

# **COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

**Subject: COURTROOM SECURITY**

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## **I. Purpose**

To establish procedures for the Municipal Court and to outline the duties and obligations of officers assigned to serve as bailiffs.

## **II. Courtroom Demeanor - General**

- A. An officer shall be attentive and respectful during court and administrative hearings. When called as a witness, an officer shall speak clearly, calmly, and in a manner to be readily heard and understood by all parties.
- B. An officer shall testify only to the truth, as he knows it, with accuracy, confining his testimony to the case heard, the evidence properly before the tribunal, and a reasonable response to questions asked.
- C. An employee shall not exhibit malice, bias, prejudice, animosity, or favor toward any party involved in a matter before the court or administrative hearing.
- D. An officer attending or in the immediate vicinity of any tribunal shall not exhibit in any way his displeasure, animosity, or disbelief upon hearing any decision of the court or hearing officer, argument or statement of counsel, or presentation of evidence with which he does not agree.

## **III. Physical Security Plan**

- A. The Captain of Support Services Division has the overall responsibility for security of the police department. The police department shall be responsible for maintaining the physical security of the courtroom. The courtroom may be used for the following purposes.
  - 1. Court;
  - 2. ALS hearings;
  - 3. Special meetings.

B. Key Control.

Keys to the courtroom shall be limited to the following persons:

1. Support Services Captain
2. Municipal Court clerks.
3. CSRs.

It is the responsibility of the Municipal Court clerks to make sure that all windows and doors in the courtroom are locked when the court is unoccupied. The clerks are to be notified whenever the courtroom is to be used by other than police personnel.

C. Security

1. The courtroom will be staffed by at least one bailiff at all time while court is in session. The bailiff will report thirty (30) minutes prior to court coming into session. Bailiffs will conduct a physical security check of the courtroom prior to each session and complete a checklist. The completed checklist will be filed with Court Services.
2. The courtroom is equipped with two security cameras that record both video and audio. Several supervisors are capable of viewing live video and also taped video for up to 90 days after the event.

D. External Communications

The Head Bailiff, which will be designated by the Patrol Division Commander shall have portable radios available during all court sessions. The CSR shall have a radio available in case of an emergency to speed information from the court to the 911 Communication Center. There also is a telephone at the judge's bench.

**IV. Court Procedures**

A. Access

Persons who are required to appear in the Municipal Court shall be directed to the front door of the Covington Police Department where they will be checked by a handheld metal detector. Courtroom bailiffs will physically check all handbags and briefcases before entering courtroom. Entrance to the courtroom will be through double doors.

- B. Prisoners from the Newton County Jail shall be transported to the Municipal Court by a bailiff or an on-duty officer and shall enter the courtroom from the side door of the courtroom (next to the parking lot). Prisoners will be handcuffed while in custody of the bailiffs. Handcuffs will remain on prisoners during the entire court proceeding.

- C. Hand carried articles such as purses, wallets, umbrellas, coats, etc. may be allowed in the courtroom after being searched. Articles such as suitcases, briefcases (except those carried by attorneys) boxes, bags or any item of a

suspicious nature will not be allowed. Bailiffs will inspect or search any item of a suspicious nature.

D. Escorting Defendants

Once a case has been decided, a bailiff will escort the defendant to the cashier. If the defendant is unable to pay fine, he or she will be escorted to probation officer outside courtroom.

E. Officers Waiting To Testify

Officers waiting to testify should wait outside the courtroom in the Patrol Division work area. No officer should be inside the courtroom unless notified or unless serving as bailiff. The bailiff shall summon the officer when necessary.

F. Cashier

The CSR or designee shall serve as the cashier for the court. The cashier shall collect fines and write receipts.

**V. Emergency Procedures**

A. Fire

In the event of a fire in the police department or the courtroom, all bailiffs will assist in evacuation. All persons will be directed through the double doors or through the side door of the courtroom. If necessary, exit may be made through courtroom windows. Fire extinguishers are available in the outside corridor if necessary. Notification of Communications Center will be responsibility of the bailiff. The dispatcher shall then notify fire department officials. Procedures found in disaster plan shall apply.

B. Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, (i.e. seizure, heart attack, etc.), in the courtroom, the bailiff shall notify the dispatcher. The dispatcher will then notify the emergency medical service or fire department. Bailiffs will be responsible for any crowd control or other assistance.

C. Alarm

The courtroom is equipped with a duress alarm under the judge's bench. The alarm is connected to the outside hallway. In the event the alarm sounds, any officers that are available should enter the courtroom immediately to determine the status of the alarm. Notification of patrol supervisor or officer in charge shall be made as soon as possible by the head bailiff or other officer. The patrol supervisor shall determine the nature of the courtroom incident and shall initiate the appropriate response. (See emergency operations).

**VI. Responsibility**

A. The Support Services Division Commander or designee shall serve as the Chief Bailiff of the Municipal Court. His duties shall include:

1. Overall supervision of courtroom security.

2. Maintain liaison with the Municipal Court judges concerning any security issues.
- B. The patrol watch commander shall appoint bailiffs from each watch before court. Only qualified officers will be appointed to bailiff duties. Bailiffs duties include:
1. Provide security for the court.
  2. Check interior and exterior doors and windows.
  3. Conduct a search of the courtroom before court for contraband.
  4. Transport prisoners from Newton County Detention Center to and from Municipal Court.
  5. Perform other duties at the direction of the judge or the Support Services Division Commander.
  6. Summon officers to testify when their case is called.

**VII. Weapons in Courtroom**

All persons assigned to bailiff duties are required to carry duty weapons and handcuffs in the courtroom. On duty and off duty personnel or state law enforcement personnel are allowed to wear their weapon into the courtroom. No one else will be allowed to carry a firearm into the courtroom. Anyone attempting to bring a firearm into the courtroom will be instructed to secure the weapon in their vehicle or place the firearm within a lockbox located in the front lobby of the police department.

**VIII. Security Survey**

Once every three years, the Support Services Division Commander will be responsible for conducting a security survey of the Municipal Court. The survey should include plans and procedures to deal with:

- A. Emergencies (fire, medical, hostage, bomb disaster, etc.).
- B. High-risk trials, if any.
- C. Searches, both routine and special situations.
- D. Use of restraining devices during court.
- E. Equipment inspections to include fire suppression, medical supplies, restraining devices, communications, cameras, magnetometers and alarms.

***This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.***

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

*Stacey L. Cotton*

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Chief of Police