



MONTGOMERY COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION

February 11, 2026

Waiver 26-02-002

Pursuant to § 19A-12(b)(1)(B) of the Public Ethics Law, a public employee must not be employed by a business that negotiates or contracts with the County agency with which the public employee is affiliated, unless the Ethics Commission grants a waiver.

Tracy Coleman is a Human Services Specialist at the Services to End and Prevent Homelessness Division (SEPH) of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). She would like to engage in outside employment as a Lead Case Manager at Helping Hands Shelter, an entity that has contracts with DHHS.

As a Human Services Specialist with SEPH, Ms. Coleman's responsibilities include completing psychosocial assessments of residents experiencing a housing emergency and/or utility emergency and developing comprehensive person-centered service plans. She identifies resources and services needed to prevent homelessness and quickly identifies permanent housing solutions for clients, determines eligibility for emergency financial assistance (to include Emergency Rental Assistance), and provides short-term crisis intervention and prevention case management services to help stabilize housing for at-risk households. Additionally, she screens families presenting as homeless for diversion services and as needed, link to Homeless Services for further assessment and intervention. She does not refer families directly to any shelters, as such referrals are made by a separate team within her division.

In her proposed outside employment as a Lead Case Manager at Helping Hands Shelter, her responsibilities include acting as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Administrator for the shelter, conducting monthly performance reporting, ensuring data completeness, assigning clients to beds, and assigning clients to case managers once they have been referred by the county for shelter. She does not provide any direct case management services to the families assigned to the shelter.

Ms. Coleman would have no contract monitoring, procurement or execution responsibilities in her role with Helping Hands Shelter, and she has no contract monitoring responsibilities in her official capacity with SEPH either.

Helping Hands Shelter receives funding from the US Housing and Urban Development Department, and those federal funds are distributed by the Montgomery County DHHS. So while

it appears that the shelter is operating from funds it receives from DHHS, the source is actually the federal government, and DHHS is merely a passthrough entity.

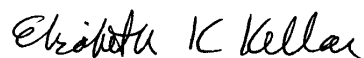
Ms. Coleman acknowledges that there is a possibility of crossover clients between SEPH and the shelter. However, Ms. Coleman does not provide direct case management to shelter clients, and in her County role, she does not refer clients to shelters. Thus, the potential for crossover clients is largely theoretical. However, if presented with a crossover client, she will hand that case to a colleague in order to prevent a conflict of interest.

Pursuant to § 19A-8(b)(3) of the Public Ethics Law, the Ethics Commission may grant a waiver of the prohibition of § 19A-12(b) if the Ethics Commission concludes that the proposed employment is not likely to create an actual conflict of interest. Upon reviewing the request and the Department's concurrence in and support for the waiver request, the Commission finds that there is no actual conflict of interest. Pursuant to the standard of § 19A-8(b)(3), the Commission grants the waiver of the prohibition of § 19A-12(b).

The Commission notes that while 19A-12(b)'s prohibition is waived, the other provisions of the ethics law are not, including those prohibiting an employee from working on official matters relating to the outside employer. The approval of this waiver is conditioned on the facts upon which the waiver is based remaining unchanged. It is also conditioned on Ms. Coleman not making referrals as a County employee to Helping Hands Shelter. She will pass any crossover clients needing such a referral to a colleague at DHHS.

This waiver expires when the outside employment approval with which it is associated expires, unless a continuation request for outside employment is timely filed and subsequently approved by the Ethics Commission. In reaching this decision, the Commission has relied upon the facts as presented by Ms. Coleman.

For the Commission:



Elizabeth Kellar, Chair