

**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**DIVISION OF HEALTH SCIENCES**  
**EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT**

# Introduction

This **CODE OF CONDUCT** should guide the decision-making, behavior and performance of members of East Carolina University Division of Health Sciences (ECU-DHS). The Chancellor, Vice Chancellor of ECU-DHS, and the Deans of the School of Dental Medicine, Brody School of Medicine, the College of Nursing, and the College of Allied Health Sciences have approved this Code of Conduct. All members of the ECU-DHS community are bound by its provisions.

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# **EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF HEALTH SCIENCES**

## **EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF HEALTH SCIENCES (ECU-DHS) CORE VALUES**

As part of its multifaceted public mission, ECU-DHS continually strives for excellence in education, research, clinical practice, scholarship, and community service. Through its dynamic interdisciplinary and intra-professional environment, ECU-DHS inspires the spirit of inquiry, initiative, and cooperation among faculty, employees, students, volunteers, and other members of the ECU-DHS community. ECUDHS strives to be a state, national, and international leader in health care, education, research, and technology development. (The Code applies to all employees in ECU-DHS, even those who may have dual status, e.g. student employees. Residents who receive stipends from constituent schools would likely be considered employees and are covered by the Code. Questions regarding ambiguity of employment status, may be directed to the Office of Institutional Integrity.)

As part of that vision, the ECU-DHS community is committed to the following core values:

- Achieving excellence in all we do.
- Providing quality health care in a compassionate and culturally sensitive manner.
- Creating new knowledge through human, animal, basic, and applied research and innovation in health and biomedical sciences.
- Providing the highest-quality education for the next generation of health care professionals, scientists, and educators.
- Providing the highest-quality education for continued professional growth and development.
- Fostering a spirit of collegiality and integrity.
- Advocating for fair and equitable access to health care.
- Maintaining a high level of accountability and stewardship for the responsible use of resources.
- Encouraging, creating, and respecting diversity within ECU-DHS.
- Fostering an environment of open, honest, and respectful communication throughout the ECUDHS community.
- Standing as a role model for service to the community.
- Stimulating and nurturing the intellectual creativity of the ECU-DHS community.
- Complying with all federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ECU policies.
- Employees will be asked to reaffirm these core values in this Code annually.

## **I. PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS members are honest, ethical, and respectful. We exemplify personal integrity and ethical behavior.**

- We continually strive to be honest, ethical and respectful at all times, regardless of whether a specific law, ECU-DHS and ECU policy, regulation, or procedure covers the situation.
- We comply with all applicable laws and ECU-DHS and ECU policies and procedures.
- We are accountable for the quality of our job performance and accept personal responsibility for maintaining our integrity when we represent ECU-DHS.
- We do not abuse the power and authority we might have based on our title or position.
- We uphold standards of professional and ethical practice in all ECU-DHS facilities and programs.
- We have a responsibility to conduct activities and use funds and resources in a responsible and ethical manner.

**ECU-DHS endorses the professional standards and requirements that are applicable to the clinical, research, academic, administrative and other professions comprising the ECUDHS community.**

- We observe the standards of our respective professions.
- We allow only qualified individuals to practice, teach and conduct research.
- We exercise good judgment and professional objectivity.
- We resolve professional differences of opinion through ethical discussions and scholarly debate, which are conducted in an honest and respectful manner.

## **II. PATIENT CARE PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS is committed to providing compassionate, appropriate, high-quality, cost effective care in a manner that is sensitive to our patients' individuality, personal beliefs, and culture while protecting patient rights, privacy, and confidentiality.**

- We pursue excellence in delivering high-quality health care to our patients in a responsible, reliable and cost-effective manner. We respond to individual, family, and community health care needs and advocate for access to equitable and appropriate health care.
- We honor the wishes and desires of our patients, and, when appropriate their families, in our plan of care. We recognize the importance of honest disclosure and take note of deficiencies and errors, even those that may seem small or insignificant.

- We help foster an environment that is open to individual improvement and system changes by taking prompt action to report deficiencies and errors to the appropriate individual in our department or work unit in accordance with ECU policies and pertinent professional standards.
- We carefully maintain patient records and documentation to comply with legal guidelines and ethical codes, and ensure that all whom we supervise do the same.
- We protect patient privacy and respect the confidentiality of health information.

