

COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: CODE OF CONDUCT

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I. Purpose

To establish a code of conduct to govern the actions of departmental members.

II. Discussion

All employees of the Covington Police Department are members of a team working together with the primary objective of serving the community. Members who fail to follow the necessary rules and regulations governing conduct not only penalize themselves, but also do a disservice to other members of the department. The code of conduct is not intended to restrict the privileges of anyone but designed to ensure the rights and safety of all members and to provide working guidelines to encourage equitable and professional conduct. The violation or attempted violation by an employee of any Federal, State, County, or Municipal Law is prohibited.

III. Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to administer discipline in a fair and equitable manner that best serves both the employee and the agency. Discipline may be administered in a positive, corrective or punitive manner.

- A. Positive: Positive discipline is designed to stimulate the morale of the employee. Positive forms of discipline include rewards such as time off with pay, awards and letters of commendation. (See SOP A200 / Awards and Commendations). [A200- Awards and Commendations.doc](#)
- B. Corrective: Corrective discipline is progressive in nature and includes remedial training and counseling. This method of discipline is appropriate in those cases involving minor infractions that can be corrected through proper counseling or training.
- C. Guardian Tracking System – An electronic database utilized to document all aspects of an employee's performance, commendations, corrective action and employee early warning notifications.
- D. Punitive: Punitive discipline is also progressive in nature and shall include the following:

1. Verbal Counseling/Reprimand: An employee contact designed to be a constructive tool or training method utilized to stimulate positive and/or remedial training as well as to motivate and encourage all departmental personnel to meet or exceed the expected goals and objectives of the person, the division, or the department. A spoken warning or indication of disapproval concerning a specific act, infraction or violation of a policy or procedure that is usually given by the immediate supervisor and is noted for the record but does not become part of an employee's personnel record. All verbal counseling/verbal reprimands will be documented in Guardian Tracking.
 2. Written Reprimand: A written statement concerning a specific act, infraction of a policy or procedure that is made part of the employee's personnel record. All written reprimands will be documented in Guardian Tracking.
 3. Within-Grade Reduction: The movement of an employee from a higher base salary to a lower base salary without a reduction in grade or change in position for a specific period of time not to exceed one year. All within-grade reductions in pay will be documented in Guardian Tracking.
 4. Suspension: The placing of an employee on leave without pay status for specific period, not to exceed ten (10) work days, for a specific act, infraction or violation of a policy or procedure. All suspensions will be documented in Guardian Tracking.
 5. Suspension Pending Investigation of Charges or Trial: The placing of an employee on leave without pay status for an indefinite period pending investigation of charges and / or trial for job related offenses. If found innocent, the employee shall be reinstated without loss of pay. Any salary due for such period shall equal the employee's normal earnings less the amount earned in other employment obtained and engaged in during the period. All suspensions will be documented in Guardian Tracking.
 6. Demotions: The movement of an employee from one merit system position or class to another with a lower-level assignment. All demotions will be documented in Guardian Tracking.
 7. Dismissal: The removal of an employee from city service for cause. All dismissals and corresponding documentation will be documented in Guardian Tracking.
- D. Corrective and punitive disciplinary actions against an employee shall be initiated promptly when it is evident that such actions are necessary to maintain an orderly and productive work environment. Except in cases of theft or serious violations of policy or procedure that creates a health or safety risk, disciplinary actions must be progressive in nature. The severity of the action shall be determined after consideration of the gravity of the offense, its relationship to the employee's assigned duties and responsibilities, the employee's work record and any other relevant factors.

IV. Responsibility

All supervisors in the police department are responsible for the administration of discipline. First line supervisors have the continuing opportunity to observe employee conduct and appearance and must administer discipline when and where it will be most effective. Copies of all disciplinary actions, including written reprimands, shall be forwarded to Internal Affairs for their records. First line supervisors are authorized to take the following disciplinary measures.

