	Onslow County Sheriff's Office GENERAL ORDER	**Number:** 1.1
	Subject: RIDE ALONG	**Effective Date:** 06/26/2026
	Revised: 12/5/22, 6/26/26	**Pages:** 6

GO 1.1.0 OBJECTIVE

Establish a program and guidelines that will allow citizens, other agency law enforcement personnel, and Sheriff's Office Detention Officers an opportunity to ride with patrol deputies to enhance their understanding of the Patrol Unit functions.

GO 1.1.1 REMARKS

The Onslow County Sheriff's Office strives to establish a climate of openness and honesty, with a mutual desire to perform our duties with our citizens with respect, acceptance, understanding, and public approval.

GO 1.1.2 POLICY

Ride Along Request Form and Waiver

Requesting participants shall complete a Ride Along Request Form and Liability Waiver. A new waiver shall be required for each ride-along, except for Sheriff's Office members, approved chaplains, and other agency law enforcement, which shall be valid for one year. The Division Major shall approve the Ride Along request.

Eligibility

Participants must be of good reputation and have no felony or serious misdemeanor convictions. The Sheriff's Office will conduct a background check before approving the Ride Along request.

Any applicant may be disqualified from participating in the program. The following factors may be considered in disqualifying an applicant and are not limited to:

1. Being under 18 years of age.
2. Prior criminal history.
3. Pending criminal action.
4. Any previous and pending lawsuit against the County.
5. Denial by Command Staff.
6. Attitude inconsistent with honorable law enforcement service.

Onslow County Sheriff's Office Deputies may not request that a family member participate in the Ride Along Program to ride with them.

Priority to participating in the Ride Along Program is given to current or alumni Onslow County Sheriff's Office citizen law enforcement academy graduates, Onslow County government employees, or sworn law enforcement officers from other agencies.

Certified and retired law enforcement officers or detention officers in good standing and current employees of the Onslow County Sheriff's Office are not required to obtain local records checks before requesting to participate in the Ride-Along Program.

Participants with unfavorable reports from the community or their organization, or those with recent criminal misconduct, will not be allowed to participate.

Background Check

A local criminal records check shall be obtained encompassing at least the past five (5) years of residency within Onslow County. Citizen candidates with less than five (5) years of residence must have a criminal records check from their previous state or county, in addition to the local check.

Participants shall be eighteen (18) years of age or older. The following exceptions apply to the age requirement:

1. Active members of the Sheriff's Office's Explorer Post who have completed at least twenty-five (25) hours with the program and a parent or guardian shall sign the Liability Waiver form.
2. High school seniors completing their senior project, and the Ride Along is part of said project. The participant shall have a written request from their senior project manager. A parent or guardian shall sign the Liability Waiver form.

Law enforcement personnel from other agencies, Sheriff's Office members or members of their immediate family, BLET candidates, college interns, citizens of Onslow County, and others deemed appropriate for educational or civic reasons. Sheriff's Office members' family members will not ride with their law enforcement relative unless approved by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.

The Sheriff or the Chief Deputy must approve special-category participants. Special category participants include:

1. Elected officials or candidates for office
2. Government representatives
3. Media personnel

The Sheriff or their designee has final approval for Ride Along participation. Division Majors may approve a ride-along unless specifically outlined within this policy.

Disclaimer

Each participant must sign a disclaimer releasing the Sheriff's Office from all liability before permission to ride along is granted.

Understanding of Rules

Each participant must read and understand this policy, initialing each paragraph to indicate their agreement and willingness to follow its stated directions.

GO 1.1.3 SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS AND DEPUTY REQUIREMENTS

Participants in the Ride Along program will be required to provide valid picture identification, i.e., driver's license, state-issued identification card, or military I.D., to the deputy assigned before being permitted into the patrol vehicle. This identification must be on the participant's body during the ride.

The deputy shall not allow the participant to access confidential or sensitive situations.

When a deputy is assigned a rider, they will take the opportunity to fully acquaint the participant with their duties and responsibilities, including the associated hazards and dangers.

They will attempt to expose the participant to law enforcement work without exposing them to hazardous situations. The participant shall not interfere with the deputy performing their duties.

