



MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS AND PUBLIC TRUST

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Ivon Mesa,
Senior Advisor
Miami Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department

FROM: Etta Akoni, Assistant General Counsel
Miami Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

SUBJECT: INQ 2025-54, Section 2.11-1(e) - Gifts

DATE: June 17, 2025

CC: All COE Legal Staff

Thank you for contacting the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and requesting ethics guidance regarding the application of the County Ethics Code to a donation from the College Football Playoff Foundation, Inc. (“CFP Foundation”) and the South Florida CFPNCG Host Committee, LLC (“Miami Host Committee”) to the Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department (“Corrections”) for the Extra Yard for Teachers Program.

Facts:

In anticipation of the College Football Playoff National Championship Game scheduled on Monday, January 19, 2026, at the Hard Rock Stadium, the CFP Foundation and the Miami Host Committee have partnered to execute the CFP Foundation program, “*Extra Yard for Teachers*,” in South Florida for the 2026 College Football National Championship Game. The partnership focuses on positively impacting educators and students in South Florida by continuing the *Extra Yard for Teachers Innovation Learning Space Makeover Program*, a program previously implemented during the 2021 College Football National Championship Game.

The planned renovations will transform the education spaces within the Corrections facilities, specifically Metro West Detention Center, Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center, and the Boot Camp Program with modern features and technological upgrades, creating a more inviting and engaging learning environment tailored to the specific needs of students at each facility. Each space will be redesigned with elements such as new flooring, fresh paint, removal of outdated shelving and furniture, modular seating options, soft seating areas, whiteboard walls, wall wraps, and advanced technology, including virtual reality goggles, laptop carts, and a green room.

The project will also include a \$30,000 investment for a music therapy component aimed at supporting trauma recovery as a part of the overall \$200,000 budget. The \$30,000 music therapy component will go directly to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Per Veronica Salom, Corrections Deputy Director for Administration, Corrections will not receive any funding directly and has no obligations to the CFP Foundation and the Miami Host Committee.

CFP Foundation and the Miami Host Committee are not County vendors nor registered lobbyists. Miami-Dade County Resolution R-158-24, passed on February 21, 2024 by the Board of County Commissioners, establishes the basis of the relationship between Miami-Dade County, Orange Bowl, LLC, and the Miami Host Committee, but does not address this donation or Corrections. A formal agreement of the terms of Miami-Dade County Resolution R-158-24 is anticipated by the first quarter of the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Issue: Whether a prohibited conflict of interest could result from the acceptance of a donation of in-kind construction services, furniture, and equipment from the CFP Foundation and the Miami Host Committee to redesign educational spaces within the Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department's Metro West Detention Center, Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center, and the Boot Camp Program, worth \$200,000.

Discussion

Section 2-11.1(e)(3)(a) of the County Ethics Code, entitled *General prohibition on solicitation and giving of gifts*, states that:

A person described in subsection (b)(1) through (6) shall neither solicit nor demand any gift. It is also unlawful for any person or entity to offer, give or agree to give to any person included in the term defined in subsection (b)(1) through (6) or for any person included in the term defined in subsection (b)(1) through (6) to accept or agree to accept from another person or entity, any gift for or because of:

- i. An official public action taken, or to be taken, or which could be taken;
- ii. A legal duty performed or to be performed, or which could be performed;
- or
- iii. A legal duty violated or to be violated, or which could be violated by any person included in the term defined in subsection (b)(1).

This section of the County Ethics Code prohibits accepting donations or gifts by County staff tied to *quid pro quo* transactions defined in the section. The Ethics Commission has recognized that private donations and funds can be properly relied upon to support essential government functions, to promote government-sponsored community programs, and charitable causes and events which clearly serve a public purpose, including feeding or aiding those in need. *See generally* RQO 02-70; INQ 13-70; INQ 19-124; INQ 2020-134.

For example, in INQ 2022-128, the Cigarette Racing Team, a manufacturer of offshore powerboats, offered to donate a Cigarette manufactured boat, at no cost with an accompanying maintenance program to Miami-Dade County. The vessel would be used by one of the County's first responder uniformed services departments, either the Miami-Dade County Police Department

or the Miami-Dade County Fire Rescue Department, in the discharge of their official duties. The donation was offered after the May 6-8, 2022, Miami Grand Prix Formula 1 racing events, which took place at the Miami International Autodrome located at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida. In INQ 2022-128, the COE indicated that the Ethics Commission has recognized that the County may accept a gift from a private company for its use in the performance of its official functions. *See also* INQ 17-231 (County may accept a gift from a private company consisting of 5,000 portable housing units in relief of persons displaced by a hurricane); INQ 18-31 (County Medical Examiner's office may accept donated catering services valued in excess of \$2,000 from a private entity for memorial service honoring the former Medical Examiner).

However, as is prohibited by Section 2-11.1(e)(3)(a) of the County Ethics Code, said donations cannot be given with the expectation or requirement of specified subsequent government action, even if said action is to provide a service or product for the county department receiving the donation. As indicated by the Corrections Deputy Director for Administration, the CFP Foundation and the Miami Host Committee have not made any requests of Corrections in exchange for this donation. Additionally, Corrections is not contemplated as a part of the County's pending agreement pursuant to Miami-Dade County Resolution R-158-24 for the Orange Bowl.

Opinion

Based on the facts presented here and discussed above, accepting the proposed construction donations to Corrections from the CFP Foundation and the Miami Host Committee would not result in a prohibited conflict of interest. This opinion is limited to the facts as presented to the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and is limited to an interpretation of the County Ethics Code only. If these facts change, or if there are any further questions, please contact the above-named agency counsel. Other conflicts may apply based on directives from Corrections or under state law. Questions regarding possible conflicts based on Corrections directives should be directed to the Mayor's Office. 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/>.

We appreciate your consulting with the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust to avoid possible prohibited conflicts of interest. If the facts associated with your inquiry change, please contact us for additional guidance.

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 these are informal opinions, covered parties that 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.