1. Purpose

The Harford County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) has established the Citizen Ride-Along Program (CRP) to give members of the community, and job applicants for the Agency, a better understanding and appreciation of the law enforcement role in the community.

2. Policy

The Harford County Sheriff’s Office recognizes the desire of citizens to ride with deputies to learn the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement officers. The CRP allows citizens and other interested parties to ride with deputies for observational and/or educational purposes.

3. Definitions

PROGRAM COORDINATOR: manages the daily operations of the program and will maintain a list of persons who are requesting to ride, those whom have ridden, and those whom have been deemed unacceptable to ride-along. A Program Coordinator for each respective Patrol Precinct shall be appointed by the Division Commander of that precinct.

4. References

Wilson v. Layne, 526 U.S. 603, 614

5. Procedures

A. Criteria

1. The Southern and Northern Precinct coordinators shall manage all activities of the CRP.

2. Persons participating in the CRP will only be able to ride with personnel from the Police Services Bureau, Patrol, unless authorized in writing by the respective Division Commander of the location for the requested ride-along.

3. Persons requesting to participate will be provided a:
   a. CRP application; and
   b. A copy of the guidelines for the program.
4. A prospective ride-along candidate must be:
   a. A resident of Harford County (exceptions are given for applicants and other special considerations at the discretion of the Sheriff); and
   b. At least 18 years of age; and
   c. Must authorize a criminal background check to be conducted; and
   d. Must successfully pass the background investigation prior to the ride; and
   e. Be currently enrolled as a student in an educational facility, college or university, and able to provide verification of enrollment; or
   f. A Harford County employee interested in furthering a cooperative relationship with the HCSO with approval in writing by his or her current county supervisor; or
   g. A family member of a current Sheriff’s Office employee who wishes to learn about a deputy’s duties and responsibilities; or
   h. A Harford County Sheriff’s Office correctional or civilian employee with written approval of their respective Division Commander; or
   i. Any other interested person, at the discretion of the Sheriff.

5. All CRP scheduling is subject to manpower availability.

B. Restrictions

1. A prospective CRP candidate shall not be permitted to participate in the program if:
   a. he is the subject of an active criminal investigation,
   b. he has an active exparte, peace order, domestic violence order, or warrant against him, or
   c. he has a felony conviction.

2. A prospective ride-along candidate may be denied participation in the program if:
   a. he has a misdemeanor conviction on his or her criminal record, or
   b. an active summons, or
   c. if in the judgment of the Sheriff’s Office, his participation would interfere with law enforcement operations.

3. The decision to include or exclude a candidate from the program based on the above criteria is at the discretion of the respective Division Commander and not subject to appeal.

4. Participants in the program are prohibited from riding with family members or those with whom they have an intimate relationship.
C. Exceptions

1. Joppatowne Homeland Security Program participants and Harford County Sheriff’s Office Explorer Post 6600 participants may ride-along at 16 years of age.
   a. when the ride-along is under 18 years of age, deputies must make personal contact with the participant’s parent/guardian to obtain permission for the student to ride.
   b. a deputy must witness the parent/guardian signing the release and waiver of liability before any person under 18 years of age participates in the CRP.

5. Other exceptions to the policy may be granted at the discretion of the Sheriff.

D. Procedure

1. Applicants shall submit a completed Ride-Along Application/Citizen Participation Program Waiver Claim and Release from Liability (SO-107) to the precinct Program Coordinator.

2. The application shall be reviewed, and a background check will be completed by the precinct Program Coordinator.

3. If approved, the precinct CRP coordinator shall:
   a. maintain a file of all applications for a period of 3 years.
   b. contact the approved participant to schedule the ride.

4. Shift/unit supervisors shall ensure that the applicant is aware of the procedures contained within this policy.

5. A candidate who is approved to ride-along may do so for up to 90 days before another application must be submitted and the background investigation updated.

6. A candidate may ride-along a maximum of four times during the 90-day period.

7. A participant riding more than once should not be assigned to the same deputy.

E. Participation Guidelines

1. To ensure officer safety, participants must be in good physical and mental health in order to participate.

2. **NO WEAPONS** of any kind may be carried by participants.

3. Participants may not purchase, consume, possess, or be under the influence of an alcoholic beverage or controlled dangerous substance.

4. Proper attire is required.
   a. Tube tops, bare backs, bare midriffs, t-shirts, torn jeans, tight-fitting clothes, shorts and short skirts are not permitted.
5. Any supervisor shall have the discretion to cancel the ride-along if the candidate’s attire is inappropriate.

6. Participants may not display any badge, shield, pin, identification card, shirt, or patch not authorized by the Sheriff or his designee.

7. Participants must report promptly for their scheduled ride-along and present a supervisor with photo identification.

8. Participants must follow all guidelines given to them by any Agency member.

9. Participants are not permitted to leave the patrol vehicle or handle any equipment without permission from the deputy.

10. Participants may terminate their ride-along by requesting to be returned to the respective precinct at the next opportunity.

11. Only one participant may ride in a car at any time.

12. Participants shall not interfere in any way with a deputy’s investigation.

13. Participants are encouraged to ask questions regarding an incident; however, those questions should only be posed after the deputy and participant have left the scene.

14. A deputy shall return the participant to the precinct should the participant exhibit any inappropriate behavior and forward a written memorandum to the Division Commander detailing the occurrence as soon as practical.

15. Participants may be called to court to act as a witness.

16. Participants may accompany a deputy on calls for service provided that neither the type of call, nor the situation presented upon arrival, pose a significant threat to the participant’s safety.

17. Participants may only accompany a deputy into a private residence with the express permission of the occupant or owner. The participant does not need permission to accompany the deputy into businesses and other public facilities.

18. Participants are prohibited from taking photographs or using audio/visual recording equipment.

F. Deputy and Agency Responsibilities

1. A deputy involved in the CRP must have completed his probationary period with the Agency.

2. The deputy is responsible for the safety of the CRP participant and should not intentionally involve the participant in a dangerous situation.
   
   a. In the event of an arrest, the deputy will have the discretion of weighing the potential danger and the educational value of transporting a prisoner in the same vehicle as the participant.

   b. HCSO deputies will be responsible for the participant at the Interagency Processing Center (IPC) and shall not allow them to move about the IPC unescorted.
3. In the event a deputy receives an emergency call, he may respond with or without the participant. If
the call is inherently dangerous the deputy may have the participant exit the vehicle at a safe
location prior to responding to the scene.

4. No civilians (Explorers, Interns, Ride-Alongs, or Reporters/Media, etc.) are to enter any structure,
home or business of any search and seizure warrant executed by the HCSO.

a. An exception to this rule is when the civilian(s) has an expressed duty / assignment to aid law
enforcement in the execution of said warrant, e.g. FSU personnel, Victims Services, Computer
Forensics, Financial Investigators, etc.

Approved

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JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF

DATE__________________