services for a Metropolitan contractor, for someone who has done business with Metropolitan in the previous 12 months or who can reasonably expect to do so in the foreseeable future. Employees may not enter into an agreement that involves advising any agency or other entity on matters related to their regular duties.29 Employees should not appear to be in competition with Metropolitan.30

To guard against the appearance of a conflict and to alert the organization to any potential interference with Metropolitan duties, employees should let their supervisors know about outside activities.31 Open communication, one of Metropolitan’s core values, encourages employees to share information with their supervisor that would lead to efficient operations. Supervisors may approve occasional requests for time off due to an employee’s outside activities.32 However, the approval of outside activities does not include allowing the use of Metropolitan materials or property.33

Scenario 2

Jen found her work environment good for group work, but not quiet enough for projects that involved her deep individual concentration. She took those projects home after making the investment to add needed software on her computer. Sometimes, at the completion of such assignments, she wondered whether what she produced belonged to Metropolitan or to her. She never asked for additional compensation for her at-home work activities.

Any work performed for Metropolitan or in relation to a person’s job duties at Metropolitan belongs to Metropolitan, regardless of where the work is done. The work is either in the public domain or the intellectual property of Metropolitan regardless of where or when the work was completed. The issue of working at home is a matter for Jen’s manager to address. Employees who are exempt from overtime pay may need to complete work outside regular business hours. However, employees subject to overtime pay have a right to receive pay for overtime work that has been approved ahead of time by their manager.
Outside work should not cause unfavorable criticism of Metropolitan.34

Employees are encouraged to continue their education through Metropolitan's tuition reimbursement program. But, learning activities, like outside work activities, should be completed outside of Metropolitan work time.35 Metropolitan provides rich opportunities for research, but all questions or surveys outside of the ordinary course of business need to be approved by the General Manager’s Office and Ethics Office. A copy of the resulting paper, project or presentation will be kept on file in the Ethics Office.36

Employees demonstrate leadership, one of Metropolitan’s core values, in their commitment to society on and off the job.

Metropolitan employees are encouraged to be politically active as well. However, they are prohibited from soliciting political funds or contributions at Metropolitan facilities.37

---

**Scenario 3**

Lucille didn’t know much about how government worked when she came to work for Metropolitan, but five years into her job, she had become passionate about public process. After speaking before her City Council on a number of issues, she ran for office and was elected to the City Council. Other City Council members also had full-time employment, so Lucille wasn’t too worried about any interference with her work at Metropolitan.

Metropolitan employees are encouraged to be active citizens and leaders in the community. Lucille and her supervisor should determine when changes in her schedule can be made to accommodate her work on the City Council. However, Lucille must be careful not to use Metropolitan time or assets in fulfilling her duties of public office, and must be careful not to use her public office in influencing her work at Metropolitan.

---

**Scenario 4**

Sydney, an engineer employed by Metropolitan, loves her job, but also considers herself an environmental activist. Usually, she finds herself engaged in letter-writing campaigns and demonstrations to protect endangered species. The organization that she belongs to sometimes takes stands that are different from those taken by Metropolitan. Recently she winced when she heard another member refer to her by saying, “See, even the Metropolitan engineer agrees with us.”

Metropolitan employees are free to engage in advocacy that express their own convictions, but should be vigilant in communicating that they are expressing their personal views, and not those of Metropolitan. In addition, employees should be aware that they may not participate in outside work activities that bring discredit to Metropolitan or that impair public confidence in Metropolitan’s integrity.

---

34 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 4. Outside Work and Educational Activities
35 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 5. Outside Work and Educational Activities
36 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 6. Outside Work and Educational Activities
37 Admin. Code § 7108
38 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 7. Outside Work and Educational Activities
39 Metropolitan Operating Policy, H-03, 8. Outside Work and Educational Activities
Iron Mountain
PUMPING PLANT

Eagle Mountain
PUMPING PLANT
The mission of Metropolitan is a guiding light for employees and directors. Generally speaking, everyone at Metropolitan has consistent goals. Regardless of one's position at Metropolitan, we all share commitment to the mission and to Metropolitan's core values: integrity, stewardship, diversity, leadership, open communication, and teamwork. The mission focuses our daily activity as well as Metropolitan's long-term strategic planning. Metropolitan’s core values provide guideposts for how we can best accomplish the mission.

But interests, even within Metropolitan, can appear to be at odds. Sometimes the conflict is between individual employees. Sometimes, it can feel like management and employees are at war with one another. Other times, misunderstandings arise between directors and employees. Tempers flare, miscommunication occurs, rumors run rampant. Many wonder how trust can ever be built again.
Conflict, though uncomfortable, is an opportunity. We can each make the choice to handle conflict in ways that sustain relationships or in ways that destroy them. Here are some guidelines for dealing with conflict and disagreements in an ethical fashion:

- Remember that participants share the goal of maintaining a working relationship after the conflict is over. Keeping the need to maintain a long-term relationship in mind can help individuals refrain from saying or doing things that might make it difficult to work together in the future.

- Keep focus on the real problem. It is easy to get sidetracked. Adding on complaints is easier than solving a single problem. If there is truly more than one issue that needs to be resolved, parties should agree on the list of issues and the priority in terms of discussion. If it is difficult to reach agreement on priority, the least powerful party should determine the order. If there is disagreement about which party is most powerful, choose who determines the order by coin toss or other equally arbitrary means. The important thing is for parties to stay focused on one issue at a time and get started working toward that issue's resolution.

- Let each participant describe his or her desirable outcome. Even if the desirable outcomes initially seem very far apart, getting clear on what the other wants provides the foundation for finding a solution.

- Articulate areas of agreement, don’t hesitate to involve a neutral third-party to mediate, keep an open mind, and be prepared to work hard on the goal of finding a mutually agreeable solution. Dealing with conflict is rarely fun, but creating a solution is often satisfying.

What if your opponent is less willing than you are to argue ethically?

It may be tempting to respond to unethical behavior with more of the same. Don’t give in! Just as someone acting unethically has the power to drag down the level of the debate, someone determined to behave ethically has the power to keep the conflict civil and goal-oriented.
Actions say more about who we are than our words ever can.

Have a concern?

Contact Metropolitan’s Ethics Office

Deena Ghaly, Ethics Officer
Office: 213-217-5521
E-mail: dgaly@mwdh2o.com

Jeffrey Cable, Ethics Educator
Office: 213-217-5743
E-mail: jncable@mwdh2o.com

Edith Yamasaki, Senior Administrative Analyst
Office: 213-217-5622
E-mail: eyamasaki@mwdh2o.com

Fax: 213-217-7809

The Network

888-228-7794
The Network is an independent hotline that accepts concerns about Metropolitan Directors, employees and contractors. Anonymous calls are accepted.

THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Office: 700 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Mailing Address: Box 54153, Los Angeles, CA 90054-0153
www.mwdh2o.com ethics@mwdh2o.com

©Metropolitan Water District, June 2007

Thanks to members of the Ethics Outreach Committee for comments and corrections.
Grace Chan
Melani Gil de Montes
Paula Hubbard
Habto Kassa
Chris Neal
Silvia Perez
Dannaline-Mimi Pham
Joe Pomento
Janice Richardson
Debra Sass
Barbara Siewert

Design by: studio L

The Network

888-228-7794
The Network is an independent hotline that accepts concerns about Metropolitan Directors, employees and contractors. Anonymous calls are accepted.
Promote the mission
Diversity
Representative
Stewardship
Community
member
Leadership
Integrity
Professional
Support Others