A. Corrective:

1. Counseling: A supervisor should use counseling as a function of discipline in those cases involving minor infractions. Criteria used to determine the necessity of counseling as opposed to other discipline may include:
 - a. Employee's past work record (including disciplinary record, attendance, job performance evaluations, etc.);
 - b. Employee's attitude (towards the work place, supervisors and co-workers);
 - c. The severity of the offense in relation to departmental guidelines governing offenses. (See Disciplinary Code, beginning on page 6).

Supervisors who utilize counseling, as a form of discipline, shall document the conditions that prompted the counseling session and the corrective action expected. Results should be forwarded to the Watch Commander and then to the Division Commander for review. A copy will be forwarded to Internal Affairs.

2. Remedial Training

A supervisor should use remedial training as a method of discipline in those cases involving minor infractions usually of a procedural nature in departmental policy. Examples of areas where remedial training may be used as a function of discipline include radio procedures, firearms qualifications, report writing, etc.

Criteria used to determine the necessity of remedial training, as opposed to other forms of discipline, include:

- a. The effectiveness of training in a particular area to improve productivity;
- b. The ability of the employee to respond to retraining in specific areas;
- c. The employee's work performance record to include attendance, disciplinary records, etc.

Supervisors who utilize remedial training as a form of discipline should document the employee's shortcomings, deficiencies or lack of expertise and either take immediate steps to retrain the employee in those areas that are deficient or schedule the employee for remedial training.

Documentation shall be forwarded to the Watch Commander and then to the Division Commander for review. A copy will be forwarded to Internal Affairs.

3. Notice of Corrective Action

- a. A supervisor may give an employee a notice of corrective action for minor offenses of improper conduct. A notice of corrective action will not affect an employee's raise. It is only used to document a minor infraction of department policy or work performance.
- b. A notice of corrective action will be maintained in an employee's training files for a period of one year. If an employee receives four notices of corrective action within one year, he or she will be given a written reprimand for failure to perform job duties in an acceptable manner.

B. Punitive:

1. An immediate or higher level supervisor has the authority to immediately relieve an employee from duty if the retention of such employee will cause or continue a disruption of the work force and, within one workday, shall submit a recommendation for appropriate disciplinary action to the Chief of Police.
2. The Chief of Police shall have the authority to take any disciplinary action provided for in these regulations. Prior to taking any disciplinary action, the Chief of Police shall provide the employee with a copy of the charges and allow such employee a reasonable period of time to respond, which shall be not less than two (2) work days.
3. First line supervisors may immediately suspend any employee for the balance of one work day under any of the following conditions:
 - a. Employee is intoxicated;
 - b. Gross insubordination or misconduct;
 - c. Any violation of criminal law;
 - d. Gross negligence involving potential loss of life;
 - e. Any violation of department rules or regulations that would subject the violating employee to immediate dismissal.
4. Patrol supervisors who suspend an employee under any of the conditions listed above must immediately notify the Watch Commander and the Patrol Captain and submit a written report. Investigative supervisors shall notify the Captain of Investigations. All suspensions without pay are considered punitive in nature and require the signature of the Chief of Police prior to the form going to the City Personnel Office.
5. In all cases of within-grade reduction, demotion, suspension and dismissal, an employee shall receive written notice of such disciplinary action at least five (5) working days prior to the effective date. The

standard charging document shall contain the reasons for the actions with specific charges, the effective date and appeal rights.

6. When a dismissal is made, the employee shall receive a statement of the status of fringe and retirement benefits and a statement as to the content of the employee's employment record relating to the dismissal.

V. Application of Disciplinary Measures

- A. Employees of the police department are expected to abide by the rules and regulations of the department and the City of Covington. Violations of those rules and regulations will submit the employee to discipline for violation of those rules and regulations.
- B. Recognizing that each instance of misconduct may differ from somewhat similar actions, department supervisors and the Chief of Police retain the right to treat each occurrence on an individual basis without creating a precedent for future cases. The rules and regulations in this policy are not to be interpreted as a limitation upon the retained rights of supervisors and the Chief of Police, but are to be used as a guide.
- C. The rules and regulations provide for recommended progressive penalties to apply to specific offenses; however, the recommended penalties may be modified by the Chief of Police or a department supervisor to include a lesser or more severe penalty when extenuating circumstances are present.

