

CITIZEN OBSERVER PROGRAM

1. **PURPOSE:** To establish a policy and procedure for a citizen ride-along program. This program will strive to promote positive relations between the community and law enforcement.
2. **POLICY:** It shall be the policy of the Huntsville Police Department to allow civilians to ride with officers during a normal tour of duty.
3. **SCOPE:** This Written Directive is applicable to all personnel employed by the Huntsville Police Department.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** It shall be the responsibility of all personnel employed by the Huntsville Police Department to comply with this Written Directive.
5. **CRITERIA:** To be eligible for the ride-along program, the person must be at least 18 years of age and meet one of the following criteria:
 - A. Be a resident or business owner in the City of Huntsville;
 - B. Be a spouse or relative of an officer;
 - C. Be an applicant for a position with the Huntsville Police Department;
 - D. Be a civilian employee of the police department; or
 - E. Be a student, currently enrolled in a criminal justice or related program in an accredited college or university.
 - F. Applicants that are 18 years of age are also required to have a signed and notarized consent form from parents or guardians to participate in the program.

Sworn Huntsville Police officers may ride off duty with permission of the Shift Commander (no application required). Others, under special circumstances, may ride subject to approval by the Operations Bureau Commander.

6. **PROCEDURES:**
 - A. The Citizen Observer Program application/waiver form must be completed and submitted to either the applicable precinct office, which will verify that applicants meet the criteria for the program, or online to Huntsville Police Records.

- B. The Precinct Clerical Staff will forward the application to Records for an N.C.I.C. check and the recruiter(s). Records will attach the results of the inquiry, including a criminal history printout if applicable. The completed packet is to be returned to the Precinct Commander within 48 hours.
- C. The Precinct Commander shall then approve or deny the application and contact the individual within 48 hours of their working shift. When making assignments, the Precinct Commander will attempt to honor the date and/or shift requested. However, all riding assignments will be made subject to scheduling and/or manpower restrictions. If an applicant is denied, the reasons supporting the denial shall be noted under the "comments" section, and the completed form shall be maintained by the Precinct Commander. Approved applications/waivers shall be forwarded to the appropriate precinct Shift Commander's office for field assignment. The application shall be retained there until the applicant is scheduled to ride.
- D. When the applicant reports to ride on the scheduled date, the Shift Commander or his designee shall complete the application by adding the officer's name with whom the citizen is assigned to ride. The date and shift blocks of the application will be completed and signed by a supervisor.
- E. Assigned officers will ensure that the citizen is aware of the rules and regulations governing the program. Additionally, the officer will explain his/her job as fully as possible and attempt to create a favorable impression of the department.

7. GENERAL REGULATIONS

- A. Under no circumstances shall a civilian participant in the observer program be armed, regardless of whether or not they are licensed to carry a firearm. This order shall also pertain to any sworn officer that participates in this program and is not a member of the Huntsville Police Department. Exceptions to the "no firearms carry regulation" will be granted to those Federal, State, or local officers who normally have jurisdiction in Huntsville.
- B. Under no circumstances shall a civilian have access to criminal justice information. It is the responsibility of the officer to ensure this information is protected at all times.
- C. The Precinct Commander will monitor the frequency of citizen ride-along. A citizen may ride as often as approved by the Precinct Commander.

- D. Whenever possible, Field Training Officers and Part Time Recruitment Team Members shall be utilized for this program. Assignment to the same shift and/or precinct as a relative shall be at the discretion of the Precinct Commander.
- E. Student observers assigned to ride-along with Huntsville Police officers shall be governed by this order with the exception of the limitations on frequency of participation. Assignments and frequency of tours for students shall be directed by the Director of Training or his/her designee.
- F. The Chief of Police reserves the right to deny any person permission to participate in this program if the person's participation could pose a threat to the security or be detrimental to the operations of the Huntsville Police Department.