

481—10.29 (10A) Code of administrative judicial conduct. The code of administrative judicial conduct is designed to govern the conduct, in relation to their adjudicative functions in contested cases, of all persons who act as presiding officers under the authority of Iowa Code section 17A.11(1). The canons are rules of reason. The canons shall be applied consistent with constitutional requirements, statutes, administrative rules, and decisional law and in the context of all relevant circumstances. The canons must be harmonized with the dictates of the administrative process as established by the legislature. While Canons 1, 2, and 3 are generally applicable to both administrative law judges and agency heads or members of multimember agency heads when these persons act as presiding officers, these canons shall be applied to agency heads and members of multimember agency heads only as expressly mandated by statute and as reasonably practicable when taking into account the fact that agency heads and members of multimember agency heads, unlike administrative law judges, have multiple duties imposed upon them by law. The provisions of Canon 4 concerning the regulation of extrajudicial activities are not applicable to agency heads or members of multimember agency heads. This code is to be construed so as to promote the essential independence of presiding officers in making judicial decisions.

Whether disciplinary action is appropriate, and the degree of discipline to be imposed, shall be determined by the appointing authority through a reasonable and reasoned application of the text and shall depend on such factors as the seriousness of the transgression, whether there is a pattern of improper activity, and the effect of improper activity on others or on the administrative system. This code is not designed or intended as a basis for civil liability or criminal prosecution.

10.29(1) Canon 1. A presiding officer shall uphold the integrity and independence of the administrative judiciary.

a. An independent and honorable administrative judiciary is indispensable to justice in society.

b. A presiding officer shall participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing high standards of conduct and shall personally observe those standards so that the integrity and independence of the administrative judiciary will be preserved.

c. The provisions of this code are to be construed and applied to further that objective.

10.29(2) Canon 2. A presiding officer shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all adjudicative functions in contested cases.

a. A presiding officer shall respect and comply with the law and at all times shall act in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the administrative judiciary.

b. A presiding officer shall not allow family, social, political, or other relationships to influence the presiding officer's judicial conduct or judgment. This provision shall not be construed as prohibiting the development of public policy by contested case adjudication. A presiding officer shall not lend the prestige of the office to advance the private interests of the presiding officer or others; nor shall a presiding officer convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence the presiding officer.

c. A presiding officer shall not hold membership in any organization that the presiding officer knows practices invidious discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion or national origin.

10.29(3) Canon 3. A presiding officer shall perform the duties of the office impartially and diligently.

a. Adjudicative responsibilities. A presiding officer in the performance of adjudicative duties in contested case proceedings shall follow these standards:

(1) A presiding officer shall be faithful to the law, unswayed by partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism.

(2) A presiding officer shall maintain order and decorum in proceedings before the presiding officer.

(3) A presiding officer shall be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, witnesses, attorneys, representatives, and others with whom the presiding officer deals in an official capacity, and shall require similar conduct of attorneys, representatives, staff members and others subject to the presiding officer's direction and control.

(4) A presiding officer shall not, in the performance of adjudicative duties by words or conduct, manifest bias or prejudice, including but not limited to bias or prejudice based upon sex, race, national origin or ethnicity and shall not permit staff and others subject to the presiding officer's direction and control to do so.

(5) A presiding officer shall accord to all persons who are legally interested in a proceeding, or their representatives, full right to be heard according to law, and neither initiate nor consider ex parte communications prohibited by Iowa Code section 17A.17.

(6) A presiding officer shall dispose of all adjudicative matters promptly, efficiently and fairly.

(7) A presiding officer shall abstain from public comment about a pending or impending contested case proceeding that might reasonably be expected to affect the outcome or impair the fairness of the proceeding, and shall require similar abstention by agency personnel subject to the presiding officer's direction and control. This subparagraph does not prohibit a presiding officer from making public statements in the course of official duties or from explaining for public information the hearing procedures of agencies.

(8) A presiding officer shall not disclose or use, for any purpose unrelated to adjudicative duties, nonpublic information acquired in an adjudicative capacity except as lawfully permissible in the performance of official duties by an agency head or member of a multimember agency head.

(9) A presiding officer shall report any violation of this code to the appropriate authority for any disciplinary proceedings provided by law.

b. Disqualification. A presiding officer or other person shall withdraw from participation in the making of any proposed or final decision in a contested case if that person:

(1) Has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a representative of a party;

(2) Has personally investigated, prosecuted or advocated, in connection with that case, the specific controversy underlying that case, or another pending factually related contested case, or a pending factually related controversy that may culminate in a contested case involving the same parties;

(3) Is subject to the authority, direction or discretion of any person who has personally investigated, prosecuted or advocated in connection with that contested case, the specific controversy underlying that contested case, or a pending factually related contested case or controversy involving the same parties;

(4) Has acted as counsel to any person who is a private party to that proceeding within the past two years;

(5) Has a personal financial interest in the outcome of the case or any other significant personal interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the case;

(6) Has a spouse or relative within the third degree of relationship that:

1. Is a party to the case, or an officer, director or trustee of a party;

2. Is an attorney in the case;

3. Is known to have an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the case; or

4. Is likely to be a material witness in the case; or

(7) Has any other legally sufficient cause to withdraw from participation in the decision making in that case.

c. Disclosure on record. In a situation where a presiding officer knows of information which might reasonably be deemed to be a basis for disqualification and decides voluntary withdrawal is unnecessary, the presiding officer shall disclose the relevant information on the record and shall state reasons why voluntary withdrawal is unnecessary.

10.29(4) Canon 4. An administrative law judge shall regulate extrajudicial activities to minimize the risk of conflict with judicial duties.

In general, an administrative law judge shall conduct all of the administrative law judge's extrajudicial activities so that the administrative law judge does not:

1. Cast reasonable doubt on the administrative law judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge;

2. Create the appearance of impropriety or demean the adjudicative office; or

3. Interfere with the proper performance of adjudicative duties.