

INTERN PROGRAM
OFFICE POLICY FOR THE 79th JUDICIAL DISTRICT
ATTORNEY'S OFFICE-JIM WELLS & BROOKS COUNTIES

1. General Policy Guidance

Nothing in this policy will supersede the law. Any differences in or clashes between the county policy and this one should immediately be brought to the attention of the District Attorney for resolution. All Jim Wells and/or Brooks County Policies are in effect for this office unless they conflict with the policies of the District Attorney's Office. If there is a conflict, the District Attorney's Office policy will control.

Nothing about this policy is intended to interfere with freedom of religion. Employees will give the District Attorney advanced notice within a reasonable time to allow the District Attorney to make arrangements to accommodate the specific religious practice.

Harassment on the basis of gender, age, religion, race, sexual preference, and country of origin will not be tolerated.

It is the duty of all employees to review the District Attorney's Office policy and report any unconscionable, illegal, or harassing policy or act to the District Attorney.

The District Attorney's Office is a high profile public office. Employees will act in a manner consistent with decorum, even when off-duty. Employees will self-report any charges of any crime, particularly any involving violence or which would reflect negatively on the office. All employees are "at-will". Employees will not engage in any activity or controversy which interferes with the operations or reputation of the office.

Full time employees will not have another outside job unless it is specifically authorized by the District Attorney and does not interfere with the workings of the office. This does not apply to charity work, Armed Forces Reserve duty, Law Enforcement Reserve duty, or any job specifically excepted by law.

In the absence of the District Attorney, the most senior attorney will enforce the policy and make exceptions as needed, consistent with the spirit of this policy.

2. Goals

a. General

The goal of this office is to timely and accurately administer justice. We owe an obligation to the citizens of Jim Wells and Brooks Counties and every other person we encounter to perform our jobs diligently and professionally. We owe it to ourselves and our family to work in a harassment free, enjoyable workplace.

Phone calls should be answered if at all possible and not left for the answering machine. Attorneys can help answer calls when necessary. Phone messages should be returned within one (1) hour when possible. The Office will be staffed over the lunch hour.

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When someone requests a meeting with an attorney or calls on the telephone, the call should be forwarded to the appropriate assistant for the specific attorney. That assistant should pull the file, or when the file is in the attorney's office, ensure the attorney has the file, preferably before the visitor or caller discusses the matter with the attorney.

All settings should be documented on the front of the file and the result of the setting. These notes should be entered into the computer database under the Defendant's name.

Conflicts of interest should be noticed early. If there is an allegation where the alleged facts are a violation of the law, then the D.A. shall find another attorney in the office to prosecute the case or ask the Court to appoint a special prosecutor or an attorney pro tem. If the alleged facts are not a crime or there is a dispute to that matter, then the matter will be treated as if there is a conflict.

Law Enforcement, Defense Attorneys, the Press, other Public Servants, the Public and Defendants will be treated with respect and courtesy. Our demeanor should convey strength, confidence and professionalism.

b. Intake

All cases submitted to the Office shall be stamped immediately and input into the computer no later than 48 hours after receipt.

The "Intake Drawer" will be emptied of new cases every month. Every case ready for the Grand Jury will be taken. No backlog is allowed. This may mean late nights or early mornings. Every case should be indicted or dismissed prior to 90 days, particularly if the Defendant is in Jail.

Every victim or victim's family will be contacted in an assault case. If possible, their wishes should be considered.

c. Discovery

There is an "Open File" policy in existence, meaning all evidence that is not attorney work product will be turned over to defense attorney. The "Brady" rule is in effect. If there is any evidence or information, credible or not, showing that the Defendant is innocent or which can be used for mitigation, it must be turned over to the Defense.

d. Policy / Guidance to law enforcement or other govt. entities.

No employee will make or distribute policy for District Attorney's Office without first getting that policy authorized by the District Attorney. All statements to the media/press will be cleared by the District Attorney's Office prior to release.

e. Community Outreach

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The District Attorney's Office will implement several community outreach programs and participate in the community activities in our area. Activities such as parades, fairs, National Night Out, etc., are just some of the types of activities that employees will be expected to participate in. Community outreach will be part of the job duties for every position in the District Attorney's Office. Through community outreach, we will aim at providing resources to our community through education. All employees shall inform the District Attorney and Community Outreach Director of any community activities that the employee becomes aware of. Employees who participate in authorized community outreach activities that are outside of the employee's normal work schedule will receive comp time.

3. Work Attendance

All interns are hourly employees of the District Attorney's Office and will show up for work as scheduled. Interns will keep logs of time of check in and time of check out of the office. When conducting trips outside the office, time for any side trips for errands will be deducted. Compensatory time, i.e. Comp time, will be given to hourly employees who work late or show up early, as per coordination with the District Attorney. Permission to work on the weekend to makeup or catch up on work will be authorized through a supervisor. No overtime will be granted without the specific and direct approval of the District Attorney. This cannot be delegated.

The District Attorney will consider the needs of the office and the desires of the employee when scheduling employee comp time, leave and personal time. Personal time off and/or leave will be coordinated through the District Attorney prior to scheduling.