### **III. RESEARCH PRINCIPLES**

**The integrity of ECU-DHS’s researchers and ECU-DHS’s commitment to the ethical conduct of research are critical to the university’s research mission.**

- We respect human and animal research participants and are committed to their ethical and humane treatment.
- We comply with ECU-DHS and ECU policies, rules and regulations regarding the conduct of research and the administration of sponsored projects.
- We protect human research participants, laboratory personnel, laboratory animals, and scientific integrity by first securing appropriate institutional review and approval for any research involving human or animal subjects.
- We adhere to approved research protocols and obtain prospective approval of any changes in those protocols.
- We engage human research participants or their appropriate representatives in a meaningful informed consent process.
- We protect the scientific integrity and unbiased reporting of our research.
- Our research investigators comply with all stated terms and conditions of grant awards to, and contracts with, ECU and ensure proper recording and charging of all costs to appropriate accounts.
- We are committed to reporting suspicions of research misconduct to the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee or other appropriate official or office.

### **IV. ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS provides outstanding educational opportunities for those who will be tomorrow’s health care professionals, scientists, managers, and educators.**

- Those of us who teach create and nurture a collegial environment in which students are valued and respected, and knowledge is imparted in an accurate, thorough, and stimulating manner. Our students will be encouraged to engage in continual scientific and intellectual inquiry and become lifelong learners.

**ECU-DHS places a high value on intellectual curiosity, academic freedom and integrity, and outstanding professional preparation.**

- Those of us who teach recognize the responsibility we have to foster our students' professional growth and ethical behavior. We always treat students with respect, protect our students' privacy, and ensure a safe and equitable learning environment where students feel safe to express opinions and ask questions. We will carefully weigh the credentials of each candidate for graduation, ensuring that only those who have exhibited the appropriate level of expertise and demonstrated that they are deserving of the public's trust are allowed to graduate.
- We abide by the principles and guidance outlined in Part V of the Faculty Manual entitled "Academic Freedom and Statement of Professional Ethics".

**V. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS protects the private and confidential information that is provided by its faculty, employees, students, volunteers, and other members of the ECU-DHS community.**

- We never access confidential, private, or personal information about members of the ECU-DHS community unless required as part of the responsibilities associated with our job.

**ECU-DHS's patients and research participants entrust privacy and personal health information to ECU-DHS employees, students, and volunteers. ECU-DHS earns this trust through adherence to confidentiality practices as outlined in federal and state laws and regulations and ECU's own privacy and security policies.**

- We are deeply committed to the privacy and security of health information and other restricted information entrusted to us by our patients and research participants.
- Information regarding patients and research trial participants, students and employees, is confidential. We only share this information with those who have a legitimate need to know and who are authorized to receive such information.
- We only access health information as necessary to perform our job or patient care responsibilities at ECU-DHS.

**VI. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PRINCIPLES**

**A hallmark of health and research universities is a commitment to sharing ideas, research findings, and the products of intellectual pursuits with the broader academic community. When research results in potentially commercializable technologies, ECU-DHS tries to ensure that the technology is developed through appropriate relationships with industry.**

- We commonly share the products of our professional activity with others in the spirit of academic freedom and encourage this collegial interchange.

- When we create intellectual property that may have commercial value, we recognize ECU’s potential ownership interest and that ECU may assert its ownership rights to the intellectual property. We abide by ECU policies related to these issues.

## **VII. DIVERSITY, EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, AND RESPECT AT THE UNIVERSITY PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS is committed to policies of diversity and equal opportunity. Diversity is an asset that enhances creativity, productivity, and effectiveness, helping us realize our vision of being a local, regional, and national leader in health care, education, research, and technology.**

- ECU-DHS encourages and respects diversity within the university.
- ECU-DHS prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, marital status, age, veteran’s status, genetic information, or any other status protected by law, regulation or policies of ECU.
- Our actions support the university’s pursuit of equity and diversity in patient care, education, research, and employment.

**ECU-DHS values an environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, disrespectful behavior, and violence.**

- We do not engage in degrading jokes, slurs, bigotry, physical or verbal intimidation, unwelcome sexual advances, or other disrespectful conduct when interacting with co-workers, students, patients, volunteers, or visitors.
- We help create an environment at ECU-DHS in which we can openly discuss concerns about diversity and equal opportunity without fear of retaliation or retribution, especially from those in positions of power and influence.
- If we experience or observe any form of prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment, violence, or other unethical or disrespectful behavior or activities, we will take appropriate action and follow the reporting procedure outlined in university policy including talking with our supervisor, manager, an integrity officer, the Office of Equity and Diversity, Human Resources, or other suitable office or person.