VI. Suspensions

Police personnel may be suspended from duty as follows:

- A. Non-disciplinary suspension with full pays and benefits.
 1. Whenever an officer's use of force results in death or serious physical injury, he will be removed from line of duty assignment pending an internal review by the Office of Professional Standards and/or the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Such removal will be non-disciplinary in nature with no loss of pay or benefits. Removal shall continue until the investigation is complete unless otherwise ordered by the Chief of Police.
 2. Pending Internal Affairs investigation. Whenever an incident arises where the public interest necessitates the immediate imposition of discipline, an employee may be relieved of normal duties by an immediate supervisor or Watch Commander. Removal shall continue until otherwise ordered by the Chief of Police.

- B. Disciplinary suspensions with pay

An immediate or higher level supervisor has the authority to relieve an employee from duty with pay if the retention of such employee will cause or continue a disruption of the work force.

VII. Disciplinary Records

- A. All disciplinary reports shall be retained in the employee's personnel file for a minimum period of seven years. After such time, the employee may submit a written request to the City Manager for the removal of the disciplinary report. If

the request is approved, the disciplinary report will be removed from the employee's file and destroyed.

- B. All reports pertaining to an Internal Affairs investigation shall be maintained in a separate file and shall be retained pursuant to Georgia Records Retention Schedule.

VIII. Employee Appeals

- A. Any career status employee, except those under the direct supervision of the City Manager, may appeal a written reprimand or within-grade reduction in accordance with City Personnel Policy No. 507.
- B. Employees under the direct supervision of the City Manager may appeal such disciplinary actions to the Mayor.
- C. Career status employees (except those under the direct supervision of the City Manager) may appeal a demotion, suspension or dismissal in accordance with City of Covington Personnel Policy No. 507.
- D. Employees under the direct supervision of the City Manager may appeal such disciplinary actions to the Mayor and Council; a majority action of which shall be considered final.
- E. Employees, other than merit system career employees, may appeal a disciplinary action in accordance with City Personnel Policy No. 507.

DISCIPLINARY CODE

The offenses listed in the Disciplinary Code are not all inclusive. The exercise of good judgment and the application of common sense, together with the highest degree of cooperation by those entrusted with law enforcement are essential to effective police work. The Chief of Police and/or Command Staff reserved the right to discipline employees for offenses that are not listed here to include, but not limited to, violations of departmental policies and procedures, City of Covington ordinances, state or federal laws, or ethical violations.

Section 1 - Insubordination Offenses

§1.01 Respect Toward Superiors

Police personnel shall, at all times, display respect and shall address supervisors and superiors officers by proper rank and title.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Third Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension).

§1.02 Abusiveness

Police personnel shall not use abusive language or gestures toward a supervisor, superior officer or co-worker.

(First Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Second Offense - ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - dismissal).

§1.03 Public Criticism of Policies, Procedures or Orders

Police personnel shall support the policies, procedures, and orders of the department and shall not publicly criticize or ridicule the police department or its policies, procedures, or orders in any manner where such interferes with the maintenance of discipline or otherwise undermines the effectiveness of the police department.

(First Offense - three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - three (3) to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - dismissal).

§1.04 Prompt Compliance with Lawful Order of a Supervisor

Police personnel shall promptly execute the lawful orders of a supervisor of the police department and shall not delay or fail to carry out such orders or instructions in a timely manner.

(First Offense - Verbal Reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - Written Reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense – five (5) days suspension to dismissal).

§1.05 Compliance with the Direct Order of a Superior Officer or Internal Affairs Investigator

Police personnel shall obey the direct orders of superior officers or internal affairs investigators to answer questions specifically and directly related to an internal investigation of alleged misconduct and shall comply with orders from internal affairs investigators to submit to a polygraph examination, voice stress analysis, medical examination, interview, etc. Employees will not discuss on-going internal investigations with anyone outside of Internal Affairs, without specific permission from Internal Affairs or the Chief of Police.

(First Offense - three (3) days suspension to dismissal; Second Offense - dismissal).

§1.06 Concerted Curtailment of Work

Police personnel shall not engage in concerted curtailment of work by instigating, leading or participating in any walkout, strike, sit-down, or refusal to return to duty at the scheduled time.

