


STRATFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT 	Type of Directive: Policy and Procedure	Updated: 09-20-2023
	Title: Ethics	No. 2.1
	Issuing Authority: Chief Joseph McNeil	Issued: 10-09-2018
	Reference: 5-6-21, 10-12-22 Accreditation 1.5.4, 1.6.2, 2.4.1, 3.3.7, 3.3.8 Rescinds 2.1.1, 2.2	

PURPOSE:

It is the purpose of this policy to establish a code of conduct based on the accepted Code of Ethics for officers employed by the Stratford Police Department.

POLICY:

The Stratford Police Department will maintain the highest standard of integrity by never violating the trust that the community has placed in our profession, as such all persons will be treated with respect, regardless of their position in life. Treating persons disrespectfully, in a discriminatory manner, or using bias in decision-making is prohibited and may be cause for dismissal from the department. Each member of the Department must recognize that he/she is held to a higher standard than the private citizen because, in addition to representing the Department, he/she also represents the law enforcement profession and town government. Therefore, his/her conduct must be beyond reproach.

PROCEDURE:

It shall be the procedure of the Stratford Police Department to adopt the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics as a general standard of conduct for Stratford Police Officers.

Law Enforcement Code of Ethics (1.6.2)

As a law enforcement officer, my fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property, to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the constitutional rights of all persons to liberty, equality, and justice.

I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all; will maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop self-restraint; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others.

Honest in deed and in my personal and professional life, I will obey the laws of the land and the regulations of my Department. While acting in the capacity of an officer of this Department, whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided in me in my official police capacity will be kept confidential, unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my official police duty.

I will never volunteer my police services where they are neither asked nor need or permit prejudices, animosities, or friendships to influence my decisions. With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice or ill will, never employing unnecessary force or violence and never accepting gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of the police service. I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself to my chosen profession of law enforcement.

Employee Code of Conduct

The manner in which duties are performed by each departmental employee reflects upon the professionalism of the department. Employees are encouraged to exercise judgment, initiative, and sound reasoning in all official transactions; to strive for efficiency and effectiveness; to exercise restraint in difficult situations; to seek self improvement through formal and informal schooling; and to assist fellow employees whenever possible. In situations where no written directive or supervisory guidance is available, employees are expected to analyze the situation and react in a professional manner. These are attributes upon which professionalism is established. The following should be considered;

- Is the decision or conduct legal and consistent with government policy?
- Does the decision or conduct conform to the Department's policies and procedures, as well as Code of Conduct and Ethics?
- What will be the possible outcomes be for yourself, your fellow staff, the Police Department, other people and the community itself?
- Do you have a conflict of interest in making this decision and could it lead to private gain?

Can the decision or conduct be justified in terms of the public interest and would it withstand public scrutiny? Conduct and ethical decisions and actions can often be guided by putting the community interest first, then the Department, and last, yourself. Subsequently, employees can ask themselves:

- How would my community judge my actions if they became known?
- How would my department judge my actions if they became known?
- How would I benefit from the decision as compared to the community and Department?

Respect for Constitutional Rights

It is the duty of each officer to respect and protect the rights guaranteed to each citizen by the constitution. No person may be deprived of constitutional rights because he/she is suspected of having committed a crime. In the performance of duty, an officer is called upon to make difficult decisions. He/she must exercise discretion in situations where rights and liabilities are affected by his/her conduct and judgment. Decisions are not made easily and involve a choice, which may cause him/her

hardship or discomfort. An officer must be faithful to his/her oath of office, the principles of professional police service, and the objectives of the Department. In the discharge of duty, he/she must not allow personal motives to govern decisions and conduct.

Altering Information on Official Documents

No employee shall unnecessarily change, alter, or otherwise distort the information on any traffic or citation or any other official document, written or issued by himself or another member of the department.

Arrest, Search, and Seizure

Employees shall not make any arrest, search, or seizure, which they know or should know, is not in accordance with law and Departmental procedures. Employees shall not knowingly violate anyone's constitutional rights.