**ECU-DHS fosters a spirit of collegiality and open, honest, and respectful communication among all members of the ECU-DHS community.**

- We treat everyone--our patients, visitors, and other members of the ECU-DHS community--with respect and dignity. We value courteous, honest, and respectful verbal and nonverbal interpersonal behavior. Through our words and actions we create a professional work environment that should be apparent to employees, patients, students, volunteers, and visitors.
- We respect differences of opinion and address conflicts and concerns in a professional manner and recognize that honest disagreement expressed appropriately is not disrespectful.



- We refer significant disputes to appropriate supervisors, managers, or department or university personnel for resolution.
- We share and expect to receive constructive feedback or other corrective action or discipline privately and in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- We create an environment in which members of the ECU-DHS community may raise ethical and compliance concerns and openly discuss those concerns without fear of retaliation.

## **VIII. PUBLIC INTERACTIONS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES PRINCIPLES**

- **ECU-DHS recognizes the important role it plays as a member of a broader community and supports the community and civic involvement of its employees**
- We work with the university to foster a positive relationship with local, state, and national communities.
- We recognize that every public interaction, statement, and acknowledgement by a member of the ECU-DHS community has the potential to enhance or harm the reputation and integrity of the university and those who are associated with it.
- We understand that ECU-DHS has delegated the responsibility of coordinating its public contacts and messages to University Communication, Public Affairs and Marketing.

## **IX. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES PRINCIPLES**

**We rely on state law, regulation and university policy to provide guidance for the political activities of ECU-DHS employees.**

- We do not use our ECU-DHS titles or affiliation to support or oppose a candidate or issue on a ballot.
- We understand our right as members of the ECU-DHS community to express our personal opinions; however, we do not pursue or advocate for our personal political preferences or activities while at work.
- We avoid giving the impression that we are speaking for ECU-DHS while involved in our personal political activities.
- We do not use ECU-DHS resources, such as stationery, telephones, time, or e-mail for engaging in political activities unless we are authorized to do so by our supervisors and managers.
- No public employee shall solicit any money, influence, service or other thing of value or otherwise promote or oppose any political committee or promote or oppose the nomination or election of a candidate, the gathering of signatures on an initiative, referendum or recall petition, the adoption of a measure or the recall of a public office holder while on the job during working hours and/or using any university resource.

## **X. PUBLIC ACCESS TO ECU-DHS INFORMATION PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS complies with all laws, regulations, and university policies regarding requests for information about activities of the university, or its employees, students, volunteers, patients or research subjects, carefully balancing privacy rights with the public's interest.**

- We work collaboratively with University Communications, Public Affairs & Marketing to share our activities and accomplishments with other members of the ECU-DHS community, as well as with the public through traditional and electronic media.
- We ensure the information we provide Communications & Marketing and representatives of the media is accurate and that our role is honestly portrayed.
- We adhere to the guidelines that have been developed and seek advice, so we can avoid confusion and enhance our common mission.

## **XI. PERSONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS provides and promotes a healthy, safe environment for faculty, employees, students, volunteers, patients, and visitors.**

- We protect the health and safety of members of the ECU-DHS community, ECU-DHS's physical environment, and the environmental impact of our activities on the broader community.
- We uphold all laws, regulations and policies related to the safe use of ECU-DHS buildings, laboratory spaces, chemicals, drugs, equipment, and products.
- We take the necessary steps and precautions to safely perform our duties and protect our coworkers, students, volunteers, patients and visitors.
- We perform our duties and protect others in the ECU-DHS community by using sound safety practices, including coming to ECU-DHS free from the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs.
- We promote a healthy environment by following the Tobacco Free policy and abstaining from smoking or using other tobacco products at ECU-DHS.

## **XII. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BILLING PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS is accountable for the money and other resources it receives for patient care, research, and education.**

- We will adhere to applicable laws and ECU policies as we protect, spend, and properly account for money and resources with which we are entrusted.
- We do not make or accept payments or decisions that others may view as bribes, kickbacks or inducements to influence an administrative, business, professional or clinical decision.
- We will abide by federal law, ECU policy, and regulatory agency rules in expending and accounting for grant and contract funds.