(First Offense - dismissal).

Section 2 - Neglect of Duty Offenses

§2.01 Abuse of Rest Period

Police personnel shall take only the specified amount of time for meals or rest periods as established in the standard operating procedure.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense - written reprimand; Third Offense – one (1) to three (3) days suspension).

§2.02 Preparation for Duty

Police personnel shall be physically and mentally prepared for duty when they report to work. It shall be the responsibility of the employee to get enough rest prior to their scheduled tour of duty to maximize effectiveness and safety.

(First Offense – verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand; Third Offense – one (1) to three (3) days suspension).

§2.03 Tardiness

Police personnel shall report for duty properly prepared at the time and place required by assignment or orders. Three (3) incidents of tardiness in one month constitute one (1) offense.

(First Offense - one (1) day suspension; Second Offense - one (1) to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - one (1) to ten (10) days suspension to dismissal).

§2.04 Failure to Report as a Witness When Duly Notified or Subpoenaed

Police personnel shall promptly report as a witness when duly and properly notified or by judicial subpoena. In cases of conflict or illness, it is the officer's responsibility to notify the proper authority (judge, district attorney, supervisor, etc.).

(First Offense - written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense – three (3) days to five (5) days suspension).

§2.05 Notification of Sick Leave

Police personnel shall notify their supervisors of absence caused by illness no later than 2 hours prior to the scheduled time for duty, whenever possible. Absences caused by emergencies or other legitimate reasons shall be reported as soon as possible. If unable to contact a supervisor 2 hours prior to the start of a shift, the employee shall notify CSR and CSR should then continue to attempt to notify supervisor. Personnel shall notify the supervisor prior to leaving work due to sickness or other emergency.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension).

§2.06 Abuse of Sick Leave

Police personnel shall not feign illness or injury or falsely report themselves ill or injured for the purpose of staying out of work through the use of sick leave.

(First Offense - written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - five (5) to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - dismissal).

§2.07 False Illness or Injury Report

Police personnel shall not feign illness or injury or falsely report themselves ill or injured for the purpose of making a fraudulent claim for insurance, worker's compensation or disability retirement.

(First Offense - dismissal.)

§2.08 Response to Radio Call

Police personnel shall respond promptly to all radio calls and shall monitor other units' radio traffic.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to 3 days suspension; Third Offense – three (3) days to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.09 Constant Contact with Radio Dispatcher

Police personnel must maintain continuous contact with radio dispatchers whether in or out of the patrol unit; therefore, officers must have their portable radio turned on when out of the patrol unit.

(First Offense – verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense – written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension.)

§2.10 Submission of Reports

Police personnel shall submit all required written reports prior to ending a tour of duty, except as authorized by a supervisor. Personnel will always submit required written reports prior to days off.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense – written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.11 Willful Violation of Departmental Procedures and/or Directives

Police personnel shall not willfully ignore or violate official policies, directives, procedures, orders or supervisory instructions.

(First Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Second Offense - five (5) to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - dismissal).

§2.12 Endangering Others Through Neglect of Duty

Sworn police personnel shall take appropriate action in response to emergency situations where there is a clear and present danger to others and in response to serious crimes that come to their attention while on duty.

(First Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension; Second Offense - written reprimand to dismissal.)

§2.13 Leaving Assigned Work Area During Work Hours

Police personnel shall remain in their assigned work area while on duty unless authorized by a supervisor.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.14 Sleeping on Duty

Employees shall remain awake while on duty. If unable to do so, they shall report to their supervisor, who shall determine the proper course of action.

(First Offense – verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension).

§2.15 Failure to Work Overtime, Special Hours

Police personnel shall promptly report for duty when assigned to work overtime, special hours, special details or special shifts.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to dismissal).

§2.16 Failure to Satisfactorily Complete School Attendance; Other Requirements

Police personnel who are scheduled for training schools, seminars or classes are expected to meet all the requirements for the school, seminar or class to include, but not limited to, attendance, attire, academic performance, academy rules and regulations, etc.

