

# WEST PALM BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## I-1 CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS OF POLICE DEPARTMENT MEMBERS

**EFFECTIVE: 01/01/2005**

CALEA Standards: 1.1.1, 1.1.2

CFA Standards: N/A

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**I. POLICY:** Prior to assuming sworn status, all members are to take and abide by 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 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 that 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 exercise of 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 officers. 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 that trust is neither diminished nor lost due to the conduct of a member.

The City of West Palm Beach Police Department has adopted the Police Code of Conduct and the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics as published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. All sworn members are required to abide by this Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics. Non-sworn members should guide themselves by the same standards wherever possible.

### **II. DEFINITION:**

A. Conduct unbecoming an officer or non-sworn member - an act, on or off-duty, of immoral, improper, disorderly or intemperate personal conduct that reflects or has a tendency to reflect discredit upon the member, fellow members or the Police Department itself.

### **III. CONDUCT:**

A. Police Officers and non-sworn members are encouraged to 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 that the alleged conduct be criminal in character nor that it is proved beyond a reasonable doubt. It is sufficient that the complaint conduct and its attending circumstances are such as to offend publicly accepted standards of decency.

C. The Police Department will notify a member of precisely what he or she is 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:

- 1 Department Standard Operating Procedure,
2. Department Rules and Regulations,
3. The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, and
4. The Police Code of Conduct.

**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:**

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.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police believes it's important that 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.

**Primary Responsibilities of a Police Officer**

A police officer acts as an official representative of government who is required and trusted to work within the law. The officer's powers and duties are conferred by statute. 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.

**Performance of the Duties of a Police Officer**

A police officer will perform all duties impartially, without favor or affection or ill will and without regard to status, sex, race, religion, political belief or aspiration. All citizens will be treated equally with courtesy, consideration and dignity.

Officers will never allow personal feelings, animosities or friendships to influence official conduct. Laws will be enforced appropriately and courteously and, in carrying out their responsibilities, officers will strive to obtain maximum cooperation from the public.

They 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.

**Discretion**

A police officer will use responsibly the discretion vested in his or her position and exercise it within the law. 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.

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. There can be difficulty in choosing between conflicting courses of action. It is important to remember that a timely word of advice rather than arrest which may be correct in appropriate circumstances can be a more effective means of achieving a desired end.

**Use of Force**

A police officer will never employ unnecessary force or violence and will use only such force in the discharge of duty as is reasonable in all circumstances.

The use of force should be used only with the greatest restraint and only after discussion, negotiation and persuasion have been found to be inappropriate or ineffective. While the use of force is occasionally unavoidable, 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.

**Confidentiality**

Whatever a police officer sees, hears or learns of that is of a confidential nature will be kept secret unless the performance of duty or legal provision requires otherwise.

Members of the public have a right to security and privacy, and information obtained about them must not be improperly divulged.

**Integrity**

A police officer will not engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will an officer condone such acts by other police officers.

The public demands that the integrity of police officers be above reproach. Police officers must, therefore, avoid any conduct that might compromise integrity and thus undercut the public confidence in a law enforcement agency. Officers will refuse to accept any gifts, presents, subscriptions, favors, gratuities or promises that could be interpreted as seeking to cause the officer to refrain from performing official responsibilities honestly and within the law. Police officers must not receive private or special advantage from their official status. Respect from the public cannot be bought; it can only be earned and cultivated.

**Cooperation with Other Police Officers and Agencies**

Police officers will cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives in the pursuit of justice.

An officer or agency may be one among many organizations that may provide law enforcement services to a jurisdiction. It is imperative that a police officer assist colleagues fully and completely with respect and consideration at all times.

**Personal-Professional Capabilities**

Police officers will be responsible for their own standard of professional performance and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve their level of knowledge and competence.

Through study and experience, a police officer can acquire the high level of knowledge and competence that is essential for the efficient and effective performance of duty. The acquisition of knowledge is a never-ending process of personal and professional development that should be pursued constantly.

**Private Life**

Police officers will behave in a manner that does not bring discredit to their agencies or themselves.

A police officer's character and conduct while off duty must always be exemplary, thus maintaining a position of respect in the community in which he or she lives and serves. The officer's personal behavior must be beyond reproach.

**VI. REFERENCE:**

- SOP # IV-22 Internal Affairs Function.
- Applicable Collective Bargaining Agreements.
- Rules and Regulations.
- Police Officer Bill of Rights.
- F.S.S. 876.05 Public employees; oath.

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**Delsa. R. Bush, Chief of Police**

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