

COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: RIDE ALONG PROGRAM

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I. Purpose

To increase understanding between officers and citizens. Officers can use the period of the ride along to learn how citizens view them and riders can increase their awareness of law enforcement needs, problems and operations.

II. Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to encourage community interest and involvement in the law enforcement process and to allow reputable citizens and students to ride as passenger/observer in Covington Police Department vehicles for legitimate civic or educational reasons. Participation in the Ride Along Program is limited to residents of Newton County, employees working for businesses within Newton County, and on occasion those who apply for consideration with a special purpose, i.e., students, visiting law enforcement employees.

III. Procedures

A. Persons eighteen (18) years of age and older, wishing to participate in the program, will address a letter of request to a police captain or his designee identifying themselves (this will include full name, sex, race, DOB, as well as address and telephone number), the date and time they wish to ride and their particular interest in law enforcement. Persons studying criminal justice or engaged in criminal justice research, city officials or visiting law enforcement officials will be given priority.

1. A brief background investigation of each rider will be made by Support Services to determine if the citizen is of suitable character to ride along.
2. A release form must be completed and signed by the ride along participant before being allowed to ride. Signing the release form must be voluntary. Failure to sign the release form, indicating that the person assumes the risk involved in riding, shall result in refusal of permission to ride. Completed release forms will be filed with Support Services. A new release form will be signed and dated each time a participant rides.
3. Participation in the ride along program shall be limited to once every ninety (90) days.

4. Riders will report to the Patrol Division supervisor in charge on the date and time assigned. They will carry identification including doctor and hospital preference, the nature of any medical problems and the name of the person to notify in case of emergency. Riders will dress in neat and clean clothing, including street shoes. No jeans or T-shirts will be allowed.
5. Each rider will be briefed by the officer and supervisor in charge, on the hazards and dangers involved. The rider, at all times, shall be under the direction of the officer with whom he/she rides. Cameras and recorders are prohibited except for media representatives.
6. Only one (1) rider will be allowed in each vehicle. Support Services will ensure that proper scheduling is accomplished in advance. No more than one (1) vehicle on any watch will have riders at any one time.
7. The rider participant is required to wear his/her safety belt at all times while riding in police vehicles.

B. Persons under Eighteen (18) Years of Age

Interested persons under eighteen years of age are encouraged to visit our police department, tour the facilities and talk with officers working areas in which the person may be interested. With parental permission and under the direct control and supervision of an officer, persons under the age of eighteen (18) may ride. This will be an extremely closely supervised activity, and will consist only of general tour of the city and explanation of police duties. The parent/guardian and participant must sign release form.

C. Immediate Family

A Covington Police officer's immediate family (i.e., spouse, father, mother, brother, sister) may ride without prior approval from Support Services; however, approval from the appropriate Patrol Division supervisor must be obtained.

Again, the release form must be signed each time a family member rides. A family member rider will not be assigned to ride along with the relative officer, except with prior approval of the Chief of Police.

D. Officer's Responsibility

1. When an officer is assigned a citizen rider, he will use the opportunity to fully acquaint the citizen rider with the range of his problems and responsibilities. He will attempt to expose the citizen to law enforcement work, without putting the citizen into a hazardous situation and without allowing the citizen to participate in carrying out his duties or being privileged to confidential or sensitive situations.
2. When assigned a rider, the officer will immediately make known to the supervisor any unusual assignments, which could present a hazard beyond normal risk. The supervisor will then find other means to complete the ride or he will ask the citizen to return on another day.
3. During the course of a ride, if the officer or citizen decides that a danger is present to the citizen, the officer will discontinue the ride. The officer

may also discontinue a ride if continuing it would threaten the officer's safety or substantially interfere with the discharge of duties. When discontinuing, the officer will notify the Communications Center and attempt to provide either immediate transportation to the Police Department or shelter until transportation can be obtained.

4. All riders will alter the normal discharge of the officer's duties and therefore, "interfere" with them to some degree. However, when a rider acts in such a manner that will substantially interfere, the officer should give one clear warning that the behavior will not be tolerated. If the behavior persists, the ride should be discontinued. A report to Support Services indicating the problem will assure the citizen will not be allowed to participate in the future.

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

Stacey L. Cotton

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Chief of Police