- We maintain adequate internal controls and procedures for accurate financial reporting and regularly reassess our internal control structure.

### **XIII. PREVENTING AND DETECTING FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE PRINCIPLES**

A number of federal and state laws are designed to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse in government health care programs. ECU and ECU-DHS have in place policies and procedures to avert violations of the law and to discover and remedy those violations when they occur.

#### **ECU-DHS bills only in accordance with applicable laws, third-party payer requirements, and fair and ethical billing practices.**

- We only bill for services actually rendered. We accurately code these services to ensure both proper billing and the integrity of the appropriate databases.
- We accurately charge and document for the health care services we provide, and we comply with all federal, state, and private payer requirements.
- We base patient bills on federal, state, and third-party payer requirements, as well as fair and ethical billing practices.
- We refer billing questions and potential billing discrepancies to the appropriate office promptly to resolve the issue.

#### **Members of the ECU-DHS community who believe that a bill, payment request or other financial transaction may be improper or otherwise violate a law or regulation are expected to report those suspicions to appropriate institutional officials.**

- Reporting suspicions of improper billing and other financial transaction is an ethical responsibility of all members of the ECU-DHS community.
- If we learn of a bill or payment request that seems improper or appears to be a false claim, we promptly report the situation to our supervisor, manager, other superior, the Office of Institutional Integrity, Internal Audit & Management Services, or the Office of University Counsel.
- Employers are prohibited from punishing, disciplining, discriminating or retaliating against an employee because the employee reports or discloses information about potential false claims or other suspected financial irregularities.
- Employees who believe that they are the victim of unlawful discipline, discrimination, or retaliation because they reported concerns regarding potential billing improprieties may contact the Office of Institutional Integrity, Internal Audit & Management Services, or the Office of University Counsel.

### **XIV. BUSINESS AND LEGAL PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS maintains the highest ethical standards in its business and legal arrangements and is committed to the responsible use of resources.**

- We are responsible to the individuals and organizations that provide funding. ECU-DHS's public mission reflects our accountability to the citizens of North Carolina.
- We conduct our business operations in a manner that complies with applicable laws, regulations, and policies and that merits the trust and respect of those we serve.
- We fairly and accurately represent our services and responsibilities and are accountable to the public.

**XV. CONFLICT OF INTEREST PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS recognizes the potential benefits of its employees' participation in outside activities to advance the welfare of the community, the university, and the employee.**

- We will conduct our outside activities in a manner that is consistent with the well-being of the university.
- When involved in outside activities, we will consult and follow ECU policies, procedures, the law and the appropriate individuals to identify, disclose, manage and resolve potential conflicts of interest and commitment that those activities may pose with our role at ECU-DHS.

**XVI. CONTRACTS PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS is fair and ethical in its contracting practices and follows its policies and fair business practices.**

- We observe fair business practices in our marketing services, activities using marketing materials that accurately reflect ECU-DHS's skills and accreditations.
- We select services on the basis of quality, effectiveness, economy and appropriateness, and design them to meet identified needs while seeking to avoid unnecessary expense. We employ fair business practices in negotiating our contracts and making our purchases prior to execution or purchase.
- We understand that only designated ECU-DHS representatives have authority to obligate ECU under contracts. We understand that only those individuals with appropriate authority may sign contracts binding the institution.
- We will contact and work through ECU's established contract process and the Office of University Counsel to ensure proper contractual language and signature authority for all university contracts.
- We do not fix prices, divide geographic markets, or make any agreement that may artificially raise the prices of ECU-DHS services or otherwise impede competition.
- We will follow relevant state laws and regulations, state policies, and institutional policies regarding negotiating and selecting contracting parties.

- We seek advice from our supervisors, managers, or department heads, or the Office of University Counsel if we have any questions about business practices.

## **XVII. GIFTS PRINCIPLES**

**Gifts and donations provide critical support for the university's missions and make possible our innovative health care, education, research, and outreach activities. ECU's Foundation has been established to administer donations and gifts on behalf of ECU-DHS.**

- We follow ECU-DHS policy, appropriate laws, regulations, ECU policy, and use good judgment, before soliciting or accepting gifts, so our actions do not compromise or appear to compromise our professional integrity or the integrity of ECU-DHS.
- ECU-DHS schools, units, divisions, and departments only accept gifts that support one or more of ECU-DHS's core missions and that do not unduly influence or appear to unduly influence the unit's activities or decisions.

