




ARLINGTON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVE MANUAL

Chapter: 5 Procedures	Effective Date: April 12, 2019	Amends/Supersedes: October 6, 2017 March 1, 2005	By Authority of the Chief of Police  Charles A. Penn
Accreditation Standard(s): N/A			

523.02 Ride Along Program

I. Policy

The department's ride-along program is intended to facilitate and generate community support for law enforcement by providing individuals with a better understanding of the challenges, hazards and rewards that police officers routinely encounter on the job.

II. Procedure

A. Eligibility - In order to participate in the ride-along program, an individual must be at least 18 years old, and meet one or more of the following criteria.

1. Live or work in Arlington County.
2. Student of law enforcement or criminal justice.
3. Member of the military.
4. Arlington County Police or Auxiliary applicant.
5. Arlington County employee.
6. A member of a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency.
7. A relative or friend of an officer in this department.
8. A visiting guest of this department.

B. General Requirements

1. A ride-along participant is ordinarily assigned to a patrol officer in the Operations Division, but upon request may be permitted to ride with another division.
2. Participation is limited to one (4) hour ride-along every 12 months, ride-alongs will not be scheduled on Fridays or Saturdays, and no more than two ride-alongs will be scheduled during any shift. Exceptions may be granted by the watch commander, division commander, or Chief of Police at the time of a ride-along and may be contingent on circumstances that include, but are not limited to, department policy, availability of officers, call volume, nature of calls for police assistance, and any dangers to the officer or citizen resulting from the ride-along.
3. Participants must be appropriately dressed in businesslike attire or neat casual attire. Acceptable dress for men include a suit, sports coat and slacks or a collared shirt and slacks. Women may wear the preceding, a dress, or a pant suit. Jeans, shorts, shirts without collars, and tennis shoes are not permitted.

4. All participants will conduct themselves in a responsible manner during the ride-along.
5. Cell phone use by civilian ride-alongs is prohibited except in an emergency situation.
6. Cameras and tape recorders are not permitted unless prior approval is granted.
7. Participants will be required to comply with all lawful requests made by a supervisor or officer of this department.
8. Participants must abide by all the requirements outlined in this procedure.
9. Other than sworn law enforcement officers with federal or state criminal jurisdiction throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia or in Arlington County no participant is permitted to carry any kind of weapon.

C. Ride Along Application

A fillable [Ride Along Application](#) is available at the department's website and must be filled out entirely and submitted via email or U.S. Mail to the Operations Division administrative assistant for processing. The Ride-Along Application must be approved by the affected division commander prior to participation in the program. Exceptions to this requirement may be granted, at the discretion of the Chief of Police, the division commander under whom the ride-along will occur, the watch commander, or in accordance with section II.E.5. of this procedure. The rejection of a ride-along application will be documented in a memorandum and forwarded to the Office of the Chief.

D. Administrative Assistant Responsibilities

1. The Operations Administrative Assistant will ensure that all ride along applications are routed to the appropriate division administrative assistant for processing as follows:
 - a. Review the Ride-Along Application and ensure it is filled out completely.
 - b. Conduct a criminal records check and forward the completed ride-along cover sheet and Ride-Along Application to the respective division commander for review.
 - c. Upon approval by the division commander, schedule the ride along using the [Unified Ride-Along Calendar](#) located in "Inside The Blue" on AC Commons.
 - d. Notify the respective watch commander or section commander and the applicant of the date and time at least 24-hours prior to the scheduled ride-along.

E. Supervisor's Responsibilities

1. A police supervisor should advise the officer of the assigned ride-along at the earliest opportunity.
2. Operations Division ride-alongs should be assigned to marked patrol units whenever possible.

3. A police supervisor should perform their duties in the same manner as if the ride-along were not present.
4. A police supervisor has the authority to terminate a ride-along or reassign the participant to another unit for any of the following reasons:
 - a. The participant's conduct or attire is not in the best interest of the department.
 - b. Depending on immediate circumstances, the ride-along would be exposed to imminent danger, or hamper or endanger the officer in the performance of their duty.

The supervisor exercising the authority to terminate a ride-along for cause will document the circumstances and notify the Office of the Chief, the affected division commander and their administrative assistant, via memorandum as soon as possible.

5. A police supervisor may approve a ride-along without prior application approval. This authority shall apply only to unforeseen situations in which a law enforcement objective may be advanced. A Ride-Along Application form and Liability Waiver Form must be completed prior to commencement of the ride-along.

F. Officer Responsibilities

1. The officer will have the participant sign a [Liability Waiver Form](#) prior to commencement of the ride-along. This document will be witnessed, and attested to, by two police officers. The completed waiver is to be forwarded to the appropriate division's administrative assistant.
2. The officer is responsible for the safety of the citizen participant, and should not intentionally involve the citizen in a dangerous situation. The officer should perform routine duties as if the citizen were not present.
3. It is discretionary as to whether the participant should or should not accompany the officer into a citizen's home. Good judgment should be exercised in cases where the officer knows or suspects a call may be volatile or inherently dangerous (e.g., a domestic or family dispute).
4. An officer may direct the ride-along to remain inside the police vehicle at any time during the ride-along.
5. An officer may drop off their ride-along at a safe location when responding to an obviously dangerous call (e.g., an active shooter, pursuit, etc.). The ride-along should be advised that another police officer will be requested to pick them up and either continue the ride-along or transport them back to the police station.
6. An officer may request that a supervisor terminate a ride-along if the participant hampers, interferes or otherwise hinders their performance and efficiency.

G. Special Conditions or Exceptions

This procedure does not apply to law enforcement officers who are engaging in an official law enforcement function that requires them to be accompanied by an Arlington County Police Officer.