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## Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

# Memo

**To:** Mike Murawski, COE advocate  
**From:** Breno Penichet, COE investigator  
**Date:** Nov. 14, 2007  
**Re:** K07-114 Dorothy Lowe

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**Background:** COE opened a case looking into whether an employee of the Miami-Dade Department of Human Services exploited her official position for personal gain. The case was initiated following an August 28, 2007 e-mail from Ms. Carmen Morrina Director Office of Administration Miami-Dade Department of Human Services. According to the information supplied in an accompanying document it was alleged that Ms. Dorothy Lowe who was the Acting Director for the Naranja Neighborhood Service Center, entered into a rental agreement with Ms. Grace Guarderama in August 2006 to rent her a property belonging to Ms. Lowe and her husband, located at 10940 SW 218 Terrace, Goulds Florida 33170. Further information provided disclosed that Ms. Guarderama was in the Emergency housing program which provides temporary short-term housing as a result of becoming homeless because of a Government action, Legal eviction and/or Natural disaster. Ms. Lowe was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the center.

A review of the rest of the Information revealed that in entering into this agreement Ms. Lowe may have violated Miami-Dade County Personnel rules as well as some Departmental provisions and SOP. The report goes on to state that Ms. Lowe displayed poor judgment and was in a position to influence the client and gain financially. It was also discovered that Ms. Lowe had contacted the COE and requested an opinion regarding this matter.

**Findings:** COE Investigator Penichet obtained a copy a letter dated February 13, 2006 Re: SEC 06-08. It was determined that because of the information provided Ms.

Lowe was eligible to rent her property for Section 8 Housing, it did not mention any other circumstances that may be out side the Code, Section 2-11.1(c) of the Conflict of Interest & Code of Ethics Ordinance.

COE Investigators additionally Interviewed Ms. Lisa Skirving who is Ms. Lowe's direct supervisor. Ms. Skirving verified all the information in the report and advised that she felt Ms. Lowe was only trying to help the client due to the fact that she was running out of time at the shelter and needed to move, also the money used to pay for the deposit and first month rent was actually saved by the client no public money was used only some money from a non-profit that helps but it is a very small part.

COE Investigators also interviewed Ms. Dorothy Lowe; she stated that her husband is in charge of renting the house, this property was her father's house until he passed away. Ms. Lowe advised that it is very difficult to find reasonable housing for the client in the area and the staff routinely do canvass in order to identify properties that can be rented by the clients. Ms. Lowe advised that the staff included her property an when she became aware she requested the opinion from the COE. Ms. Lowe did not feel she was doing any thing improper and the proof is the fact she never concealed it from any one, the sad fact is that the client destroyed her property and only paid the first month and she had to take civil action to remove her. Ms. Lowe provided documents that are made part of this file.

Note: All documents received are included in the file. COE Investigator Penichet attempted to contact Ms. Guarderama with negative results.

**Conclusion:** Accordingly, it is recommended that the above-cited be closed. It does not appear that any Ordinance within our jurisdiction has been violated. This should be reviewed for possible Administrative action.