



WEST PALM BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedure I-1

CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS OF POLICE DEPARTMENT MEMBERS

Revised: June 4, 2020

I. POLICY:

Prior to assuming sworn status, all members are to take an oath of office in compliance with [Florida State Statute 876.05](#) to enforce the law and uphold the Nation's constitution or basic law of the land. The West Palm Beach Police Department expects police officers and non-sworn members to conduct themselves, both on and off duty, in a manner that will not have an adverse effect on the member's performance or the Department's reputation. It is imperative members understand they are held to a higher standard of conduct by the public.

It is not the intent of the Police Department to interfere in the private lives of its members or to hinder the member's constitutional rights. All personnel must understand the high standard of conduct is applied to them in order for the public to continue to have confidence in the Department and the members. This trust is a critical and precious commodity for an effective law enforcement agency to have, and yet, it is extremely fragile and easily lost. This policy will ensure trust is neither diminished nor lost due to the conduct of a member.

Actions of members which are inconsistent, incompatible or in conflict with the values established by this agency and negatively affect its reputation and its members are not tolerated. These actions detract from the Agency's overall ability to protect the public, maintain peace, and order, and conduct other essential business effectively and efficiently. Members are to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects ethical standards consistent with the rules disseminated by this agency at all times.

II. DEFINITION:

Accountability – In the context of this policy, accountability means the duty of all members to truthfully acknowledge and explain their actions and decisions without deception or subterfuge when requested to do so by an authorized member of this Department.

III. GENERAL CONDUCT:

- A. Police Officers and non-sworn members must be reasonable in their actions and refrain from conduct that threatens the reputation and good order of the Department or that interferes with the Department's ability to carry out its mission.
- B. It is not necessary the alleged conduct be criminal in character or that it is proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

1. It is sufficient the relevant conduct and its attending circumstances offend publicly accepted standards of decency.
- C. The Police Department will notify a member of what he or she is precisely accused of having done in violation of this policy and will give the member the full opportunity to be heard.
- D. All members are required to comply with all Department Policies, Procedures, Rules and Regulations
- E. Members will not engage in any conduct or activities, on or off duty, which discredits the members, brings this agency into disrepute, or impairs its efficient and effective operation.
- F. Members are directly accountable for their actions through the Chain of Command to this agency's Chief Executive Officer.
- G. Members will fully cooperate in any internal administrative investigation conducted by this agency or any other authorized agency and will provide complete and accurate information in regard to any issue under investigation.
- H. Members will accept responsibility for their actions without attempting to conceal, divert, or mitigate their true culpability or engage in efforts to thwart, influence, or interfere with an internal or criminal investigation.
- I. Members of the Police Department, including volunteers, will not use their official position to secure privileges for themselves or others.
- J. Members of the Police Department, including volunteers, will refrain from engaging in activities that constitute a conflict of interest.

IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT CODE OF ETHICS:

As a law enforcement officer, my fundamental duty is to serve the community, to safeguard lives and property, to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the constitutional rights of all to liberty, equality and justice.

I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all and will behave in a manner that does not bring discredit to me or my agency. I will maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop my self-restraint; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. Honest in thought and deed both in my personal and official life, I will be exemplary in obeying the law and the regulations of my department. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided to me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty.

I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, political beliefs, aspirations, animosities, or friendships to influence my decisions. With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice, or ill will, never employing unnecessary force or violence and never accepting gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of police service. I will never engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will I condone such acts by other police officers. I will cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives in the pursuit of justice.

I know that I alone am responsible for my own standard of professional performance and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve my level of knowledge and competence.

I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself before God to my chosen profession law enforcement.

V. POLICE CODE OF CONDUCT:

- A. All law enforcement officers must be fully aware of the ethical responsibilities of their position and must strive constantly to live up to the highest possible standards of professional policing.
- B. The International Association of Chiefs of Police believes it is important police officers have clear advice and counsel available to assist them in performing their duties consistent with these standards and has adopted the following ethical mandates as guidelines to meet these ends.
 - 1. A police officer acts as an official representative of government who is required and trusted to work within the law.
 - 2. The officer's powers and duties are conferred by statute.
 - 3. The fundamental duties of a police officer include serving the community, safeguarding lives, and property, protecting the innocent, keeping the peace, and ensuring the rights of all to liberty, equality, and justice.