(First Offense – verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense – written reprimand to dismissal).

§2.17 Failure to Report Job Related Injury

Police personnel shall promptly report any job-related injury to their immediate supervisor.

(First Offense - written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - three (3) to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - five (5) to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.18 Failure to Report a Police Vehicle Accident

Police personnel shall immediately report any police vehicle accidents in which they are involved to dispatch and to their supervisor.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to dismissal).

§2.19 Failure to Carry Assigned Equipment on Duty

Police personnel shall carry all necessary assigned equipment while on duty. (i.e. firearm, badge, I.D., leather, handcuffs, flashlight, etc.)

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.20 Failure to Report Loss or Damage of Equipment

Police personnel shall immediately report the loss or damage of any police equipment to a supervisor.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.21 Dress and Grooming Standards While On Duty

Police personnel shall maintain a neat and professional appearance in accordance with established policy while on duty or in uniform. (Note: "uniform" refers to the dress requirement of the specific assignment). Personnel shall adhere to the grooming standards of the department by complying with SOP A060. In addition to the disciplinary actions listed below, the employee may be required to go home to fix the discrepancy either in dress or grooming.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension).

§2.22 Notification of Correct Address and Telephone Number

Police personnel shall keep the police department informed of their current home address and telephone number and are required to maintain telephone service so they can be reached at any time. Any changes to address or telephone number shall be reported to the police department within 24 hours of the change to both the CSR and the Accreditation Manager.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension).

§2.23 Care and Maintenance of Service Weapons and Other Equipment

All police officers that are required to carry a firearm or other equipment shall maintain such firearm and equipment in a clean and serviceable condition. In addition, officers must secure their weapon(s) when off-duty at home or other locations to protect the weapon(s) from unauthorized use, especially by family, friends or children or damage or loss.

(First Offense - written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.24 Search of Arrested Persons

Police officers shall exercise due care and diligence by thoroughly searching all persons they arrest. When a person cannot be thoroughly searched, the officer shall promptly notify the receiving officer.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense - written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§2.25 Unauthorized Persons in Patrol Vehicle

Police officers shall not allow any person in the police vehicle unless the person is under arrest, a prisoner, a stranded motorist, an authorized ride-along or otherwise authorized by a supervisor.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense - written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense – three (3) days to ten (10) days suspension).

Unauthorized person in vehicle injured while in vehicle

(First Offense - five (5) days suspension; Second Offense - five (5) to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - five (5) days suspension to dismissal).

Section 3 - Improper Conduct Offenses

§3.01 Conduct Unbecoming

An employee must, at all times on and off duty, conduct himself/herself in a manner which does not bring discredit to himself/herself, the Department, or the City. Conduct unbecoming shall include that conduct:

- a. which adversely affects the morale or efficiency of the Department; or that
- b. which has a tendency to destroy public respect for employees and confidence in the Department.

To sustain a charge of conduct unbecoming, it is not necessary that the alleged conduct be criminal in nature.

Typical examples of conduct unbecoming include, but are not limited to:

- a. speeding
- b. profane language in public
- c. associating with known felons
- d. ticket fixing
- e. misappropriation of departmental property
- f. removal of departmental records without authorization
- g. failure to cooperate with an internal investigation
- h. failure to report that the employee was arrested or received a citation from another law enforcement agency
- i. unauthorized or inappropriate personal web pages or other internet-based postings.

(First Offense – 3 days suspension to dismissal; Second Offense – 10 days to dismissal; Third Offense – dismissal).

§3.02 Courtesy

Police personnel shall be polite, courteous and professional in their contacts with the public and other police personnel.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.03 Confidentiality of Addresses and Telephone Numbers

The address and phone numbers of all police personnel is considered confidential. Such information may only be released when authorized by a supervisor or by the consent of the personnel that it involves.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.04 Use of Radio Procedures

Police personnel shall follow proper radio procedures in accordance with established policy.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense; verbal to written reprimand; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.05 Gossip

Police personnel shall not engage in or convey gossip that is detrimental to the department or other police personnel.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension. Third Offense - written reprimand to dismissal).

