

COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: STRIP / BODY CAVITY SEARCHES

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I. Purpose

To establish guidelines for determining if and under what conditions the use of strip searches are legally permissible and to establish guidelines for the appropriate conduct of such searches.

II. Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department that the use of strip searches and body cavity searches may, under certain conditions, be necessary to protect the safety of officers, civilians and other prisoners; to detect and secure evidence of criminal activity.

Recognizing the intrusiveness of these searches on an individual's privacy, it shall be the policy of this department that such searches shall be conducted only with proper authorization and justification, and with due recognition of and deference for the human dignity of those being searched.

No juvenile(s) in custody of police personnel shall be stripped searched or body cavity searched without the direct supervision of the Juvenile Court. Such searches may only be conducted with written consent by a Juvenile Court Judge.

III. Definitions

- A. STRIP SEARCH – Any search of an individual requiring the removal or rearrangement of some or all clothing to permit the visual inspection of any or all skin surfaces including genital areas, breasts and buttocks.
- B. BODY CAVITY SEARCH – Any search involving visual inspection of skin surfaces and the internal physical examination of body cavities, such as the stomach cavity.

IV. Procedures

A. Strip Searches

- 1. Individuals arrested for traffic violations and other minor offenses of a nonviolent nature should not be subject to strip searches unless the

arresting officer has articulable, reasonable suspicion to believe that the individual is concealing contraband or weapons. Reasonable suspicion may be based upon, but is not limited to:

- a. The nature of the offense charged;
 - b. The arrestee's appearance and demeanor;
 - c. The circumstances surrounding the arrest;
 - d. The arrestee's criminal record, particularly past crimes of violence or narcotics offenses;
 - e. The discovery of evidence of a major offense in plain view or in the course of a search incident to the arrest;
 - f. Detection of suspicious objects beneath the suspect's clothing during a field search incident to arrest;
2. Field strip searches of prisoners shall be conducted only in the rarest of circumstances under exigent circumstances where the life of officers or others may be placed at risk, and only in privacy with the explicit approval of a supervisory officer.
 3. Where articulable, reasonable suspicion exists to conduct a strip search, the arresting officer shall make a documented request for such action to the on-duty supervisor or other designated authority that clearly defines the basis for suspicion.
 4. When authorized by the supervisor, strip searches may be conducted only:
 - a. In conformance with standard hygienic procedures and professional practices;
 - b. By the least number of personnel necessary and only by those of the same sex; and
 - c. Under conditions that provide privacy from all but those authorized to conduct the search.
 5. Following a strip search, the officer performing the search shall include, as part of the written report, the:
 - a. Date and place of the search;
 - b. Identity of the officer conducting the search;
 - c. Identity of the individual searched.
 - d. Those present during the search;
 - e. A detailed description of the nature, the extent of the search and the reason for search;
 - f. Any weapons, evidence or contraband found during the search.

B. Body Cavity Searches

Should visual examination of a suspect during a strip search and/or other information lead an officer to believe that the suspect is concealing a weapon, evidence or contraband within a body cavity, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The suspect shall be kept under constant visual surveillance until a body cavity search is conducted or an alternative course of action taken.
2. The officer shall consult with his immediate supervisor to determine whether probable cause exists to seek a search warrant for a body cavity search. The decision to seek a search warrant shall recognize that a body cavity search is highly invasive of personal privacy and is reasonable only where the suspected offense is of a serious nature and/or poses a threat to the safety of officers or others.
3. If probable cause exists for a body cavity search, an affidavit for search warrant shall be prepared that clearly defines the nature of the alleged offense and the basis for the officer's probable cause.
4. On the basis of a search warrant, a body cavity search shall be performed only by medically trained personnel at the physician's direction. For safety and security reasons, the search shall be conducted at the medical facility.
5. The authorized individual conducting the search shall file a report with the requesting law enforcement agency.

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

Stacey L. Cotton
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Chief of Police