

Child Dependency Courts

Judicial ethics in dependency cases are an essential component to safeguarding the rights and well-being of children and families involved in these sensitive and high-stakes legal proceedings.

Judicial officers must navigate complex issues while simultaneously upholding core ethical principles such as impartiality, fairness, transparency, and respect for all parties.



Washington State Code of Judicial Conduct

Washington's [Code of Judicial Conduct](#) is organized into four main Canons, each outlining core principles of judicial ethics:

- 1 **Independence, integrity and impartiality**
- 2 **Perform duties impartially, competently and diligently**
- 3 **Conduct extrajudicial activities so as to minimize conflicts with core judicial duties**
- 4 **Avoid conduct that could be perceived as improper or undermine public trust in the judiciary**

Each Canon is supported by rules and comments that provide detailed guidance.



Judicial officers should regularly review the Code and ask for guidance if there are questions.

Ethics Advisory Committee



The Ethics Advisory Committee in Washington State provides ethical guidance to judicial officers regarding the application of the Code of Judicial Conduct. Comprising seven members, the committee **issues advisory opinions to assist judicial officers in navigating ethical dilemmas** and maintaining the integrity of the judiciary.

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Judicial Ethics in Dependency Cases

Dependency court judicial officers must uphold impartiality, fairness, and due process while prioritizing the best interests of the child. Judicial officers should ensure timely proceedings to avoid unnecessary delays in achieving stability for children, exercise oversight of child welfare agencies without compromising independence, and engage in ongoing education to remain informed on issues affecting children and families in the dependency system.

