

Anti Corruption Glossary

While all these terms seem familiar, sometimes they are used in very specific ways when talking about corruption.

These are a combination of accepted definitions from around the world and might differ from certain laws or regulations. For example, "bribery" and "graft" are often used interchangeably in some areas.

Category I: The Appearance of Corruption

This Category includes those types of corrupt activities that are not directly depriving the public from their resources, but focus on the appearance of unfairness.

Special Treatment: This is something of value in exchange for speeding up or "special handling" of a government service otherwise entitled. This is sometimes called "legal corruption" as the member of the public had a right to that service anyway. The appearance of corruption and favoritism is corrosive and the official might be tempted to slow the routine process down to increase demand for a "handling fee"

Conflict of Interest (Self Dealing): The most common of Conflict of Interest; this is where the public official has a private interest in the decision or official activity. Regulating business licenses for a particular industry when the official owns a business in that industry. This is not to say that any unfair practices are occurring, but only that the Conflict exists.

Conflict of Interest (Two Hats): The Conflict of Interest does not have to be Public versus Private. A Government Official, who has two jobs in the government, or two roles to play, can create an unfair advantage for himself in the second position.

Conflict of Interest (Family Members): As with a self-dealing Conflict, this is the case of a Government Official regulating or controlling an area in which a family member stands to benefit.

Graft: Graft is simply the receipt of a gift or payment by a public official from a person over whom he has some authority. A good example would be a large Christmas Gift or money payment to the local Police Chief. This is a one-way transaction. It is different from "Bribery" where the Police Chief would do something in return.

Favoritism by Nepotism: The selection of a family member for a job or government benefit. There are times where a family member might be the best person for a government benefit, but the appearance of wrongdoing and later problems of accountability make this a corrosive situation

Favoritism by Cronyism: The selection of a close friend for a job or a government benefit. As these are not necessarily bad acts, it only creates the impression that there are unfair or biased practices occurring

Favoritism by Patronage: The selection of a party or political supporter for a job or a government benefit. One can think of numerous examples where this would be appropriate or even desirable, but the widespread awarding of government jobs to supporters is corrosive to the public trust in government

Category II: Administrative Corruption

Administrative (or petit) Corruption is where impartial, fair rules exist, but a government official implements the rule in an unfair way or to an illegal advantage. A good example is of a low-level worker granting a license where such a license was not to be permitted. These below are the cases of Administrative Corruption that are NOT also part of the Criminal List of Corrupt Actions.

Non Performance: When a government official is tasked to do an act, either routinely or specifically, and does not perform, this is non-performance. A common example would be to not report a specific act, (a cover-up) or to fail to enforce a law (dereliction).

Unauthorized Sale: A government employee sells government assets without proper authority, (not necessarily keeping the profits) to a person not authorized to receive them. This can be a regulatory sale, like a license, or a property sale as in surplus goods. If the official keeps the proceeds, this is also "theft", or "embezzlement."

Misuse of Office: This is a general term for using government property against its intended purpose, not necessarily for personal gain: driving a government car to visit a relative, for example. In the misappropriation of funds, it is not necessarily taking funds meant for the government and spending them on private matters, but also to simply direct the funds to another area of government use that was not intended by the government. Taking money meant for buying a new police car and using it to provide air-conditioning to the station house would be a good example. If it involves taking money for personal use, it falls into the more specific category of theft or embezzlement, below.

Bribery: This form of corruption involves the exchange of something of value for government action (or inaction). Examples are numerous: paying a fee to an official to grant an otherwise prohibited permit, for example. Bribery is often combined with other forms of corruption.

Unauthorized/Improper Disclosure: A common form of corruption where government information is given out on a selective basis. For example, the unpublished news of a large procurement process is passed on to friends or family so that they can get a jump-start on the competition in preparing an offer.

Category III: Criminal Corruption

These corrupt practices are also universally regarded as criminal acts. They fall into the corruption category as they also involve malfeasance of a public official.

Theft (stealing): Intentionally depriving the government of property with the intent to permanently keep it. Quite simply, to take government property as one's own. This is the most simple of the "Criminal Corruption" category, as it is widely understood what theft is, but it must be differentiated from embezzlement and misdirection.

Embezzlement: Embezzlement is when a person is entrusted to property and then retains it for his own use: in other words, theft without trespass. This is more common in government corruption as officials are often placed in temporary possession of property or money. A common example would be for a clerk to take money from the cash drawer of a government department.

Misdirection of Funds: This is embezzlement by another name. Misdirection is the most common type of embezzlement, where the government official directs money from the appropriate target, often through an associate or fake organization.

Kickbacks: A kickback is the combination of Bribery and Misdirection. If a government official receives a "piece of the action" from a decision made as a government official, this is called a kickback. In most countries, it is prosecuted under embezzlement, as it is taking funds from the government, albeit through an intermediary (the contractor).

Criminal Act under Color of Law: Committing any crime while using an office or position as an entrée, such as intentionally arresting the innocent or using police surveillance resources to collect information on a personal rival is an act "under color of law."

Category IV: State Capture

State Capture is influencing the formations of laws, systems or rules for a person's own benefit. Since this can appear to be Administrative Corruption on a larger scale, it is often called Grand Corruption. An example would be if a Politician created a law that required import licenses to only be given to a small percent of the public, in a way that benefited him or his family.