

St. Joseph, Missouri Police Department



DIRECTIVE TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		INDEX NUMBER: GO0017
SUBJECT: Citizen Ride Along Program		
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I. Policy

The St. Joseph Police Department offers a ride-along program to provide citizens an opportunity to learn more about the responsibilities of police officers, and to remind members of their membership in this community. The Ride-Along Program opens lines of communication between members and citizens, and allows citizens to observe firsthand the diverse situations members face. The Ride-Along Program provides members the opportunity to interact in a positive manner that does not involve enforcement, investigation, or assistance. The application requirements of the Ride-Along Program do not apply to Department Chaplain Corps members and/or Department civilian members.

II. Procedure

Any eligible citizen may apply to participate in the program, and members are encouraged to invite those citizens they believe would view the opportunity as a learning experience. A citizen observer associated with the Department during the Ride-Along Program shall be expected to adhere to specific guidelines including, but not limited to, the following:

A. Eligibility and Requirements:

1. Applicants shall be 18 years of age or older;
2. Applicants should complete a request form and submit the same to the Support Services Division 10 business days prior to the date of the requested ride-along. Late requests may be subject to rejection;
3. Applications must be reviewed by the Support Services Division to ensure they are complete;
4. The request form will be valid for a period of one year. A release and waiver must be completed for each ride along.
5. Ride-along citizen observers shall agree to abide by all requirements specified in the Ride-Along Program, and shall agree to sign the Department's Ride-Along Agreement form and Release and Waiver form before any ride-along period begins. The Ride-Along Agreement form shall be signed and maintained

- at the Support Services Division. Release and Waiver forms shall be located in the Patrol Division Roll Call Room. Each Release and Waiver form shall be maintained in Support Services upon its completion by appropriate members;
6. For the duration of the ride-along period the citizen observer will wear a Department issued "CITIZEN OBSERVER" identification tag at all times;
 7. An applicant may request a specific shift and/or officer for his/her first ride-along. These requests will be honored when possible, but the Patrol Watch Commander has full discretion in scheduling a ride-along once the ride-along reports to his/her shift;
 8. A Criminal History Check shall be conducted on an applicant by the Records Division, and the findings shall be reviewed by Support Services. Following the review, the applicant will be notified by Support Services (within 10 business days upon receipt of the criminal history check) if his/her application is approved;
 9. Upon approval, the applicant will be notified of the tentative date(s) of the ride-along. If the application is disapproved, the reason for the disapproval will be explained in detail to the applicant by Support Services;
 10. Watch Commander(s) of the shift(s) during which the ride-along(s) will occur shall be notified of scheduled ride-along by Support Services personnel. Each Watch Commander will note an assigned ride-along on the duty roster;
 11. Before the citizen observer begins a scheduled ride-along period, Support Services will provide the citizen observer with a brief orientation to the program's purpose and those requirements associated with it. Support Services members shall be responsible for ensuring that each citizen observer receives all necessary and/or requested information prior to the commencement of the ride-along period. The presentation shall be standardized to ensure that each citizen observer receives the same instruction. Application packets are available in the Support Services Division or on the Department website (<http://www.stjoepd.info/crimeprevention.html>);
 12. Whenever the citizen observer reports for the ride-along(s) on the designated date(s) and/or time(s), they shall meet the Watch Commander or a Shift Supervisor. At this time, the ride-along will be introduced to the member with whom they will be assigned;
 13. The ride-along program is meant to provide education, not entertainment. A ride-along shall be expected to immediately adhere to an officer's orders, realizing that their safety may depend on it, as well as the safety of others;
 14. Casual business attire is required. Clothing/accessories that are dirty, tattered, obscene, or are otherwise believed to be unsuitable by the supervisor shall not be allowed. Appearance or hygiene which in the supervisor's opinion reflects poorly on the department, or may otherwise interfere with an officer's duties shall be reason to advise the observer they may not ride-along until the problem is addressed.
 15. Privacy: A ride-along shall be advised that he/she is absolutely prohibited from going onto or into private property without first gaining permission from the owner, tenant, etc. PERMISSION MUST BE GRANTED;

16. A ride-along is there as an observer ONLY. He/she will not attempt to arrest, offer advice, or otherwise interfere in official police duties;
17. Behavior: A ride-along is expected to conduct himself/herself in a professional manner. Public displays of obscenity and/or abusive language during the ride-along period are prohibited;
18. Members shall have the absolute right to terminate the ride-along if they determine that such action is necessary. Upon terminating the ride-along, members shall notify the Watch or Shift Commander as soon as possible, and shall explain the reason for the termination;
19. The ride-along period shall be for four (4) hours. There shall be no extensions unless approved by the shift commander/sergeant. Extenuating circumstances apply (such as a member is engaged in a call for service, and cannot immediately bring the ride-along back to the station);
20. Program participation shall be limited to ONE TIME PER SHIFT in any one-year period, not to exceed a total of 24 hours. At no time shall an individual be allowed to ride more than three times in any 12 month period. This does not apply to interns and practicum students.
21. Within ten (10) business days of the end of the ride-along period, Support Services will send an evaluation form to the citizen observer, requesting that he/she complete the same and return the form to the Support Services Division;
22. Citizen ride-along observers shall go through the program's application and approval process and shall adhere to its requirements. A Release and Waiver form shall be filled out and signed by a citizen observer with the application packet.
23. Special consideration may be made for commissioned law enforcement personnel from other agencies, and family of department members. Under normal circumstances those persons should follow the application process as stated above. When requests by these persons are impractical due to time constraints (visiting from out of town, etc.) or other considerations, the ride along must be approved by the Watch Commander or direct supervisor of the requesting member.
24. The approving supervisor is responsible for ensuring the ride-along reads and signs both the orientation/ride along application paperwork and the special conditions release waiver. The shift supervisor shall sign off on the waiver for special considerations and log book. They shall ensure a criminal history check has been completed and the individual does not have any felony or serious misdemeanor convictions, is not currently under charges for a misdemeanor or felony crime or under indictment by the federal government. The release waiver shall be completed each time an individual rides. The shift supervisor has the discretion to deny or limit this privilege or the frequency of it for good reason.

Chris Connally, Chief of Police

Date