



# SYKESVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Community Relations

General Order 7-2

Effective: 08/23/17

Authorized by: *Michael A. Spaulding* Chief of Police

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## I. PURPOSE

To provide the procedures by members of the Sykesville Police Department are expected to engage in community relations.

## II. POLICY

The Sykesville Police Department will continually strive to establish ties with the community and to keep the lines of operation open to the needs of the community. Those needs should be kept in mind at all times and, whenever possible, met by this Office.

## III. PROCEDURES

### A. Function

Community Relations functions are shared by all members of the Sykesville Police Department, sworn and non-sworn. Every member of the Department is, therefore, responsible for promoting good community relations to meet the goals of the Department and the needs of the public.

### B. Community Relations Objectives

1. The objectives of effective community relations are to establish direct contact with the community through the school system, demonstrations, community groups (Neighborhood Watches, civic organizations, clubs, private citizens), and professional organizations (teachers' associations, bar associations, medical associations), in order to gain support of law enforcement activities.
2. To meet these objectives, the community relations plan of the Sykesville Police Department will include provisions for the following:
  - a. Establish a liaison with formal community organizations and civic groups by attending meetings and offering support consistent with the practice of community policing and problem solving policing.
  - b. Developing community relations policies for the Sykesville Police Department that reflect office objectives and input from the community, such as responding to Neighborhood Watch members' concerns and suggestions.
  - c. Conveying information transmitted from community organizations.

- d. Reviewing and analyzing input from citizens concerning police practices and to make recommendations on those practices that affect police community relations.
- e. Identifying training needs through interviews with citizen representatives, and feedback from other officers and the Chief.
- f. Establishing crime prevention groups in areas where such groups do not exist and to revitalize programs that are ineffective.

C. Community Policing Initiatives

All Department personnel are responsible for planning and coordinating community relations programs and incorporating other members of the department into community programs whenever possible.

- 1. One of the major functions of Community Policing is to present programs to different groups in the community. There are numerous program outlines on topics ranging from crime prevention and child safety to career talks and counseling. These programs are available for use by all members of the Police Department. Most requests for programs or speakers come directly to the Chief of Police. However, all officers are encouraged to be community relations oriented and may be requested to present programs to specific groups. Officers desiring to give a presentation will be assisted by supervisory personnel and encouraged to present programs to benefit our community.
- 2. A public presentation is defined as a speech, demonstration, or formal address given to a group of individuals by a member of the Sykesville Police Department on a specific topic.
- 3. Group Supervisors will assign appropriate personnel to handle presentations upon written request.
  - a. Any request for a public presentation will be documented stating date, time, location, topic, group to be addressed, and personnel requesting assignment.
  - b. Group Supervisors will use discretion in accepting verbal requests when deemed appropriate; however, written follow-up will be required.
  - c. Copies of all approved/non-approved requests will be forwarded to the Chief of Police through the chain of command for informational purposes.

- d. Any topic which the patrol supervisor considers controversial, will be brought to the attention of the Chief of Police through the chain of command prior to assignment.
  - e. After completing the presentation the person assigned will complete a Community Policing Call for Service in the RMS.
4. Routine activities such as school visits, town meetings, or other community relations activities generated by supervisors in their assigned area will be recorded in the RMS as well.

D. Evaluation Process of Community Relations Programs

- 1. The Chief of Police will review and evaluate all programs, presentations and materials used by the Department semiannually to determine if the information disseminated is useful, up-to-date and helpful to the community.
- 2. The Chief will also review the program evaluations that are completed by the sponsors as each program is completed to determine if the program is useful and needed and if in need of change or improvements.

E. Corrective Action for Adverse Community Relations

The Sykesville Police Department will strive to correct any actions, practices or attitudes within the Police Department that may have a detrimental effect on the community through training, policy changes or, when appropriate, discipline.

F. Community Input in Office Policies

- 1. Department policies and procedures that reflect the needs of the community cannot be formulated without input from the community. This input will be in the form of suggestions or opinions obtained from the general community in three ways:
  - a. By means of the Citizen meetings.
  - b. By means of the Community Surveys.
  - c. Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- 2. A report will be published on the results of the surveys. These reports will be kept on file by the Chief of Police and will be reviewed when policies are being formulated that may affect service to the community.

G. Ride-A-Long Program

The Sykesville Police Department establishes procedures for the administration of the agency Ride-A-Long program. This program is used to enhance the community's understanding of the agency's mission.

