

# **COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

**Subject: EXPLORER RIDE ALONG PROGRAM**

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## **I. Purpose**

To increase understanding between the Explorer and Officer. To foster mutual respect between community youth and the criminal justice system. Explorers can use the period of the ride along to learn how Officers function in law enforcement and to broaden the Explorer's knowledge of basic procedures for policing. The ride-along program will increase the Explorer's awareness of law enforcement needs, problems and operations.

## **II. Statement of Policy**

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to encourage Explorer interest and involvement in the law enforcement process and to allow reputable students to ride as passenger/observer in Covington Police Department vehicles for legitimate training or educational reasons. Participation in the Explorer Ride Along Program is limited to Covington Police Explorer Post #222 members.

## **III. Guidelines**

- A. The Explorer must be 14 years of age or older and must be approved by the post Advisor or the associate Advisor.
- B. Explorers under the age of 18 are prohibited from riding after midnight.
- C. Required forms:
  - 1. All youth will have a "Hold-Harmless Agreement" on file.
  - 2. A Statement of consent and limitation of liability will be signed by the parents or legal guardian of the Explorer, and by the Explorer.
  - 3. A medical release must be signed by a parent or legal guardian authorizing a police officer to consent to emergency medical treatment for Explorers.
  - 4. All youth will have a "Hepatitis B Vaccination Declination" on file.

- D. The Explorer is prohibited from drinking, smoking or sleeping while on duty. An Explorer found in the possession of illegal narcotics or other habitual drugs will be dismissed immediately.
- E. Explorers will not, under any circumstances, be allowed to carry firearms while participating in the ride-along program or any other Explorer function.
- F. The Explorer must have successfully completed the minimum ride-along training program.
- G. With the authorization of an Advisor, Explorers 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.
- H. Each Explorer will be briefed by the officer and supervisor in charge on the hazards and dangers involved. The Explorer, at all times, shall be under the direction and supervision of the officer with whom he/she rides. Cameras and recorders are prohibited except for media representatives.
- I. The Explorer may ride a maximum of 16 hours per month; a minimum of (4) hours and a maximum of (8) hours per day. Advisors have the option of rewarding Explorers with additional ride-along hours. Hours for the ride-along will be determined by the age of the Explorer and approved by the Advisor.
- J. Explorers will ride only with the officer or Advisor to whom he or she is assigned.
- K. An Explorer must report 15 minutes before the scheduled ride-along time. The Explorer must be in a clean, pressed and complete uniform when riding.
- L. An Explorer must be equipped with flashlight, whistle, reflective vest, notepad, and pen when reporting for duty.
- M. The Explorer must follow the supervising officer's directions regardless of his/her personal feelings. Any disagreement or argument with the supervising officer must be reported to Advisors in writing as soon as possible. No Explorer will be required to obey an order that is contrary to the law.
- N. The Post Advisor will maintain a log on times, dates, and activities for each Explorer ride-along.
- O. The POST Advisor shall conduct an orientation on "common sense" youth protection issues such as: actions, words, or behavior and emphasize an "at-work" professional relationship. (Check "Youth Protection Guidelines" and material for participants and adults in the Explorer program.)
- P. The rider participant is required to wear his/her safety belt at all times while riding in police vehicles.

#### **IV. Officer's Responsibility**

- A. When an officer is assigned an Explorer rider, he will use the opportunity to fully acquaint the Explorer with the range of his responsibilities. He will attempt to expose the Explorer to law enforcement work, without putting the Explorer into a hazardous situation and without allowing the Explorer to participate in carrying out his duties or being privileged to confidential or sensitive situations.

- B. When assigned an Explorer 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 contact an Advisor and ask the Explorer to return on another day.
- C. During the course of a ride, if the officer or Explorer decides that a danger is present to the Explorer, 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.
- D. All Explorers will alter the normal discharge of the officer's duties and therefore, "interfere" with them to some degree. However, when an Explorer 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 an Advisor indicating the problem will assure the Explorer will not be allowed to participate in the future.

**V. Calls in Which Explorers May Participate**

Explorers participate in the ride-along program as observers. Explorers may fulfill various duties as determined by the ride-along officer, including

- 1. Traffic/crowd control
- 2. Radio operation
- 3. Motorist assistance
- 4. Completion of routine paperwork that will not be used in any court action
- 5. Crime scene protection
- 6. Interpretation, as needed.

**VI. Calls in Which Explorers May Not Participate**

**AT NO TIME** will Explorers be at risk or used in dangerous or undercover activities, in accordance with the policy on covert operations. Some specific functions to avoid:

- 1. Interviewing/interrogating witnesses or suspects
- 2. Participating in or being left in control of the arrest of any prisoner
- 3. Leaving the police vehicle, unless instructed to do so by the assigned officer
- 4. Accompany the ride-along sponsor inside any dwelling, structure, or building except the police station or for meals while performing ride-along missions
- 5. Assisting at any scene, unless told to do so by the assigned officer

6. Being armed in any manner
7. Signing any arrest, offense, accident report, traffic citation, or other legal documentation
8. Assisting in providing cover for any possible crime in progress
9. Driving vehicles
10. Riding with any vice, narcotics, or organized crime division

## **VII. Driving Policy**

No Law Enforcement Explorer, whether or not in uniform, should drive a marked patrol vehicle. The only exception to this policy is in authorized competitions in which an adult law enforcement official shall ride in the front passenger seat. At that time, only licensed explorers will be allowed to operate a vehicle.

## **VIII. High-Risk Call Procedure**

An Explorer must follow the following procedure for high-risk calls:

1. In case of a high-risk call, the officer returns the Explorer to the station or stops at the first convenient location and radios the position of the Explorer so that another unit can pick up the Explorer while the dispatched officer proceeds to the assignment.
2. In case of an immediate emergency, the Explorer will remain in the police vehicle and observe, until the officer advises that the situation is safe.

## **IX. Explorer's Training**

Before the Explorer is permitted to participate in the ride-along program, he/she is required to complete training exercises that include the following:

1. Daily operations of a police officer
2. Post guidelines
3. Familiarization with police vehicle and equipment
4. Dress and equipment required when participating in the ride-along:
  - a. Required uniform
  - b. Equipment (clipboard and note pad, pen or pencil, flashlight, reflective vest, and weather gear, where applicable.)
5. Expected conduct of Explorer:
  - a. Follow directions of officer

- b. Explorer will not carry on a conversation with any prisoner, witnesses, or complainant, unless specifically directed by the officer.
- 6. Code of Conduct for police officers
- 7. Additional training to include:
  - a. Note taking/report writing
  - b. Geographic orientation of the area
  - c. Communications and radio procedures
- X. Officer's Criteria**
  - A. An officer must have at least one (1) year of experience
  - B. The officer must have no compromising disciplinary action on file
  - C. The consenting officer must receive an orientation to the Explorer program rules and guidelines before participation.

The officer must be furnished with a copy of the Explorer program guidelines for future reference.

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

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

*Stacey L. Cotton*

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Chief of Police