Deputies shall review the Ride Along form and ensure that the ride has been approved. The deputy shall notify Communications of a ride-along.

Deputies with ride-along participants shall not expose the ride-along to an incident or call for service with an exceptionally high level of danger. Deputies shall inform their supervisor of the conflict, and another deputy shall be dispatched to the call. If another deputy is unavailable to cover the call, the deputy should temporarily discontinue the ride by dropping the rider off at a safe and open public location. The deputy shall notify Communications of the rider's status and location. The supervisor should plan to retrieve the rider and either transport the rider to the deputy's location after the scene is secure or have another deputy transport the rider to the office to terminate the Ride Along for that day.

The deputy may also discontinue the ride if continuing would threaten the deputy's safety or substantially interfere with the deputy's ability to discharge their duties.

The deputy will consider the law enforcement objective; the danger to the participant in continuing; the danger to the participant in not continuing (e.g., weather, hazardous conditions, location of discharge, etc.); and the participant's attitude or request.

Deputies should not shield the rider too carefully from the law enforcement activities since experience and enhancement of the agency's functions are the purposes of the Ride Along Program. However, riders shall not participate in enforcing the law or be subject to dangerous situations that jeopardize the rider's health and welfare.

Deputies shall report all adverse or suspicious incidents involving the citizen rider to their supervisors. This shall be in writing.

Deputies and other members shall refrain from conversing or conveying personal or personnel problems to the rider. Matters involving opinions, politics, and topics that would be in poor taste for the Sheriff's Office should not be discussed.

Deputies will not use the Mobile Data Terminal to research or obtain information on a subject requested by the Ride Along.

Termination

Participants in the Ride Along Program who refuse to abide by the rules, abuse the program, or jeopardize the safety of any deputy or their safety will be immediately returned to the office.

The deputy involved shall report the issue to the Sheriff or Chief Deputy and determine whether to suspend or terminate the Ride Along participant's privilege to ride in the future.

GO 1.1.4 AVAILABILITY HOURS FOR RIDE-ALONG:

The Ride Along Program is available each week on Saturday and Sunday. The Ride Along times are from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Exceptions to this schedule may be made with the approval of the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.

Once approved, civilian participants will be allowed to ride no more than once every two months, except for Onslow County Sheriff's Office Detention Officers, chaplains, other law enforcement, and select alumni of the citizens law enforcement academy.

When practical, participants who request multiple opportunities to participate in the Ride Along Program should be rotated among deputies.

GO 1.1.5 GENERAL RULES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Participants must request approval at least 48 hours before riding.

Participants must obey the lawful directions and guidance provided by the deputy they are riding with.

Participants will not be allowed to carry weapons during the ride-along except for qualified law enforcement officers under the Law Enforcement Officers' Safety Act (LEOSA). Eligible participants not in a law enforcement uniform will carry their weapons concealed.

Participants shall not have access to any computer databases, i.e., DCI, NCIC, eWarrants, Veripic, etc., used in the day-to-day operations of the Sheriff's Office unless they are certified and employed by the Sheriff's Office.

Participants will not be able to operate Sheriff's Office equipment unless there is an emergency that threatens the safety of the deputy, the ride-along, or an innocent party.

Participants will not perform or become involved in a law enforcement function unless an emergency threatens the deputy, the rider, or an innocent citizen.

Participants must abide by the policies of the Sheriff's Office.

Participants will not use the Ride Along Program to promote business or political opinions.

Participants will not be allowed to enter crime scenes or areas sensitive to an investigation.

Participants may enter any public property. Participants must have permission from the property owner to enter private property. The deputy assigned to the rider will seek permission from the property owner. If declined, the rider will remain inside the patrol vehicle until the call for service is completed.

Participants who are current Sheriff's Office detention officers shall be limited to a 6-hour tour and must be conducted on a scheduled non-workday.

No audio, video, picture, recording, or other digital reproduction may be made by any Ride Along passenger at any time without the express consent of the Sheriff.

BY ORDER OF SHERIFF CHRISTOPHER D. THOMAS

DIGITALLY SIGNED