University of Washington
Department of Medicine

Family and Household Members
Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest Guidelines

PURPOSE: The purpose of these guidelines and procedures is to set forth required steps and describe best practices in the School of Medicine and the Department of Medicine to avoid conflicts of interest in the hiring, supervision, and personnel decisions for family or household members by:

- Requiring disclosure of family and household relationships;
- Prohibiting employees from participating in hiring or supervising family and household members;
- Prohibiting employees from transactions involving a beneficial interest regarding family or household members; and,
- Requiring documentation of steps taken to resolve real or perceived conflicts of interest.

BACKGROUND: The Washington Ethics in Public Service Act, Presidential Orders; Executive Order No. 32, Employee Responsibilities and Employee Conflict of Interest; and UW Conflict of Interest Policies impose obligations on University employees that affect hiring, supervision, and discussion/voting on personnel actions of family and household members.

The Ethics in Public Service Act sets forth the basic principle that no employee shall have an interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, that is in conflict with the proper discharge of his or her official duties. The UW rules prohibit University employees from having interests in conflict with their University positions, and from using their University position for special privileges or exemptions for the employee or the employee's family or household.

However, it is permissible for members of the same family or household to be appointed to University faculty and staff positions in the same department within applicable UW rules and policies. The family or household member should be qualified for the position as determined by a non-family or household member, and the supervisory structure must not violate University conflict of interest policies.

Executive Order No. 32, Section 2 E, in conformity with the Ethics in Public Service Act (Chapter 42.52 RCW) further specifies that the University considers the following as transactions that involve a beneficial interest: appointment, termination of appointment, promotion, demotion, approval of salary increase or decrease.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: Faculty and staff are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, follow appropriate hiring processes and ensure that an alternate supervisory structure is established to mitigate real or perceived conflicts of interest, and recuse themselves from the discussion and voting of personnel actions involving family or household members.

Faculty personnel actions
Faculty members are not allowed to be present for discussion nor are they allowed to vote on any of the following personnel actions for family or household members:

- Appointment
- Promotion
- Reappointment
- Merit Review

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Hiring process
If a recruit is being considered for a position in the same unit as a family or household member, the family or household member may not participate in the following activities in the hiring process:

- Reviewing resumes to narrow the candidate pool;
- Determining which candidates will be interviewed for the position;
- Participating in the interview process to narrow the candidate pool;
- Participating in selecting the successful candidate; or
- Participating in any other activity that is part of determining whether candidates are qualified for the position and will be hired for the position.

Supervision
When family or household members are in the same unit, one may not hold a supervisory position over the other or otherwise influence decisions related to another family or household member's evaluation or compensation, including:

- Providing feedback for performance evaluations;
- Participating in corrective action;
- Participating in decisions related to promotion;
- Participating in decisions related to merit increases or compensation;
- Participating in decisions related to performance management including discipline or dismissal;
- Entering or approving leave requests and timesheets;
- Approving expenditures of funds such as travel or training requests, travel reimbursements or bridge funding; and
- Otherwise making or influencing decisions related to a family or household member's evaluation or promotion.

Examples of conflicts of interest you want to report or seek advice on:

Scenario #1
You have a partner who lives in the same household working on your grant/contract. As the principal investigator you are responsible for approving leave requests and merit review. Can you approve leave requests or conduct merit reviews for the partner?

No – this would be considered a conflict of interest. An alternate supervisory structure is required.

Scenario #2
You want to hire a student helper in your laboratory or office and your college aged son/daughter interested in the job. Can you interview them? Can you hire them?

No – You cannot interview them, however, there may be an alternate supervisory structure that would allow a child to work in the same lab if they were deemed qualified for the position by an impartial supervisor. This would require advance review/approval by the Division Administrator or Department as applicable.

Scenario #3
You recently received an award in which you need to hire a collaborator for a clinical trial. Can you hire your spouse/partner to collaborate with you on this award?

Possibly, but only if the hiring of the spouse/partner is conducted by a neutral party and the recruitment is based solely on the merits of the candidate. An alternate supervisory structure would need to be established and approved in advance by the Division Administrator or Department as applicable.

Scenario #4
You have a family or household member that works in the same unit, can both family members have the same supervisor?

Yes, but the family members should not have influence over each other's annual leave or payroll entries; or merit/performance review, e.g. 360 evaluation; nor should a faculty member participate in faculty votes on appointment/reappointment or promotion for a family/household member.

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DOCUMENTATION STANDARDS: The division must demonstrate and document that no conflicts of interest exist in the hiring, supervision, or discussion/voting on personnel actions of family and household members consistent with the University’s conflict of interest policies by developing a Conflict Mitigation Plan which will:

- Document the hiring process and establish the employee did not participate in the hiring process for his or her family or household member;
- Document the alternative supervisory structure established to avoid a conflict of interest; and document any alternative review or approval structure for particular aspects of the position;
- Document that the employee did not participate in the discussion or voting of personnel matters of another family or household member.

The Conflict Mitigation Plan requires faculty/staff signature and review approval by the division administrator or department HR director as appropriate.