



Office of Ethics and Compliance Standard Operating Procedure Request for Approval for Attendance at Events Form

This Standard Operating Procedure governs the process for submission and approval of Request for Approval for Attendance at Events Forms.

Pursuant to New Jersey State law (N.J.S.A. 52:13D-12 et seq.) and regulation (N.J.A.C. 19:61-6.1 et seq.) University Hospital (UH) officers and employees must receive prior approval from their supervisors and Ethics Liaison Officer (ELO) before attending events to which they are invited in their official capacity that take place away from the work location and are sponsored or co-sponsored by non-State government sources. Employees and officers must fill out a Request for Approval for Attendance at Events Form, which is submitted to their supervisor for initial approval and then must be approved by the ELO.

The attendance form, is located on the Office of Ethics and Compliance Website at:
<http://www.uhnj.org/compliance/docs/UHRequestAttendanceEvents.pdf>

1. Events Defined

Events are defined as meetings, conferences, seminars, trainings, speaking engagements, cocktail parties, fundraisers, ribbon cutting and ground breakings that meet the following criteria:

- UH personnel are invited in their official capacity as State employees
- The events take place away from the work location
- The events are sponsored or co-sponsored by non-State government sources

Meetings that UH officers and employees attend in the regular course of business at which no benefits such as meals are offered are not considered to be events and do not require the submission of an attendance form. In addition, event invitations extended to UH officers and employees that are not related to their full-time employment or official UH duties do not require the submission of an attendance form.

2. Process for Granting of Approval

If an event invitation is related to an UH officer or employee's full time employment or official State duties, the ELO will consider the following general review criteria, including but not limited to:

- The identity of the sponsor
- The purpose of the event
- The identity of other expected participants
- Whether attendance and/or participation in the event will assist the officer or employee in carrying out his or her official duties and support the mission of UH

Interested Parties

When reviewing attendance forms the ELO will closely evaluate events that are sponsored by interested parties. Interested parties include, but are not limited to, individuals and/or entities that supply goods or services to UH, solicit business from UH or are grantees or grantors of UH.

If an employee is invited to an event sponsored by an interested party, and the event invitation is extended to the employee in his official State capacity, in most circumstances the employee or UH must pay any expenses associated with attending the event.

In addition, if an employee is invited to an event sponsored by an interested party in his private capacity, the ELO can advise the employee that his or her attendance at such an event could create an appearance problem. The ELO may counsel an employee to decline an event invitation based upon the sponsor's relationship to UH, or if the employee still wishes to attend, to reimburse the sponsor for all costs to avoid creating the impression that he or she might favor that event sponsor in his or her official capacity at UH. The ELO will also advise UH personnel that if they accept event benefits from an interested party in their private capacity, they could be required to recuse themselves from all official dealings with that entity on behalf of UH. Accordingly, acceptance of such benefits might serve to constrain or restrict the exercise of their official duties. When attending events in their private capacity, UH employees should also be aware that they cannot do so on State time, and are required to charge vacation or personal leave for any event attended during work hours.

Speakers' Exception

If a UH employee or officer is invited to an interested party sponsored event that is designed to provide training, dissemination of information, or the exchange of ideas and the employee or officer is making a speech, participating in a panel at the event or is an accompanying resource person for the speaker and/or participant, then the speakers' exception applies. Under the speakers' exception, an employee or officer may accept benefits such as conference registration, meals, travel reimbursement and lodging from the event sponsor. However, employees and officers are not allowed to accept collateral benefits such as entertainment, outings, or meals taken in a non group setting from an event sponsor. Collateral benefits must be paid for by the employee or officer.

Forms for events sponsored by an interested party where an employee or officer is accepting benefits under the speaker's exception must be submitted by the ELO to the New Jersey State Ethics Commission (SEC).

Non-Interested Parties

If an employee or officer is invited to an event sponsored by a non-interested party, but the event invitation is extended to the employee or officer in his or her official State capacity, then the employee or officer can accept benefits from the event sponsor even if he or she is not speaking, but still must fill out an attendance form. However, employees and officers are not allowed to accept collateral benefits such as entertainment or outings from an event sponsor, even if the sponsor is a non-interested party. Collateral benefits must be paid for by the employee or officer.

3. Timeline for Submission, Supporting Documentation and Subsequent Amendments

UH employees and officers are advised to submit attendance forms one to two weeks prior to an event in order to allow for sufficient lead time for supervisor and ELO review and approval. In situations where individuals are notified of attendance obligations at the last minute, or have simply neglected to file the required form, the form must be submitted subsequent to the event. However, in such circumstances the employee or officer will be required to reimburse the event sponsor and may be subject to an ethics violation if he or she accepts benefits at the event which are not permitted.

A copy of the event invitation and the event program or agenda should always be attached to the attendance form. If the circumstances of an event differ from what was disclosed on the form - for example, the employee did not realize that the event would include a meal until after he or she attended - then the employee should immediately contact the ELO for guidance regarding whether the sponsor must be reimbursed.