§3.06 Use of Profanity

Police personnel shall not use profane language or gestures when communicating with or to the public, co-workers, or supervisors.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.07 Correspondence

Police personnel shall not use the departmental letterhead or stationary without proper authorization from a supervisor.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.08 Public Appearances, Speeches

Police personnel shall secure the consent of a supervisor prior to making any public appearance or speech where they are representing themselves as a police officer or where such appearance or speech might be interpreted as the official position of the department.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to dismissal).

§3.09 Outside Employment

Police personnel shall obtain prior approval from a supervisor before engaging in any extra-duty or off-duty employment.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - verbal reprimand to dismissal).

§3.10 Wearing of the Uniform While Under Suspension

Police personnel will not wear the uniform of the Covington Police Department while under disciplinary suspension, except as may be authorized by the Chief of Police.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.11 Recommending Attorneys or Bail Bondsmen

Police personnel shall not recommend or suggest to any person arrested, or to any prisoner, or to any other person concerned with a prisoner in custody, the employment or hiring of any specific attorney or bail bondsman.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - ten (10) days suspension).

§3.12 Bonding Agents

Police personnel shall not become the surety or guarantor, or go on the bond of, or furnish bail for any person arrested and charged with a crime except members of their family, and then only upon authorization of his/her commanding officer.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.13 Use of Prescription Drugs While On Duty

Police personnel shall determine the likely effects of prescription drugs from their physician before reporting for duty. Police personnel shall obtain the approval of their commanding officer before reporting for duty while taking lawfully prescribed medications that are likely to impair normal physical and mental faculties.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Second Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to dismissal).

§3.14 Use or Odor of Alcoholic Beverages While On Duty

Police personnel shall not consume, ingest or partake of intoxicating liquors or alcoholic beverages of any kind while on duty, except as authorized in the performance of official duties. Medically prescribed drugs with an alcohol base shall not be used on duty unless approved by a commanding officer. Police personnel shall not report for duty, or be on duty with the odor of alcoholic beverages on their breath or while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Any supervisor who suspects that an employee is under the influence of alcohol will summon another supervisor to help substantiate the violation. Once both supervisors believe that the employee has been drinking, the employee will be tested. If test results indicate that the employee has a blood alcohol level of .02% - .0399% and that employee is in a safety sensitive function, the employee will be relieved of duty for a minimum of 24 hours. If the test results indicate a blood alcohol level of .04% or higher, the employee cannot return to work without a release from a substance abuse program.

(First Offense - five (5) days suspension, plus treatment; Second Offense - ten (10) days suspension, plus treatment to dismissal).

§3.15 Use of Tobacco Products

The use of tobacco products is strictly prohibited in all vehicles and facilities owned or maintained by the Covington Police Department. As used in this policy, “tobacco products” includes cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff and any other products that have tobacco as the primary ingredient.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand; Second Offense - written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension).

§3.16 Abuse of Official Identification

Police personnel shall maintain the security of their official police department identification, and shall not lend their identification card or badge to another person, or permit them to be photographed or reproduced.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.17 Intentional Abuse of Police Department Equipment

Police personnel shall utilize police department equipment only for its intended purpose in accordance with established procedures and shall not intentionally abuse, misuse or damage police equipment.

(First Offense - five (5) to ten (10) days suspension; Second Offense - dismissal).

§3.18 Careless Handling or Abuse of Equipment Resulting in Loss or Damage

All personnel shall utilize police department equipment only for its intended purpose in accordance with established procedures, and shall not subject such equipment to loss or damage through careless handling.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.19 Use of Department Issued and/or Personal Electronic Devices

Police personnel shall be permitted to use department issued and/or personal electronic devices to include audio/video recording devices, cell phones, cameras, etc. Use of such devices must be done in accordance with any established procedures and must ensure that all applicable laws are followed and the rights of individuals being recorded or photographed are not violated or compromised in any way.

(First Offense – verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense – written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.20 Use and Handling of Weapons

Police personnel shall use or handle weapons in a careful and prudent manner whether on or off duty. Officers are responsible for securing their weapons when off duty to

prevent unauthorized use by family, friends or children. Weapons shall only be used in accordance with applicable laws and established police department procedures.