Associations

Employees shall avoid regular or continuous associations or dealings with persons whom they know, or should know, are persons under criminal investigation or indictment, or who have a reputation in the community or the Department for present involvement in felonious or criminal behavior, except as necessary to the performance of official duties, or where unavoidable because of other personal relationships of the employee.

Employees shall not knowingly join or participate in any organization that advocates, incites or supports criminal acts, criminal conspiracies, or hate crime activities.

Command Responsibility

A commander has responsibility and accountability for every aspect of their command, including the activities and performance of the employees under their immediate control. Commensurately, within policy guidelines and legal constraints, they have the authority to coordinate and direct assigned personnel and other allocated resources in achieving organizational objectives. They have responsibility for maintaining all agency-owned property assigned to their division in a state of operational readiness. In so doing, they must perform the full range of administrative functions, relying upon policy, direction, training, and personal initiative to guide them and their command in achieving the highest level of performance possible.

Unity of Command

The police department is committed to upholding the principle of unity of command, wherein every member of the organization reports directly to one designated supervisor. This structure minimizes confusion, prevents conflicting orders, and promotes accountability across all levels.

The Chain of Command shall be followed by each department member who will be assigned a direct supervisor. Members shall follow directives issued by their immediate supervisor unless otherwise directed by higher authority.

All personnel are required to adhere to the established chain of command for reporting incidents, seeking guidance, and addressing concerns. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring clear and concise communication of orders to subordinates.

If conflicting orders are received, personnel must seek clarification from the higher-ranking officer in the chain of command.

Delegated Authority And Responsibility

Responsibility shall be accompanied by commensurate authority. At every level within the Department, personnel shall be given the authority to make decisions necessary for the effective execution of their responsibilities. Each employee along with supervisors shall be accountable for the use of delegated authority. Any gross improper use of authority or failure to accept authority shall be reported through the chain of command as soon as possible. Employees who have questions concerning delegated authority should consult supervisory personnel through the chain of command for prompt resolution.

Conduct Toward Co-Workers

Employees shall not be insubordinate. Insubordination includes acting in a disrespectful manner towards a supervisor, being openly defiant, or refusing to obey any lawful order or directive of a supervisor in a timely and satisfactory manner. This includes orders and directives relayed from a supervisor through an officer of the same or lesser rank.

Employees shall conduct themselves in a manner that will foster cooperation among members of this agency, showing respect, courtesy, and professionalism in their interactions with each other.

Employees shall not engage in acts of “horseplay” which involve the potential for risk of injury to the employee, other employees, other persons, or damage to property.

Employees shall not use language or engage in actions that demean, harass, or intimidate coworkers.

Conduct Unbecoming

Employees shall conduct themselves at all times, both on and off duty, in such a manner as not to discredit the Department. Unbecoming conduct shall include that which brings the Department into disrepute, or impairs the operation or efficiency of the Department.

Conformance to Laws

Employees shall obey all laws of the United States and of any state and local jurisdiction in which the employees are present.

A conviction for the violation of any law shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this section. Lack of a criminal complaint or an acquittal of a violation of law shall not preclude internal administrative disciplinary action.

Cooperation with Internal Investigations Required

Members of the department must cooperate in internal investigations of alleged misconduct, illegal activity or policy violations. Failure to answer questions or submit to proper investigative techniques constitutes insubordination.

Cooperation with Other Officers and Agencies

Police agents shall cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives in the pursuit of justice.

Courtesy

Employees, when dealing with the public and each other shall be patient, courteous, and respectful. They will not engage in argumentative discussions even in the face of extreme provocation. In the performance of their duties, employees shall refrain from coarse, violent, profane, vulgar, sarcastic, or insolent language or gestures, and will not express any prejudice, hostility or bias concerning race, religion, politics, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, social background, or similar personal characteristics. The practice of courtesy is not a manifestation of weakness; on the contrary, it is consistent with the firmness and impartiality that characterizes a professional police officer.

Disregard for Safety

Members of the department shall not intentionally, by specific action or omission, create a situation of unnecessary risk of injury to themselves, other members of the department, or to any other person.

Dissemination of Information

Members of the public have a right to security and privacy, and information obtained about them must not be improperly divulged. Employees shall treat the official business of the Department as confidential. Information regarding official business shall be disseminated only to those for whom it is intended, in accordance with law and established Departmental procedures. Employees shall not divulge the identity of persons giving confidential information except as authorized by proper authority.

Equality of Enforcement

As employees of the Stratford Police Department, Officers interact with people of diverse ethnic and sociological backgrounds. Obviously, all people within Stratford, whether transient or resident and regardless of background, have in common the need for the protection, which is afforded by fair and impartial law enforcement.

Additionally, as a person moves throughout the town, he/she must be able to expect a similar police response to his/her behavior wherever it occurs. Where the law is not evenly enforced, there follows reduction in respect for the law and a resistance to its enforcement.

Excessive Use of Force

Employees shall not use more force in any situation than is objectively reasonable under the circumstances. Employees shall use force in accordance with law and Departmental procedures.

While the use of force is occasionally unavoidable, every police agent shall refrain from applying the unnecessary infliction of pain or suffering and shall never engage in cruel, degrading, or inhuman treatment of any person.

If an officer witnesses another officer/s using excessive force on a subject, it is their duty to intervene as quickly as possible to stop the excessive force.

Fictitious Illness or Injury Reports

Employees shall not feign illness or injury, falsely report themselves ill or injured, or otherwise deceive or attempt to deceive the Department as to the condition of their health.

Gratuities

Police employees shall avoid any conduct that might compromise their integrity and thus undercut public confidence in the department. Employees shall refuse to accept goods or services that could be interpreted as seeking to cause the employee to refrain from performing official responsibilities honestly and within the law. Police employees shall not receive private or special advantage from their official status.

Individual employees shall not accept gratuities. Gratuities are defined as money, discounts, rewards, gifts, presents, or services given to police employees as a result of their employment with the police department. Discounts, special rates, free merchandise or services offered by merchants or other businesses, to various groups, as promotional advertisements or incentives are not considered to be gratuities. Employees will not accept individual discounts, gifts or rewards; as a result of their employment by the department unless the activity is part of a broad marketing campaign offered to other comprehensive groups, all City employees or is part of a recognized department activity.

At the discretion of command staff, any gifts, rewards, or gratuities given to the department or any member thereof, whether the giver is known or unknown may be given to a charitable organization, a "needy" group or a "needy" person in the name of the giver, if known. Donations directed toward improving the safety of the community or quality of life, improving the employee work environment, or providing resources for enhancing partnerships important to community policing may, at the discretion of command staff, be accepted.

Employees of the Department may solicit gifts on behalf of a police, civic, or other nonprofit or tax exempt organization so long as such solicitation is intended to promote the mission of the organization and does not create any expectation of receipt of special service or favor from the police department or its employees. Examples include: donations made for annual professional conferences, support for charitable activities such as Special Olympics, the SPAL, or the Law Enforcement Explorer Post and others.

No member of the department, while representing himself or herself, officially or unofficially, as a member of this department, or as a function of his employment, shall offer or give gifts, gratuities, or special privileges to any other person or agency in expectation of special benefit to himself or the department.

Firearms or other equipment commonly used by police officers, that are offered to all police officers at discount prices by retailers or wholesalers are not considered to be gratuities if they are not solicited.

Harassment

The Police Department and the Town prohibits harassment or sexual harassment against anyone or perpetrated by anyone, including, but not limited to, applicants, employees, volunteers, and supervisors, based on that person's race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and age, military, veteran, or marital status. Harassment-related behavior includes not only physical force, but also verbal and/or abusive behavior, including, but not limited to, intimidating, menacing, tampering, stalking, erratic, explosive, raging behavior, comments threatening violence, horseplay. Any employee who believes he or she has been the subject of unlawful harassment should report the alleged act immediately to his/her immediate supervisor or Department Director or his/her designee, or the Department of Employee Relations.

Integrity

The public demands that the integrity of its law enforcement officers be above reproach. Succumbing to even minor temptation can be the genesis of a malignancy, which may ultimately destroy an individual's effectiveness and contribute to the corruption of others. An officer must avoid any conduct, which might compromise the integrity of the Department, fellow officers, or himself/herself.

Intervention

Employees shall not knowingly interfere with Departmental functions being handled by other employees of the Department or any other governmental agency unless:

- Ordered to intervene by a supervisor
- The intervening employee reasonably believes that a manifest injustice would result from a failure to take action.

Employees shall not undertake any investigation or other official action that is not part of their regular duties without obtaining permission from a supervisor unless the exigencies of the situation require immediate action.

Intoxicants

Except as necessary in the performance of an official assignment, the consumption of intoxicants shall be prohibited while an employee is on duty.

An employee shall not consume intoxicants to such a degree that it impairs his on-duty performance.

The odor of an alcoholic beverage on the breath of an on-duty employee shall be prohibited except when it is the result of the performance of an official assignment.

An employee shall not operate a motor vehicle if his ability to do so is impaired by the consumption of an alcoholic beverage or medication which causes impairment.

An employee shall not consume intoxicants for a period of 8 hours before going on duty.

Employees, while off duty, shall refrain from consuming intoxicating beverages to the extent that it results in behavior, which discredits the Department, or renders the employee unfit to report for the next regular tour of duty.

An off-duty employee, while serving in an official "on-call" capacity, shall not consume intoxicants.

An off-duty employee, who is called to respond to duty status, shall be required to notify the caller or their supervisor of any condition, such as use of intoxicants or medications, which would be in conflict with the above listed on-duty rules and prevent their response.

Intoxicants, Alcoholic Beverages and Drugs in Police Installations

Employees shall not consume or store in any police facility, in any police property whether owned, rented, or leased, or in any police vehicle, without the permission of the Chief of Police or a Division Chief, any alcoholic beverages or controlled substances (except when lawfully prescribed in the treatment of the employee) except when they are held as evidence or as seized property.

Loyalty

Agents must be faithful to their oath of office. All employees must adhere to principles of professional police service, and the objectives of the department. The discharge of their duties must not allow personal motives to govern their decisions and conduct.

Misuse of Police Identification, Position or Credentials

Employees shall not use their official position, official identification cards, or badges for the following;

- Personal or financial gain obtaining privileges not otherwise available to them except in the performance of duty.
- Avoiding consequences of illegal acts Employees are prohibited from using information gained through their position as law enforcement employees to improve their financial position or to advance the private interests of themselves or others.
- Employees shall not lend to another person their identification cards or badges or permit them to be photographed or reproduced without the approval of the Chief of Police.
- Employees shall not authorize the use of their names, photographs, or official titles, which identify them as employees in connection with testimonials or advertisements of any commodity or commercial enterprise, without the approval of the Chief of Police.
- Employees shall not place or allow photographs or depictions of themselves dressed in uniform, and/or displaying official identification and badges, on Internet sites including but not limited to "My Space," or "You Tube," etc., for any reason, without the approval of the Chief of Police.

Neglect of Duty

'Neglect of Duty' is defined as 'Where an employee fails to carry out all or part of the duty required of him/her, carelessly or intentionally fails to exercise due diligence in the performance of official duty; failing to discharge all or part of one's duty or to take appropriate action. It includes, but is not limited to not taking appropriate action, failing to investigate a case properly, and failing to complete a report.

Obedience to Orders (1.5.4)

Members and employees of the department, regardless of rank or assignment shall obey any lawful order emanating from any superior officer. An Officer who fails to properly carryout an order may be deemed Insubordinate. Insubordination can be divided into two categories: unwillingness to carry out a directive from a manager or supervisor and disrespectful behavior toward a manager or supervisor.

An order is defined as a command or instruction, oral or written, given by one member of the Department to another member. It is essential to the proper operation of a police agency that employees promptly obey all lawful orders. Every employee of the Department shall promptly obey, without reservation, the orders, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures of the Department and all lawful commands of a supervisor including those commands relayed from a superior by an employee of the same or lesser rank. The intentional refusal to obey any direct lawful order is grounds for discipline.

No employee is required to obey any order that is contrary to any Federal or State law. Obedience to an unlawful order is never a defense for an unlawful action. Responsibility to refuse to obey an unlawful order rests with the employee to whom such order was given. The employee shall be strictly required to justify such action. Employees issued what they believe to be an illegal order shall request the issuing employee to clarify the order or to confer with higher authority.

Should an order conflict with a standing order the Officer should obey the last standing order unless it is rescinded due to the conflict.

Orders of the Department shall be issued as:

- General Orders: Any regulation, applicable to all members of the department shall be issued as a general order under the signature of the Chief of Police.
- Special Orders: Any regulation, applicable to more than one, but less than the entire membership, shall be issued as a special order under the signature of the Chief of Police.
- Division Orders: Any regulation issued by a commanding officer, applicable only to members of his/her division, shall be issued as division orders, under the signature of the commanding officer.
- If any unlawful order is given to any member or employee of the department, such member or employee shall promptly report such fact to their immediate supervisor or Chief of Police.

Operating Vehicles

Employees shall operate official vehicles in a careful and prudent manner, and shall obey all laws and all Departmental orders pertaining to such operation.

Outside Employment

The nature of the law enforcement task requires employees to have the ability to work irregular duty schedules, which are subject to change. Additionally, it is necessary that an employee be alert during a tour of duty. For these reasons, certain occupations may conflict with an employee's primary responsibility to the department. Therefore, employees shall notify the department in writing of all "second jobs" and/or "part-time jobs," or other work or jobs in which they are engaged. Special duty or outside overtime jobs are excluded (2.4.14).

Political Activity

An employee shall not use the influence of his/her position with the Department for political purposes. Employees on duty or in uniform are prohibited from participating in the following partisan or nonpartisan political activities:

- Assuming active roles in the management, organization, or financial activities of political clubs, campaigns, or parties.
- Soliciting votes in support of, or in opposition to, any candidates.
- Serving as delegates to a political party convention.
- Endorsing or opposing a candidate for public office in a political advertisement, broadcast, or campaign literature.
- Initiating or circulating a petition.
- Organizing, selling tickets to, or actively participating in a fund-raising function for a political party or candidate.
- Addressing political gatherings in support of, or in opposition to, a candidate.

Possession and Use of Drugs

Employees shall not possess or use any controlled substances, narcotics, or hallucinogens except when lawfully prescribed in the treatment of the employee as authorized for official duties such as narcotics training.

Professional Standard of Service

The department cannot be aware of each circumstance in the town where police action or assistance may be required. A person calling for police assistance expects, as a matter of right, to be provided with a service.

Prohibited Weapons

Employees shall not possess, carry, or use any weapon prohibited by law or Departmental procedures.

Publication of Articles

All members of the department shall obtain permission from the Chief of Police to publish articles as official representatives of the Police Department.

Refusal to Work

A commitment to public service and professional ethics precludes engaging in strikes, work stoppages, work slowdowns, or similar concerted activities, but shall not include the employees right to peacefully picket.

Reporting For Duty

Employees shall report for duty at the time and place required by assignment or orders and shall be physically and mentally fit to perform their duties. They shall be properly equipped and cognizant of information required for the proper performance of duty so that they may immediately assume their duties. Judicial subpoenas, notices to appear on civil infractions, and administrative notices shall constitute an order to report for duty under this section.

Response to Calls or Circumstances

Officers shall respond without delay to calls for police service unless otherwise directed by proper authority. Emergency calls for service shall take precedence. However, all dispatched calls shall be answered as soon as possible consistent with departmental procedures. If officers need to temporarily go out-of-service on a detail or otherwise be unavailable for calls, they shall notify their immediate supervisor and request permission for such details.