## **XVIII. INSIDE INFORMATION PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS creates and receives information that could directly affect the success of its business ventures and those of its current or prospective business partners.**

- To the extent permitted by law, we will protect information entrusted to ECU-DHS by current and prospective vendors, referral sources, contractors, service providers, and others. We will use appropriate precautions when transmitting confidential information electronically.
- We will not use, directly or indirectly, inside information for personal gain or for gain of others.

## **XIX. PHYSICAL PROPERTY PRINCIPLES**

**ECU's physical property includes property that is owned by or entrusted to ECU-DHS, including but not limited to: office and departmental furnishings, equipment and supplies, vehicles, cash, reports, records, including clinical and billing records in department offices, computer software, electronic files and data, patents, trademarks and service marks, research data, and records and facilities.**

- We diligently protect ECU property and the property of patients, research participants, students, employees, contractors and others who work or are being served at ECU-DHS facilities.
- We dispose of supplies, obsolete items, discontinued equipment and other ECU property in accordance with state law and university policies.

## **XX. COMPUTER AND TELECOMMUNICATION RESOURCES PRINCIPLES**

**ECU-DHS's computer and telecommunication networks are university resources that are provided to employees and allow them to transact the business of ECU-DHS. As with all**

**university property, employees who use the computer and telecommunication networks are responsible for the appropriate use of these resources.**

- ECU permits incidental personal use of computer and telecommunications resources, but we do not allow that use to interfere with our jobs.
- We do not use computer and telecommunications resources for personal commercial purposes or financial gain, nor do we use them to access or distribute material that may be illegal or offensive to others.
- We exercise appropriate care and comply fully with all university policies standards and regulations to keep the ECU-DHS network free from computer viruses.

We follow all ECU policies pertaining to confidentiality and acceptable use of computing resources.

- We only use our personal logins when accessing systems and do not share or use our usernames and passwords with others.
- We protect restricted (proprietary, confidential, and classified) information that is maintained by ECU-DHS including patient healthcare information and follow all relevant university policies, standards and regulations.

**XXI. ASKING QUESTIONS OR REPORTING CONCERNS OR SUSPICIONS REGARDING IMPROPER BEHAVIOR**

**ECU-DHS encourages and supports an environment where its community members may ask questions about integrity issues and report concerns in a safe, nonthreatening atmosphere.**

- We understand our obligation to report promptly questions, concerns or suspicions about improper conduct to an appropriate ECU office or official.

**ECU-DHS's commitment to fostering a climate of integrity is reflected in its policies and procedures, in the many ways it provides for members of the ECU-DHS community to ask questions and report concerns, and by the official prohibition against retaliation or retribution.**

- If we have concerns about improper conduct, we follow ECU and ECU-DHS reporting processes.
- We welcome the opportunity to listen and respond to the concerns raised by others. If someone raises an uncomfortable question, we address the question as appropriately as possible or attempt to secure appropriate assistance from other university resources who may help.

**REPORTING OPTIONS:**

1. If appropriate and you are comfortable doing so, talk to the individual(s) involved.
2. If you are not comfortable talking to the individual(s), discuss the concern with your supervisor, manager, or faculty member who is close to the situation and best able to help.
3. If you are uncomfortable discussing certain questions or concerns with your supervisor, manager, or faculty member, or if you have already done so and the situation remains unresolved, you are encouraged to discuss the issue with a higher level of authority, such as a department head or administrator.
4. You may also discuss your concern, suspicion, or complaint, as appropriate, with the following offices:

Office for Research Integrity and Compliance	252-744-2914
Human Resources	252-328-9847
Office of Institutional Integrity, DHS	252-744-5200
BSOM Office of Risk Management	252-744-2380
Internal Audit & Management Advisory Services	252-328-9025
Enterprise Risk Management	252-737-2803
Office of University Counsel	252-328-6940
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee	252-744-2436
Office of Equity and Diversity	252-328-6804

## **AFFIRMATION**

I have read the East Carolina University, Division of Health Sciences Code of Conduct and affirm that I will strive to abide by its standards, values, and provisions.

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Employee Signature

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Date

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Printed Name