

Nepotism

[Iowa Code 71.1](#) states, "It shall hereafter be unlawful for any person elected or appointed to any public office or position under the laws of the state or by virtue of the ordinance of any city in the state, to appoint as deputy, clerk, or helper in said office or position to be paid from the public funds, any person related by consanguinity (close relation) or affinity, within the third degree, to the person elected, appointed, or making said appointment, unless such appointment shall first be approved by the officer, board, council, or commission whose duty it is to approve the bond of the principal..."

Iowa law does not specifically prohibit or restrict employment of spouses or other related individuals. The provision of the Iowa Code allows for an extension council to make decisions regarding hiring of employees. However, individuals are not permitted to do so if the employee is related within the third degree. The third degree includes great-grandparents, great-grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and anyone closer in relationship. Parents and children would be first-degree relatives and grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, and sisters would be considered second-degree relatives.

Depending on how they are written or applied, policies and practices that prohibit or restrict the employment or affect certain employees because they are related or married to other employees may be discriminatory based on other factors, such as sex or race, and may violate the Iowa Civil Rights Act (Iowa Code Sec. 216.1et seq.). The law applies to all employers, regardless of size. Policies favoring the hiring of relatives may also have a disparate impact on protected classes and should be monitored closely to avoid such discrimination.

Conflicts of Interest and Commitment for Extension Personnel

ISU Extension employees be particularly sensitive to the potential for real or perceived conflict of interest. Extension employees must be especially careful in their private activities to avoid the perceptions that:

- 1) they are asking for or receiving private payment for services that are normally a part of their position responsibilities;
- 2) any services that they provide privately are affiliated with or endorsed by Extension; or
- 3) they are advertising or promoting their private services while performing their Extension roles.

Activities that give the perceptions above could be considered a misuse of their positions and/or a violation of state code. ISU Extension employees representing the Cooperative Extension system have additional responsibilities to safeguard against real or perceived conflicts of interest and commitment in accordance with the Smith Lever Act and USDA Federal policies.

To read the [Conflicts of Interest and Commitment Addendum for Extension Personnel](#), have any extension staff download from the for staff only site, MyExtension.

Why is this important?

Public officials and employees must be accountable to the taxpayers they serve. A transparent hiring process that assures non-discrimination and the opportunity to hire the most qualified individual for the position should be the practice.

Signs of nepotism, conflicts of interest and commitment, and favoritism may lead to co-worker and public distrust. Lack of oversight may lead to financial and legal issues for County Agricultural Extension Districts and extension councils. As stewards of the public's resources, sound, unbiased policies and procedures will result in a safe and productive work environment for all.

[Iowa Code 71.1 - Nepotism](#)

[Conflicts of Interest and Commitment Addendum for Extension Personnel \(MyExtension\)](#)