



**“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”**

— [Mahatma Gandhi](#)

When I think about ethics I first think of the above quote by the courageous leader, Gandhi. Ethics is not something we can achieve by attending a lecture once per year or by creating a statement of values which is never spoken about again. Ethics is a course of conduct that we all must participate in on a daily basis. It is something we must live and practice and an example we should set for others – so they can know who we are.

As members of the DeKalb Workforce, many of you have suffered the loss of reputation resulting from the acts of those who benefited themselves at the expense of the County and its citizens. Nevertheless, DeKalb has made structural and leadership changes providing all a chance to become part of the change we wish to see in DeKalb.

But what does this change look like? In other words, what are some guidelines for an ethical workplace. I am going to be discussing this with DeKalb officials and employees in the year to come. While I have your attention (hopefully), I would like to introduce a few ideas:

- 1) **Use the Ethics Office as a resource.** Don't feel like you have to figure the Ethics Code out on your own. You can reach me through our website [www.dekalbcountyethics.org](http://www.dekalbcountyethics.org) and you can reach me by phone. I try and respond to all questions the same day.
- 2) **Act with courage.** You may suspect others of acting in an unethical manner. Don't use their behavior as a justification to do the same. This takes courage on your part because it can be difficult to stand out and follow a different path. Please remember that following someone down a rabbit hole can cause you great trouble in your career. Even small violations can be troublesome and something you may need to report when applying for future positions. If you feel you are retaliated against for refusing to participate in unethical behavior, please report this to the Ethics Office or anonymously through our hotline. [www.dekalbcountyga.gov/ethicspoint](http://www.dekalbcountyga.gov/ethicspoint).
- 3) **Leadership must set the tone.** If leadership does not tolerate unethical behavior – in themselves or subordinates – those below will follow the example.
- 4) **Engage your employees.** Multiple studies have shown that employees who feel engaged, that is employees who feel they can speak up and their opinions are valued, are far less likely to commit ethical violations. Make your employees feel valued by listening to their opinions on how ethical and fair the workplace is.

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