

W/R  
Outreach

The following are some questions and answers on the legal limits of White House outreach on welfare to work. The first set of questions deal with our relationships with a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated to assist businesses and other entities with welfare to work programs. The second set deal with our use of particular individuals in carrying welfare to work outreach to religious organizations and non-profits. The answers to these questions are based upon the Standards of Ethical Conduct of Government Employees and other applicable regulations and statutes.

A. Relationship with a particular 501(c)(3).

1. Can we refer businesses and other entities interested in hiring or training welfare recipients to an existing 501(c)(3) for information and direction?

Yes, provided we act evenhandedly if there is more than one 501(c)(3) organization offering similar assistance. If we are not aware of any competing 501(c)(3)s, there is no problem in referring interested parties to one entity.

2. Can we invite representatives of a 501(c)(3) to meetings on welfare to work implementation strategy -- including meetings with the NGA or other similar groups?

Yes, subject to the requirements of even-handedness noted above and provided we do not disclose to them any confidential (non-public) information.

3. Is there a problem in attending meetings held by groups such as the NGA if included in those meetings are representatives from a 501(c)(3)?

No. However, if another 501(c)(3) requests a meeting separately from the one called by the NGA, we must be prepared to meet with them on a similar basis.

4. Can we direct the 501(c)(3) to engage in a particular action or follow a particular strategy?

No. The White House may not direct a private entity to take a particular action or course of action nor we selectively decide which private entities receive public information. We can, however, provide publicly available information to the private entity(ies) and indicate what strategies we feel are the most effective.

5. Can we create our own non-profit to perform welfare to work outreach to religious organizations or to other non-profits?

No. The general rule is that we cannot create non-profits to effectuate government policy. We are currently looking into whether some limited exception to this rule is possible.

B. Use of individuals for outreach.

1. Can we ask individuals to volunteer to work with religious organizations and non-profits in helping them with welfare to work?

This is a difficult issue. There is no problem in discussing issues with private individuals and indicating that we would like them to work on particular matters. However, we cannot direct a private person's activity and we must be careful to not give that person the impression that she holds an official position or that her activities are government sanctioned. That individual, in turn, must be take care in dealings with third-parties not to convey the impression that she is acting on behalf of the White House or that her actions have been officially sanctioned.

2. Can we announce that a particular private person is the point person for the White House for outreach to religious organizations and non-profits?

No. We can mention the efforts of persons of which we have knowledge; but if more than one person is engaged in similar activities, we may need to be inclusive to avoid the appearance of favoritism. If we want a person to have a specific and ongoing role, we may have to make that person an employee or provide that person with another form of formal status.

3. Can we direct a private individual to engage in specific actions or employ a particular strategy in welfare to work outreach?

Not unless that person assumes an official position in the Administration.