(First Offense - verbal reprimand to dismissal; Second Offense - written reprimand to dismissal; Third Offense - dismissal).

§3.21 Improper Use of Official Position

Police personnel shall not use their official position to gain free admission to any public event or place of amusement, or to receive discounts at any eating establishment or merchandise of any type, except in the course of official duties or as authorized by the Chief of Police.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense - verbal reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension).

§3.22 Interfering with Official Investigations

Police personnel shall not interfere with a case being handled by other officers of the Covington Police Department or other governmental agencies. Officers shall not undertake any investigation or other official action that is not part of their regular duties unless ordered to do so by a supervisor; unless the intervening officer reasonably believes that a failure to act would result in an injustice or circumstances require immediate action.

(First Offense – written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension; Second Offense – five (5) days suspension to dismissal).

§3.23 Interference by Personnel Under Investigation

Police personnel, against whom a complaint has been made, shall not attempt directly or indirectly, by threat, intimidation, appeal, persuasion or the payment of money or other consideration, to secure the abandonment or withdrawal of the complaint, charges, or allegations.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.24 Recognition and Exposure of Undercover Officers

Police personnel shall protect the identity of officers engaged in covert operations, and shall not intentionally expose the identity or occupation of officers engaged in covert operations.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.25 Defacing or Marring Facilities or Bulletin Boards

Police personnel shall not mark, mar, alter or deface any printed or written notices placed upon police department bulletin board or facilities.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense – written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.26 Dissemination of Information

Police personnel shall treat the official business of the Covington Police Department as confidential information and shall ensure that it will be disseminated only to those for whom it is intended, by authorized persons and in accordance with established procedures. Sworn personnel may remove or copy official records or reports only in accordance with established procedures.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.27 Communicating Criminal Information

Police personnel shall maintain the security of confidential information, and shall not intentionally communicate or give law enforcement information to another which may aid a person to escape arrest, delay the apprehension of a criminal suspect, or secure the removal of stolen or embezzled goods, money, or other property. Police personnel shall not intentionally divulge the identity of criminal informants except as required by law and authorized by competent authority.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.28 Handling Monies and Property

Money and other property coming into the possession of police personnel, which does not belong to such police personnel, shall be delivered promptly to the proper evidence custodian and a report made of the transaction.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.29 Processing Property and Evidence

Property and evidence, which has been received in connection with official police department investigations, will be processed in accordance with established procedures. Police personnel shall not convert to their own use, manufacture, conceal, destroy, remove, tamper with, withhold or falsify any property or evidence in connection with an investigation or other official action.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.30 Association with Dissident Groups

Police personnel shall not knowingly associate with any person or organization which advocates or is instrumental in fostering hatred or persecution of any person or groups of persons, nor shall they knowingly associate with any person or group which advocates overthrow of the United States Government.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.31 Association with Criminals

Police personnel shall avoid regular or continuous associations or dealings with persons who they know or should have known are persons under criminal investigation or indictment, or persons who have criminal histories or immoral reputations in the community, except as necessary in the performance of official duties.

(First Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Second Offense – five (5) to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense – ten (10) days suspension to dismissal).

§3.32 Excessive or Unnecessary Force not Resulting in Injury

Police personnel shall use only that degree of force that is necessary to perform official duties, and shall not strike or use physical force on any person except when necessary in self defense, in defense of another, to overcome actual physical resistance to arrest, or to prevent escape.

(First Offense - five (5) to ten (10) days suspension; Second Offense - dismissal).

§3.33 Excessive Force Resulting in Serious Injury or Death

Police personnel shall use only that degree of force necessary to perform official duties, and shall not strike or use physical force on any person to the extent that injuries are inflicted except when necessary in self defense, or in the defense of another, or to overcome actual physical resistance to arrest, or to prevent escape. Any use of force resulting in personnel injury or death shall be reported in accordance with established procedures and shall require an administrative review.

(First Offense - dismissal / prosecution if possible).