1. Eligibility

- a. The following persons are eligible to participate in this program. All participants must be eighteen years of age or older.
  - (1) Visiting law enforcement personnel or Town/County employees.
  - (2) A relative of any current agency member.
  - (3) Professionals and students in fields related to law enforcement.
  - (4) Members of the news media.
- b. Any persons interested in participating in this program must complete a Ride Along Release form before taking part in the program. Whenever possible, this should be done at least two weeks in advance.
- c. The agency reserves the right to limit participation in the program if it is being abused by anyone or to refuse permission to anyone to participate in the program.
- d. Citizens, including family members of Police Department personnel shall be limited to two ride-a-longs per person within a calendar year, unless otherwise authorized by the Chief of Police. Employees of other county public safety agencies and other law enforcement agencies will be limited to four Ride-a-longs within a year. Civilian employees, and members of the Town Government will not be limited in the number of times they Ride-a-long, with permission from the Chief of Police.

2. Administrative Procedures

- a. The Ride Along Release forms can be found in the PowerDMS under “forms.”
- b. All applicants will be provided with the release form and requested to complete it in its entirety and return it to Sykesville Police Department

- c. All completed applications for this program will be forwarded to the Chief of Police who will have the Patrol Supervisor:
  - (1) Query the in-house log book to ascertain if the person has ridden before. If the applicant has ridden before, the Patrol Supervisor will indicate on the form the date(s) of prior ride alongs.
  - (2) Log the new Ride-along Application into the Ride-along Log.
- d. If the applicant is eligible to Ride-a-long, the Patrol Supervisor will run a criminal record check through MILES/NCIC. The records check will be attached to the application and forwarded to the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police will indicate approval or disapproval on the application form. If an application is not approved, the Chief of Police will notify the applicant accordingly and forward the application to the Records Section.
- e. The approved application will then be forwarded to a Group Supervisor. The Group Supervisor will then assign the applicant to a host officer or himself.
- f. The Group Supervisor, upon receiving the application will destroy the criminal history print-out upon review.
- g. The receiving supervisor will then notify the ride-along applicant that his/her application is approved. The supervisor will also tell the applicant whom he/she will be riding with and confirm the date and time of the Ride-a-long.
- h. All Ride-along applicants will ride with an officer who is off probation. Ride-alongs will not be assigned to probationary officers.
- i. The supervisor will forward all approved ride-along applications to the assigned officer.

### 3. Operational Procedures

- a. Prior to beginning the Ride-a-long, the Officer will conduct a brief orientation with the participant, covering at least the following areas:
  - (1) The basic operation of the police vehicle.

- (2) The proper use of the police radio in the event the participant must use it in an emergency.
  - (3) The procedures to be followed if the officer must respond to an incident that may present a danger to the Ride-a-long. If this occurs, the Ride-a-long will be dropped-off at a safe location and instructed to contact communications and advise them of his/her location. As soon as possible, another officer will be sent to pick up the participant if the assigned officer cannot do it.
  - (4) Explain that the participant should hold all questions and comments concerning the manner in which a call or incident is handled until the assignment is completed and the officer and participant are away from the incident.
  - (5) Explain the basic duties of the agency.
- b. During the Ride-a-long, officers should answer any questions truthfully, courteously, and to the best of their ability. However, care should be taken not to violate the privacy rights of any person or to pass on any information confidential to the agency.
  - c. Any immediate problems that arise with a Ride-a-long participant are to be brought to the attention of the supervisor on duty at that time.
  - d. Other than Maryland and Federal law enforcement officers, no Ride-a-long participant is to carry or use any firearm of any kind. If a law enforcement officer is armed while riding with an officer, that officer must display a badge or other identification at all times and notify the on-duty supervisor that he/she is armed.

#### H. Community Survey

1. An annual survey of citizen's attitudes toward the Sykesville Police Department will be conducted by the Office of the Chief. This survey, created by the U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office, will include:
  - a. Community Involvement.
  - b. Safety.
  - c. Procedural Justice.

- d. Performance.
- e. Contact and Satisfaction.

- 2. The results of the survey will be incorporated into the Sykesville Police Department Annual Report.

#### **IV. CANCELLATIONS**

This General Order cancels and replaces the following policies: General Order 45.3, entitled Community Relations, dated December 20, 2001.