



## MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS AND PUBLIC TRUST

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### MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Officer Juan Diasgranados, Public Information Officer  
Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation  
  
Director Sherea Green  
Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation

**FROM:** Susannah Nesmith, Staff Attorney  
Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

**SUBJECT:** INQ 2023-145, Section 2-11.1(j), Conflicting Employment Prohibited

**DATE:** August 22, 2024

**CC:** All COE Legal Staff

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Thank you for contacting the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and requesting our guidance regarding possible conflicts of interest between your outside employment and your County employment.

#### Facts

You are employed by the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department (“MDCR”) as the Public Information Officer. Your job duties entail handling all media inquiries and leading all the Department’s Community Engagement. You are seeking outside employment approval to work as a trainer for the National Institute of Corrections (“NIC”), conducting classes on best practices in public information services and community engagement. NIC is not a contractor or vendor with Miami-Dade County. You state you would conduct your outside employment during your off-duty hours and that you have no access to confidential information at MDCR that would be used in your outside employment. You state that you may use sample press releases, for example, as part of your course instruction, but that otherwise you would not use the same resources you use in your County employment. You do not anticipate coming into contact with any of the same people or entities in your outside employment that you encounter in your County role.

MDCR Director Sherea Green was consulted, and she said she did not know of any specific conflicts of interest between your County employment and your proposed outside employment.

## Issue

Whether there is a prohibited conflict of interest between your proposed work for NIC and your County employment.

## Analysis

Miami-Dade County employees are required to obtain approval from their department directors prior to engaging in outside employment. *See* County's Administrative Order 7- 1. "Under no circumstances shall a County employee accept outside employment...where a real or apparent conflict of interest with one's official or public duties is possible." A.O 7-1.

Section 2-11.1(j) of the Miami-Dade County Ethics Code prohibits County employees from engaging in outside employment which would impair the employee's independence of judgment in the performance of his or her official duties, thereby creating a conflict between the employee's public duties and private interests. Conflicting employment can occur when a County employee encounters the same or similar persons or entities in both his County and outside employment. County employees may not use County time or resources in the performance of their outside employment. *See* AO 5-5; INQ 23-87; INQ 20-43; INQ 19-123; INQ 11-162.

For example, the Ethics Commission has previously found an MDCR pre-trial services officer could engage in outside employment as a driving instructor because the work was unrelated to her County employment and would not impair her independence of judgment in the performance of his County duties. *See* INQ 22-42. *See also* RQO 17-01 (discussing multiple factors to consider when evaluating whether outside employment is conflicting). Similarly, in INQ 16-288, the Ethics Commission opined that an MDCR training officer did not have a conflict of interest due to her work at the Miami-Dade College School of Justice conducting training courses, because the school no longer contracted with MDCR and her outside employment was completely unrelated to her County duties and would not impair her independence of judgment in the performance of her public duties.

It appears unlikely your outside employment with NIC will impair your independence of judgment in the performance of your County duties at MDCR, based on the information that you have provided to us at this time, including that a) your work with NIC will only occur outside of working hours; b) you will not be required to encounter the same or similar people or entities as in your County position; c) you will not use the same or similar resources that you use in your County work beyond sample press releases that are already publicly available; d) your County position does not provide you with access to non-public information that is or could be relevant to your anticipated outside employment; and e) your MDCR position does not involve the recruitment or management of vendors, contactors, bidders, or members of the public who could also be involved in your anticipated outside employment.

Nevertheless, you must continue to abide by certain limitations outlined below to avoid a conflict:

- You shall not engage in activities that relate in any way to your outside employment during regular business hours, including phone calls, or any other communication and/or use of

County resources (including but not limited to phones, copiers, computers, fax machines, County vehicles, in connection with your outside employment, even after work). *See* County Ethics Code Section 2-11.1(g); AO 5-5, AO 7-1; INQ 20-43; INQ 19-123; INQ 15-240,

- You are prohibited from disclosing and/or using any confidential and/or proprietary information acquired as a result of your County employment to derive a personal benefit, for the benefit of your private employer or its clients. *See* County Ethics Code Section 2-11.1(h).
- You shall obtain permission to engage in outside employment on an annual basis by filing a Request for Outside Employment with your department director and shall file an Outside Employment Statement with the County's Elections Department by July 1st of each year. *See* County Ethics Code Section 2-11.1(k)(2).<sup>1</sup>
- You will not lobby the County on behalf of your outside employer or anyone else. *See* County Ethics Code § 2-11.1(m)(1).

County department directors and their subordinate supervisors have the discretion to deny a request for outside employment if they determine that, at any time, the proposed outside employment would be contrary, detrimental, or adverse to the interests of the County or the employee's department. *See* AO 7-1; RQO 16-02; RQO 00-10. Accordingly, **this memorandum does not grant you permission to engage in outside employment.** You must obtain permission to engage in outside employment every year from your department director.

### Opinion

Based on the facts presented here, your outside employment for NIC does not appear to conflict with your County employment because it will not impair your independence of judgment in the performance of your County duties.

This opinion is based on the facts presented. If these facts change, or if there are any further questions, please contact the above-named Staff Attorney.

This opinion is limited to the facts as presented to the Commission on Ethics and to an interpretation of the County Ethics Code only. For an opinion regarding Florida ethics law, please contact the Florida Commission on Ethics, P.O. Drawer 15709, Tallahassee, FL 32317, phone number (850) 488-7864, <http://www.ethics.state.fl.us/>.

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<sup>1</sup> The form is available online at [https://www.miamidade.gov/elections/library/forms/\\_outside-employment-statement.pdf](https://www.miamidade.gov/elections/library/forms/_outside-employment-statement.pdf).

INQs are informal ethics opinions provided by the legal staff after being reviewed and approved by the Executive Director. INQs deal with opinions previously addressed in public session by the Commission on Ethics or within the plain meaning of the County Ethics Code. RQOs are opinions provided by the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust when the subject matter is of great public importance or where there is insufficient precedent. While this is an informal opinion, covered parties who act contrary to the opinion may be referred to the Advocate for preliminary review or investigation and may be subject to a formal Complaint filed with the Commission on Ethics and Public Trust.