§3.34 Use of Deadly Force

Police personnel shall use deadly force only in accordance with established procedures of the Covington Police Department and Georgia law governing the use of deadly force.

(First Offense - ten (10) days to dismissal).

§3.35 Political Activity

Police personnel shall not engage in any political activities while on duty, use their official position when engaged in political activities or use their official position to influence any person to vote for or against any particular candidate or issue.

(First Offense - written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Second Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to dismissal).

§3.36 Falsification of Official Documents

Police officers shall not knowingly falsify or knowingly cause another to falsify an official record or document.

(First offense - dismissal).

§3.37 Unlawful Compensation, Bribery

Police personnel shall not request, solicit, accept, or agree to accept any monetary or other benefit not authorized by law, for past, present, or future performance, non-performance, or violation of any act or omission believed to have been either within the official discretion of police personnel, in violation of public duty, or in performance of public duty in violation of Georgia law.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.38 Untruthfulness

Police personnel shall speak truthfully and shall not knowingly make false or untrue statements except as authorized in the performance of duties and as necessary to maintain covert operations or investigation of criminal activities not in violation of Georgia law.

(First Offense – five (5) days suspension; Second Offense – dismissal).

§3.39 Domestic Violence/Employee

Police personnel shall take care so as to not be involved in domestic violence situations/incidents. Any personnel involved with any potential domestic violence incident shall remove themselves from the situation as quickly as possible and notify a supervisor.

(First Offense – five (5) days suspension to dismissal)

§3.40 Willful Violation of GCIC Council Rules and GCIC CJIS Security Policy

Employees shall comply with all the rules and regulations of the GCIC CJIS Security policy.

(First Offense – five (5) days suspension; Second Offense – ten (10) days to dismissal.)

§3.41 Perjury

Police officers shall not knowingly make false statement(s) while under oath in a formal judicial setting in violation of Georgia law.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.42 Harassment

Police personnel shall not use their official position to harass, threaten, coerce or inconvenience any citizen or co-worker because of personal prejudice.

(First Offense - dismissal).

§3.43 Chain of Command

Police personnel shall adhere to the organizational chain of command in the conduct of regular duties, except when necessary for maintaining the morale and/or integrity of the police department or in cases of justifiable personal need.

(First Offense - verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to five (5) days suspension; Third Offense - written reprimand to ten (10) days suspension).

§3.44 Employee Identification

Departmental employees shall respond promptly to a request for their identification from any citizen by displaying their department issued photo identification card. Employees shall also identify themselves when answering a police department phone.

(First Offense – verbal to written reprimand; Second Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Third Offense – five (5) days suspension).

§3.45 Social Networking Sites

The department recognizes that its employees have the right to create, maintain and participate in personal web pages and other Internet-based sites and postings. However, the department also recognizes its obligation in establishing standards of conduct relating to this activity, as to ensure no reduction in public confidence and respect for the department.

Employees should be aware that information posted on social networking sites may not be secure or private and might be viewed by any member of the public. Once information has been posted on the Internet, it may continue to be accessible indefinitely. In the event employees choose to post information on a social networking site, they should be aware that the information could be used for fraudulent purposes. Employees should be aware that they may be jeopardizing their personal confidentiality and that of other employees by posting photographs or personal information about themselves or other members of the department. In addition, they may be jeopardizing their safety, the safety of their family, their co-workers and on-going or future investigations.

Employees are prohibited from accessing social networking sites while on-duty except in the course of official investigations and then only with supervisory approval. In addition, employees shall not access social networking sites from department-owned computers or laptops, except as noted above. Employees are prohibited from posting agency material, photographs, images, etc., on a social networking site without prior approval. Employees are prohibited from posting any material, photographs, images, recordings, etc that are related to an on-going investigation, unless such posting is related to the investigation and prior approval was received.

Employees are prohibited from personal Internet postings that identify themselves as a police employee or through photographs depicting departmental uniforms, badges, patches, or agency vehicles without prior approval from the chief of police or his designee.

(First Offense – written reprimand to three (3) days suspension; Second Offense – three days suspension to dismissal).

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

Stacey L. Cotton

Stacey L. Cotton
Chief of Police