Visitors and/or family members who stay in the office longer than an hour need to have authorization from the District Attorney. This is for office confidentiality and productivity reasons.

Interns are expected to arrive no later than their scheduled work time. Weekly work schedules must be approved a week in advanced.

Interns are required to notify their supervisor about any absence from their work schedule at least 24 hours in advanced or as soon as reasonably possible. Any intern who fails to give advanced notice on three occasions will be dismissed from the internship program.

4. Dress Code

The Dress Code will be enforced.

Females: no low cut tops, mini, micromini, short skirts, blue jean shorts, or stiletto heels.

Males: no shorts of any kind. No tennis shoes. Must have a tie and coat ready to change into at anytime.

Both: no sweat suits, scrubs, or flip-flops. No provocative or revealing clothing. Nothing will be allowed with language, pictures, or symbols which are lewd, suggestive or otherwise unprofessional. No exposed tattoos or piercing other than earrings for ladies. No exposed undergarments. All hair must be neatly trimmed. For men, beards or mustaches must not present an appearance that is distracting to the public. Appearance must be neat, clean, and professional.

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On special events, holidays and specific days, such as pay day Fridays, blue jeans may be allowed, if no settings are on the court's docket, no juries are scheduled, and no other types of public appearances are scheduled.

Anyone violating the dress code will be sent home to change. The employee will only be paid for time spent at work in proper attire.

5. Workplace

Communication. Emails, instant messaging and phone calls may be monitored. Personal phone calls, texting and web surfing will be kept to a minimum. If they interfere with the workings of the office, a notice will be given to the employee. No inappropriate websites will be viewed on government computers unless connected to a specific and necessary investigation. Inappropriate websites include sexually explicit, racially divisive or any website which, if known to the public, would reflect negatively on the office.

Desks will be kept free of offensive or non-professional items. Tasteful pictures of family and friends are encouraged when they do not interfere with productivity.

Non-office business vendors will not be allowed in the office during office hours. The executive secretary will be responsible for accountability on all purchases for the office.

Our files are extremely sensitive. They should be handled with care and security. Any files dealing with pornography will not be copied nor taken out of the office.

6. Behavior of Interns

All interns are expected to behave in an appropriate manner which reflects the gravity, professionalism and integrity of the office. If an employee is arrested, charged, or in any way is accused of an act that would call into question the ethics or professionalism or even reflect badly on this office, they are required to immediately report that arrest, charge, allegation or accusation.

Any relationship, other than a casual friendship, with a party or their attorney from the opposing side of litigation must be disclosed to this office and to the parties being represented. Relationships include but are not limited to being related, dating, marriage, property ownership and business interests. Such disclosure will help to avoid conflict of interest issues.

7. Drug Free Workplace

The District Attorney's Office intends to help provide a safe and drug-free environment for all of its employees. With this goal in mind and because of the serious drug abuse problem in today's workplace, we will fully endorse and fully adhere to the Drug-free workplace policies of Jim Wells and Brooks Counties. In the event that any county within the 79th Judicial District has not adopted a County Drug-Free Policy, the District Attorney's Office shall adopt the policy from another county within the district. In the event that the counties have not adopted a Drug-Free Policy, the District Attorney will adopt a policy.

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8. Sexual Harassment Policy

All employees are expected to behave in an appropriate manner which reflects the gravity, professionalism and integrity of the office. Sexual harassment of any sort is strictly forbidden. Casual acts and comments between co-workers can spill over into the area of sexual harassment. Any employee who feels that they are the subject of sexual harassment must bring it to the attention of the District Attorney.

9. Conflict of Interest/Appearance of Impropriety

All interns are expected to report any potential conflict of interest or potential appearance of impropriety to the District Attorney. In an effort to hold the Office of District Attorney to the highest level of integrity, we will not only avoid improper conduct, we will avoid the appearance of impropriety. If something does not look or feel “right”- it must be identified and brought to the attention of the District Attorney. Examples of situations that need to be addressed include: cases where the accused, victim or witnesses are related to an employee of the District Attorney’s Office; cases where the suspect, victim or witnesses are public officials or public servants; cases where due to the friendship of the suspect, victim or witness to an employee of the District Attorney’s would create a conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety.

10. Confidentiality

All interns are expected to keep all information related to the District attorney’s Office secure and confidential. Information about suspects, victims, witnesses, grand jurors, and case status is sensitive information and will not be releases unless authorized by law. Any request for information shall be forwarded to the attorney assigned to review open records requests. Any employee who is not sure if the requested information can or cannot be released shall confer with the attorney assigned to review open records requests.

11. Disciplinary Action

All employees are expected to follow the policies adopted and implemented by the County and the District Attorney’s Office. Failing to comply with policy can result in disciplinary action. Disciplinary action includes, but is not limited to: private counseling, written reprimand, suspension with pay, suspension without pay, and termination of employment. All disciplinary action will be handled by the District Attorney.

None of these policies are meant to conflict with State Laws. If they should so conflict, State Law controls.

BY SIGNING MY NAME BELOW I AM SIGNIFYING THAT I HAVE READ THIS POLICY, UNDERSTAND THE POLICY, AND WILL ABIDE BY THE POLICY.

INTERN SIGNATURE

DATE

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