

April 27, 1999
Re: IO-99-79

You inquired whether employees of the Department of Recreation and Parks could receive cell phones for their use in summer recreational programs. You stated that AT&T would be donating these phones, plus a certain amount of free air time, to the employees, as part of a nationwide program called the "AT&T Safe Schools Program". The purpose of providing these phones is to insure that program managers and other supervising adults have instant phone access in case of emergencies and other contingencies. You also indicated that the schools would be responsible for any expenses incurred in excess of the time donated by AT&T.

Based on the sample agreement you sent me, I am presuming that the county employees to whom these phones are given, will use them exclusively in the conduct of specified department business. The phones cannot be used for long distance calls, and the county will monitor and report on the use of the phones. Under these circumstances, the donation of the phones would be a gift to county citizens, and not to county employees. The use of these phones by county employees will provide a benefit to the participants in county programs, and not to the employees who use them. Therefore, I do not see any ethical issues raised by your inquiry.

If you have other questions, please call any time.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director