



# FRATERNIZATION

**INDEX CODE: 109**  
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## **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to prevent bringing discredit to good order and discipline, compromise or appearance of compromise to the integrity of supervisory authority or chain of command, causing actual or perceived partiality or unfairness, and involvement or appearance of involvement of the improper use of rank or position for personal gain as a result of workplace romantic relationships.

## **II. POLICY**

It is the policy of the Anne Arundel County Police Department to ensure that members avoid any perceived or actual conflict of interest between their duties and interests arising from romantic relationships which a member might have with another member or supervisor. The Department will investigate and/or act upon said violations, as well as violations of those specific prohibitions listed below. The Department recognizes that fraternization is gender-neutral, meaning there is no presumption that fraternization is limited to or defined by interactions between members of certain genders. The policy and procedures described are strictly limited to addressing the actual or reasonably perceived adverse impact on romantic relationships, not the actual relationships. Except for the limited circumstances described in the section entitled "Prohibited Actions," nothing in this policy is intended to control or examine the relationships that may exist or develop between members of the Department.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

### **1. Romantic Relationship**

For the purposes of this policy, a "romantic relationship" is a relationship characterized by a level of personal affection and familiarity not typically shared by coworkers. Such relationships involve, but are not limited to, the following activities: dating, physical intimacy, sexual activity, or other similar behavior(s).

### **2. Fraternization**

For the purposes of this policy, "fraternization" is defined as a romantic relationship between members of the Department that results in an actual or reasonably perceived adverse impact on matters such as (but not limited to):

- a. The chain of command;
- b. The authority or objectivity of a supervisor;
- c. The impartial participation in and application of departmental activities; or

- d. The good order and morale of the Department.

### **3. Direct Report**

For the purposes of this policy, a “direct report” is a member of the Department who regularly reports or takes orders directly from a higher-ranking member of the department, without the intervention or involvement of another supervisor.

### **4. Supervisor – Subordinate Relationship**

For the purposes of this policy, a “supervisor-subordinate relationship” is a romantic relationship involving a member of the department and another member of a higher supervisory rank or position within the same Bureau chain of command. This includes sworn field trainer – sworn field trainee assignments and the civilian equivalents.

### **5. Adverse Impact**

For the purposes of this policy, an “adverse impact” is an effect caused by a romantic relationship which, includes:

- a. Appreciably or significantly compromises the work performance, objectivity, judgment, professionalism, business reputation or the business manner in which a member may conduct himself or herself, or
- b. Causes the Department to suffer significant public disdain and/or a loss of public esteem.
- c. Has the appearance or perception of any of the above.

## **IV. PROHIBITED ACTIONS**

Except as provided in this policy, the prohibited actions described in this section apply to circumstances involving members of the department, applicants to become a member, and police recruits regardless of agency affiliation.

Fraternization is prohibited as follows:

1. No member of the Department may begin a romantic relationship with a police recruit, regardless of the recruit’s agency affiliation.
2. No member of the Department may work as a direct report or in a supervisor – subordinate relationship with a member with whom they are married or with whom they are engaged in a romantic relationship.
3. Members may not select or apply for assignments which would place them in a circumstance or assignment that is prohibited by this policy.
4. A member may not participate in any way with decisions or procedures *in reference to personnel matters regarding a member of the department to whom he/she is married or with whom he/she is engaged in a romantic relationship, including but not limited to: appointment, assignment, employment, promotion, or advancement.*

## **V. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

All supervisors bear responsibility for ensuring that appropriate standards of mutual conduct and respect are observed and fraternization does not occur in their relationships. In any circumstance where a prohibited action under Section IV of this policy occurs, it is the responsibility of the higher-ranking member to ensure compliance with the reporting requirements in this policy.

1. Allegations of fraternization in violation of this policy must be reported directly to the Office of Professional Standards. Allegations of misconduct in violation of this policy will be investigated by the Internal Affairs Section in accordance with Index Code 303.2 Complaint Reception and Investigation.
2. In a circumstance where a romantic relationship exists in violation of this policy, the higher ranking member involved in that romantic relationship must report the relationship to their direct supervisor. The supervisor will forward the disclosure to the Chief of Police via chain of command.

## **VI. REMEDIAL AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

Upon learning of the disclosed relationship, the Chief of Police will review the facts and circumstances and determine the appropriate remediating course of action regarding violations of this policy. Such remediation ***may include, but is not limited to, the Chief of Police granting an exception to Section IV of this policy or, the*** Chief of Police may, with full discretion, transfer any member who is in violation of Section IV of this policy. The Chief of Police may refer the members to the Office of Professional Standards for disciplinary action for violations of sections IV or Section V of this policy, except as stated below. The Chief of Police may also order other actions that will prevent adverse impacts which would derive from the romantic relationship.

Discipline may not be imposed if the relationship was reported within a reasonable amount of time from when the romantic relationship began.

**VII. PROPONENT UNIT:** Office of the Chief of Police.

**VIII. CANCELLATION:** This directive cancels Index Code 109, dated ***09-28-23***.