VI. PERFORMANCE OF THE DUTIES OF A POLICE OFFICER:

- A. A police officer will perform all duties impartially, without favor, affection, or ill will, and without regard to status, sex, race, religion, political belief, or aspiration.
 - 1. All citizens will be treated equally with courtesy, consideration, and dignity.
- B. Officers will never allow personal feelings, animosities, or friendships to influence official conduct.
 - 1. Laws will be enforced appropriately and courteously and in carrying out their responsibilities, officers will strive to obtain maximum cooperation from the public.
- C. Officers will conduct themselves in appearance and deportment in such a manner as to inspire confidence and respect for the position of public trust they hold.

VII. DISCRETION:

- A. A police officer will responsibly use the discretion vested in his or her position and exercise it within the law.
 - 1. The principle of reasonableness will guide the officer's determinations, and the officer will consider all surrounding circumstances in determining whether any legal action will be taken.
- B. Consistent and wise use of discretion, based on professional policing competence, will do much to preserve good relationships and retain the confidence of the public.
 - 1. There may be difficulty in choosing between conflicting courses of action.
 - 2. It is important to remember a timely word of advice rather than an arrest may be a more effective means of achieving a desired end.

VIII. USE OF FORCE:

- A. A police officer will never employ unnecessary force or violence. Officers will use only that force which is necessary and reasonable in the discharge of duty.
- B. The use of force should be used only with the greatest restraint and only after de-escalation techniques have been ineffective or impractical.
 - 1. Every police officer will refrain from unnecessary infliction of pain or suffering and will never engage in cruel, degrading, or inhuman treatment of any person.
- C. **Duty to Intervene:** If an officer utilizes excessive force all other officers who have a reasonable opportunity to do so, must intervene to stop the excessive use of force.

IX. CONFIDENTIALITY:

- A. What a member sees, hears, or learns of a confidential nature will be kept secret unless the performance of duty or legal provision requires otherwise.
- B. The public has a right to security and privacy. Information obtained during performance of duty must not be improperly divulged.

X. INTEGRITY:

- A. Members will not engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will a member condone such acts by other members.
- B. The public demands the integrity of Police Department members is above reproach.

1. All members must avoid conduct that might compromise integrity and thus undercut the public confidence in a law enforcement agency.
2. All members will refuse to accept any gifts, presents, subscriptions, favors, gratuities or promises that could be interpreted as seeking to cause the member to refrain from performing official responsibilities honestly and within the law.
3. Members must not receive private or special advantage from their official status.
4. Respect from the public cannot be bought, it may only be cultivated and earned.

XI. COOPERATION WITH OTHER POLICE OFFICERS AND AGENCIES:

- A. Police officers will cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives in the pursuit of justice.
- B. Many organizations may provide law enforcement services to a jurisdiction.
 1. It is imperative a police officer assist colleagues fully and completely with respect and consideration at all times.

XII. PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES:

- A. All members are responsible for their own standard of professional performance and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve their level of knowledge and competence.
- B. Through study and experience all members should acquire the high level of knowledge and competence essential for the efficient and effective performance of duty.
 1. The acquisition of knowledge is a never-ending process of personal and professional development and should be pursued constantly.

XIII. PRIVATE LIFE:

- A. All members will behave in a manner to not bring discredit to the agency or themselves.
- B. The character and conduct of all members when off duty must always be exemplary, thus maintaining a position of respect in the community in which he or she lives and works.
 1. All members' personal behavior must be beyond reproach.

XIV. REFERENCE:

- SOP # IV-22 Internal Affairs Function.
- Applicable Collective Bargaining Agreements.
- Rules and Regulations.
- Police Officer Bill of Rights
- [FSS 876.05](#) Public Employees Oath

Approved:

Signature on file

Frank Adderley, Chief of Police

June 8, 2020

Date: