



Atlanta Police Department – Standard Operating Procedure			
	<b>APD.SOP.3065 – Field Interviews</b> <b>Effective Date: March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025</b>		
<b>Chief Darin Schierbaum</b>	<b>Signature by: DS</b>	<b>Date Signed: 3/25/2025</b>	<b>Renewal: 2026</b>

## SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

### APD Staff,

The Policy and Standards Section is dedicated to providing the department, and its employees, with accurate, understandable and transparent policies. In order to publish policies that reflect the most up-to-date standards, the Policy and Standard Section regularly reviews all policies to ensure that they are reflective of the current mission and objectives of the Atlanta Police Department.

During the review and renewal of APD.SOP.3065- Field Interviews, the following processes for initiating and conducting a field interview has been updated to comply with the Calhoun Order:

1. The officer has established reasonable articulable suspicion to believe the individual being stopped is involved in criminal activity.
2. Frisk will be performed by patting down the individual to check for weapons in a non-intrusive manner. The officer will not enter pockets or manipulate items unless weapons or contraband is immediately apparent through plain feel. While patting down the individual for weapons, if the officer feels what is immediately apparent as contraband, the officer may seize the suspected contraband.

**Thank you and stay informed!**

**Policy and Standards Section**  
**Planning, Research, and Accreditation Unit**

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## 1. PURPOSE

To establish procedures and guidelines for an active approach to the reduction of suppressible crimes, such as pedestrian robbery, residential burglaries, and larceny, by encouraging officers to contact, identify, and document encounters with suspicious persons and vehicles.

## 2. POLICY

The field interview process is intended to increase patrol visibility, and remove the anonymity of potential criminals, thereby reducing suppressible crimes.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 Section and unit commanders will monitor the field interview process.
- 3.2 Supervisors will ensure that officers comply with this directive.
- 3.3 Officers and investigators will use field interviews to identify and document encounters with suspicious persons and vehicles.
- 3.4 PRAU will contact the City of Atlanta Department of Law prior to making any revisions, amendments, or deletions in this Standard Operating Procedure.

## 4. ACTION

### 4.1 INITIATING A FIELD CONTACT

- 4.1.1 When encountering and/or approaching an individual who the officer has reasonable articulable suspicion to believe is involved in criminal activity, direct the suspect to keep their/his/her hands in view at all times. If the officer reasonably believes that the person is armed and presently dangerous, a frisk will be conducted before questioning.
- 4.1.2 Before an officer stops an individual who the officer has reasonable articulable suspicion to believe is involved in criminal activity, the officer will advise dispatch and provide as many details as possible such as, but not limited to: location, number of persons, sex, race, approximate age, and clothing description.
- 4.1.3 Except in unusual situations, an officer will obtain assistance before making a stop of two or more persons.
- 4.1.4 When making stops at night, direct the vehicle lights, spotlights, or flashlight on the subject(s).
- 4.1.5 Officers may detain an individual only when they have reasonable articulable suspicion that the individual is involved in criminal activity. If, following the stop, the officer reasonably believes that the person is both armed and presently dangerous, the officer may frisk for weapons.
- 4.1.6 A Frisk will be performed by patting down the individual to check for weapons in a non-intrusive manner. The officer will not enter pockets or manipulate items unless weapons or contraband is immediately apparent through plain feel. While patting down the individual for weapons, if the officer feels what is immediately apparent as contraband, the officer may seize the suspected contraband.
- 4.1.7 After stopping a person, if the officer's suspicions have been satisfied, the officer will de-escalate the situation by courteously explaining what prompted the stop.

*\*This Subsection, 4.1, may not be deleted, revised, or amended pursuant to the Court Order in Calhoun, et al. v. Pennington, et al. 1:09-CV-3286-TCB. Consult the City of Atlanta Department of Law with any questions or concerns.\**

#### 4.2 CHECKS

After the person has been stopped and/or frisked, the officer will obtain the person's name, date of birth, address, and identification, and proceed with questioning the suspicious behavior that prompted the stop. Officers will make wanted checks on suspicious persons that are stopped whenever possible.

#### 4.3 FIELD INTERVIEW/CONTACT PROCEDURE USING REPORT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (RMS)

If the stop and subsequent investigation do not result in the immediate arrest of the subject or in totally removing the officer's suspicions about the subject, the officer will document the contact in the RMS System. The officer will, by the end of their tour of duty, electronically submit all completed Field Contact information via the RMS. The collected field contact information will be accessible for use by investigators and officers, in developing leads and establishing crime patterns. The Field Contact information is also useful as an official Department record of the field interview and the circumstances that prompted the officer to conduct it.

1. The Field Contact information data does not take the place of an incident report in any instance that requires an incident report. Information for an investigative unit concerning a specific case will be documented on an incident report.
2. After completing the subject's personal information and description in the RMS's Field Contact, the officer should determine whether the person is wanted. If the individual is not wanted, it is not necessary to detain the subject any longer, as the remaining information is based on the officer's observations.

#### 4.4 USES OF THE FIELD CONTACT REPORT IN THE RMS

4.4.1 The Following are examples of proper use of a Field Contact Report.

1. Documenting contact with suspicious persons/vehicles.
2. Alarm calls where there may be suspicious activity but no damage or forced entry.
3. Curfew violators -with **no citations issued.**
4. Vehicles that fail to stop.
5. Prearrest diversion contacts or referrals.
6. Any contact with a citizen that you may want documented that does not rise to the level of an Incident report.

4.4.2 Field Contact reports should not be used for the following:

1. Recording any type of crime offense.
2. General informational reports.
  - If a citizen requests documentation for any reason, an Incident report should be completed. The offense/incident type of "**Miscellaneous Non-Crime**" would be used. Do not use the offense/incident type of "**All other offenses**" for non-crime incidents.
3. Any requested documentation that a citizen will want to retrieve.
  - If a citizen asks for documentation, it should be recorded as an Incident Report in the RMS. Field Contact reports are investigative tools and are not released to the public unless there is a specific open records request.

4. Any information that a specific report is required.
  - Arrest, Missing Persons, or any other incident that has a specifically required report in the RMS should only be recorded on a Field Contact report after all other required reports are completed. The Field Contact report would then be optional as a further investigative tool, and not required after the proper reports are completed.
5. The Reporting person or the Victim
  - The reporting person or victim should only be documented in a Field contact report if they are suspected to be involved in a related crime. The link to any additional suspicious activity should be specifically noted in the Field Contact report narrative.

## 5. DEFINITIONS

Frisk: A limited search of an individual to check for concealed weapons.

Reasonable Articulate Suspicion (RAS): a legal standard that allows law enforcement to stop and question someone based on specific, articulable reasons to suspect criminal activity.

## 6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.3065 “Field Interviews”, issued October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## 7. REFERENCES

September 2024 Order in Calhoun, et al. v. Pennington, et al. 1:09-CV-3286-TCB

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), 5th Edition Standards 1.2.3 and 42.1.6