Sleeping On Duty

Employees shall remain awake while on duty. If unable to do so, they shall report to a supervisor, who shall determine the proper course of action.

Supervisory Notification

Any employee who, in an off-duty capacity, is arrested or charged for a criminal offense or misdemeanor traffic violation or any comparable out-of-state violation, shall notify his or her supervisor or an on-duty supervisor/commander without delay. The loss or suspension of an employee's Driver's License Shall Be Reported to the Employee's Supervisor.

Treatment of Persons in Custody

Employees shall not mistreat persons who are in their custody. Employees shall handle such persons in accordance with law and Departmental procedures.

Truthfulness

Upon the order of the Chief of Police/designee or a supervisor, employees shall truthfully answer all questions specifically directed and narrowly related to the scope of employment and operations of the Department, which may be asked of them. Officers shall not willfully or knowingly make an untruthful statement, verbally or written, or knowingly omit pertinent information pertaining to his/her official duty as a Stratford Police Officer. Officers shall not willfully or knowingly make an untruthful statement or knowingly omit pertinent information in the presence of any supervisor, intended for the information of any supervisor, or before any court or hearing.

Unauthorized Use of Department Letterheads

Officers shall not use official departmental letterhead except for authorized, official departmental use.

Wearing of the Uniform

Members of the department shall wear their appropriate uniform when on-duty, and may wear it when commuting to and from work, when participating in an authorized departmental function, or when working authorized special duty employment in a police capacity. The intent of this regulation is to prohibit employees or others from wearing departmental uniforms in other than approved capacity.

Use of Department Equipment

Employees shall utilize Department equipment only for its intended purpose and in accordance with established Departmental procedures and training, and shall not abuse, or negligently damage or lose Department equipment. All Department equipment issued to employees shall be maintained in proper order. Employees shall report to their supervisor any defect or hazardous condition in Departmental equipment.

Use of Weapons

Officers shall not use or handle weapons in a careless or imprudent manner. Officers shall use weapons in accordance with law and Departmental procedures.

Violations of Rules

Personnel shall not commit any acts or omit any acts, which constitute a violation of any of the rules, regulations, directives, orders, or policies of the Department, whether stated in this Code of Conduct or elsewhere. Ignorance of the rules, regulations, directives, orders, or policies shall not be considered a justification for any such violations. Negative discipline may be necessary where there is a disregard of lawful orders, commands, or directives.

Misuse of Police Identification, Position or Credentials

Employees shall not use their official position, official identification cards, or badges for the following;

- Personal or financial gain obtaining privileges not otherwise available to them except in the performance of duty.

- Avoiding consequences of illegal acts Employees are prohibited from using information gained through their position as law enforcement employees to improve their financial position or to advance the private interests of themselves or others.
- Employees shall not lend to another person their identification cards or badges or permit them to be photographed or reproduced without the approval of the Chief of Police.
- Employees shall not authorize the use of their names, photographs, or official titles, which identify them as employees in connection with testimonials or advertisements of any commodity or commercial enterprise, without the approval of the Chief of Police.
- Employees shall not place or allow photographs or depictions of themselves dressed in uniform, and/or displaying official identification and badges, on Internet sites including but not limited to "My Space," or "You Tube," etc., for any reason, without the approval of the Chief of Police.

Fictitious Illness or Injury Reports

Employees shall not feign illness or injury, falsely report themselves ill or injured, or otherwise deceive or attempt to deceive the Department as to the condition of their health.

Leaving Duty Post

Employees shall not leave their assigned duty post during a tour of duty except when authorized by proper authority or when necessary to perform immediate police functions.

Discretion

Police officers, of necessity, exercise professional discretion in deciding whether or not to arrest citizens for violations of the law. Other specific laws, department policies, or orders of a supervisor may further limit officers' discretion and direct whether or not to affect an arrest. In general, the greater the incident the less discretion an Officer has.