

201 COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1. Community Relations Policy

Members of the Department shall be governed by the following policies in regard to community relations.

2. Definition and Purpose

- A. Community relations is that state of rapport between the Department and the community which it serves.
- B. The mutual advantages of a friendly relationship between the people of a community and their police force should be widely understood and fully appreciated. The success of a police force in the performance of its duties is largely dependent upon the degree of support and cooperation it receives from the people it serves. It is of great importance, therefore, to secure for this Department, the confidence, respect, and approval of the public. Development of these desirable relationships between the community and the police depends upon the behavior of each individual police officer. A program to enhance good community relations must necessarily have the active participation of every member of the Department.

3. Principal Factors - The principal factors involved in determining the relationship between this Department and the community are briefly:

- B. The Police: Their attitudes toward the total community, their attitudes toward their role as police officers and the Department, their efficiency in the performance of their duties, and the personal belief in the value of community relations.
- C. The Public: Individual's attitudes toward the police, group attitudes toward the police, and racial and religious attitudes.
- D. Communications: Direct and indirect.

4. The Police

- A. Attitudes toward the total community: Members of this Department come from the community and reflect community attitudes. However, this does not give any officer justification for discriminatory conduct toward any segment of society. An officer is expected to be unbiased and impartial in his dealings with all people. He is expected to recognize the individual worth of every person with whom he comes into contact and treat them with due respect. Police officers are probably

the most visual representatives of their City government. Officers should take pride in their community and allow their conduct to reflect such an attitude.

- B. Attitudes toward their role as police officers and the Department; Officers should take pride in their profession and their Department. A lack of professional esteem is evident in an officer's appearance, bearing and conduct. The public cannot be expected to support a Department in which the officers themselves do not exhibit respect and pride.
- C. Efficiency in the performance of duties: Police offices must realize that their conduct is continuously being evaluated by the public. It is important for individual offices to demonstrate the knowledge, skill, and ability to provide the type of police service which the people expect. Self-discipline is required in order to conduct all activities in a manner reflecting the dignity of the position of the police officer. Officers must train themselves to exhibit habits of acceptable conduct which will merit public approval. Officers are expected to experience the normal emotion of anger, fear, depression, and amusement, but it is imperative that they learn to control and constrain these emotions. Unchecked, these emotions could cause an officer to engage in actions which would jeopardize the welfare of innocent citizens, his position, and the image of the Department.
- D. Personal belief in the value of community relations: The burden of responsibility for the community relations effort lies with each individual officer. He must have an attitude of good will toward each person with whom he comes into contact. However, this attitude alone is not sufficient. In addition, he must exhibit this attitude by the use of courtesy, pleasantness, and respect in all his contact. One of the most important means by which the Department may gain the confidence and support of the public is through the personal belief of every officer in the value of community relations efforts. Public support will dictate the degree of success that the Department will attain in budgetary appropriations and salaries, voluntary compliance with the law, recruiting, obtaining cooperative witnesses, convictions by juries, and citizen assistance in coping with crime.

5. The Public

- A. Individual attitudes toward the police: The public we serve, for the most part, is composed of peaceful, hardworking, law abiding citizens. The criminal element is only a small portion of the population. While the enforcement of regulations and laws is necessary to protect citizens and their property, and infraction does not necessarily indicate criminal tendencies, especially in the area of traffic violations. Officers should seek voluntary compliance to laws through persuasive and

educational methods. While the average individual will quickly resent a domineering, pretentious attitude of the part of the policeman, the same individual will generally be quite willing to comply to a courteous request.

B. Group attitudes toward the police: Various organized groups and associations are interested in promoting improved community relations in religious, cultural, racial, commercial, civic, and law enforcement areas. Being interested in the public welfare, they are in a position to render valuable assistance to the police. Their objectives should be understood by the police, and they should receive the sincere cooperation of each officer and of the Department.

C. Attitudes:

a. The character of our population is reflected in many distinctive backgrounds found here. Care will be exercised that no favoritism be shown any particular group. Conversely, particular care shall be exercised to avoid use of any word, phrase, or expression, and of any act, gesture, or demeanor that could be justly construed as being discriminatory in nature or prejudicial in motivation. Officers are expressly forbidden from using any trigger word which would cast dispersion on the character or ethnic origin of any citizen.

b. The freedom of controversy, the conflict of ideas and opinions, and the spirit of protest are part of the American heritage. It is the duty of all officers to afford protection for all citizens who peacefully assemble and petition for redress of grievances. In this situation, patience, tact, resourcefulness, self-restraint, and a calm demeanor increase the effectiveness of the policeman.

1. Communications

A. Direct: Direct communication includes every contact a police officer has with a citizen. If the contact is favorable and is executed in a professional and courteous manner, the image of the Department is raised by that individual officer. However, if the officer exhibits poor demeanor, the citizen with whom the officer comes into contact will probably have a less favorable opinion of the Department. He will also relate the incident to others, thus creating further undesirable

attitudes. The Department's image in such a case will be significantly lowered.

- B. Indirect: Indirect communication includes all situations in which a citizen observes an officer engaged in police activities either alone or with an officer engaged in police activities either alone or with another citizen. Although the citizen making the observation may have no conception of the nature of the police activity, he is none-the-less forming attitudes about the officer and the Department. Since the citizen can not hear the officer, he forms his opinions by what he sees: The officer's appearance, his movements and mannerisms, and his actions. Again, these characteristics convey to the citizen the officer's attitude toward himself, his role as a police officer, and toward the Department.

Many citizens have indirect contact with police officers and the Department through the news media:

- a. The news media performs a service for the public, the importance of which should be clearly understood by police officers. The function of the news media is to keep the public informed on matters of public interest, including the activities of Department officials and government employees.
- b. While police officers must exercise discretion with respect to information of a nature that cannot and should not be divulged, it is equally important to promptly release to the news media such information as is permissible, without jeopardizing the right of the defendant to a fair trial. Officers will refrain from speculating about the motive of an offense, the cause of death, or other factors that may be a part of the prosecution's case.
- c. Cooperation with accredited representatives of the news media and other legitimate agencies of publication is extremely important in promoting good community relations. A cooperative attitude and a courteous explanation, when necessary, will usually result in a more desirable presentation of the facts from the police view-point.

2. Program of Community Relations

- A. The personal conduct of each member of the Department is the primary factor in promoting a program of desirable community relations. The exercise of tact, patience, and courtesy shall be strictly observed under all circumstances whether conducting investigations, interviewing complainants, answering the telephone, responding to personal inquiries, or when issuing necessary instructions to the

public as in policing fairs, parades, and other public gatherings.

- B. Superior officers shall by example demonstrate and shall instruct subordinates in proper department and desirable attitudes in their contacts with the public.
- C. All officers are reminded of the sincere desire of the Department to establish good relations with the community we serve. Each officer determines the esteem with which the Department is held. Members of the Department shall carefully avoid behavior such as would tend to bring adverse criticism of the Department. Their conduct, whether on or off duty, shall be such as to merit the respect and confidence of the public.
- D. Members should indicate a willingness to participate in and encourage involvement in requests from the public to learn from the police. Public speaking is not suited to everyone, but informing the public of the Department's desire to serve in whatever way possible is beneficial.