

PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

STANDARD NO(S): NYSLEAP Chapters 28 & 29

DATE: Updated May 2019

REFER TO: Sheriff

I. OBJECTIVE:

To insure community support and understanding for the role and activities of the OCSO in Ontario County.

II. POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the OCSO to promote and maintain effective and positive community relations by insuring the public's access to information concerning OCSO's activities; by dealing with the news media openly, candidly and without favor; and by developing programs which will enhance the public's trust and confidence in the OCSO.

C. Community relations - The OCSO is fully cognizant of the importance of establishing and maintaining close ties with the people of Ontario County. Every member shall be alert for and quick to repudiate any manifestation of the "them versus us" mentality. Without "grass root" community support, successful enforcement of traffic and criminal laws may be difficult if not impossible. A well-organized community relations operation can be an effective means of eliciting public support and can serve to identify problems at an early stage. Therefore, the OCSO encourages the establishment of direct contacts with the community through the following activities:

1. A plan for the enhancement of community relations shall be developed under the supervision of the Chief Deputy and with the approval of the Sheriff.

The objective of this plan is to present to the community information concerning the activities and functions of the OCSO, including crime awareness and crime prevention. This can be accomplished through the various community groups such as business, minority, civic, and church organizations, as well as private security agencies and state and national associations. The plan shall provide for:

- a. The participation of all personnel in discharging the OCSO's responsibility in achieving its community relations objectives;

- b. The assignment of specific personnel to establish and maintain liaison with the kinds of groups mentioned above, for the exchange of information of mutual concern;

- c. Encouraging the transmittal of information from the groups to the OCSO on a regular basis;

- d. Identifying training needs through the evaluation of information developed during Professional Conduct Unit (PCU) investigations or through citizens' complaints which may not require PCU action;

- e. Utilizing information obtained to develop corrections in practices or attitudes which might be contributing to community tensions or grievances;

- f. Evaluating OCSO policies concerning police/community relations on a regular basis in order that timely improvements may be made; and,

- g. An assessment of the effectiveness of OCSO's relationships with the various community groups with the provision for their modification or the creation of new ones to address community needs.

Relevant information obtained by any member, whether received individually from a citizen or as a result of a speaking engagement as noted below, shall be relayed promptly to the Chief Deputy for evaluation and further action, if warranted.

2. Speaking engagements - The OCSO shall provide, upon request from civic, service, religious, media, educational and professional organizations, an experienced staff member to speak on law enforcement issues ranging from crime prevention to drug abuse.

a. Members are encouraged to accept speaking engagements at schools, service clubs and civic organizations. Preparation for such an assignment is an excellent way to review subjects within the knowledge and experience of law enforcement officers and enhances one's confidence in the ability to perform one's job.

b. Varied programs of informative material relating to law enforcement shall be developed by each Division of the OCSO. Topics should be of general interest. Presentation should include the use of audio-visual aids and live demonstrations which illustrate the tasks performed by our members.

c. Members accepting speaking engagements should develop the ability to listen. Such exposure almost always brings forth many questions which are often indicative of the concerns held by members of the

community. Should a problem concerning a law enforcement service be identified in this way, the speaker will often be in an excellent position to determine how the problem can best be solved and then make recommendations to do so. Speakers shall avoid initiating the discussion of controversial subject matter in a public forum.

d. Sometimes a question posed is hostility in disguise and the questioner is trying merely to embarrass the speaker. Every effort should be made by the member to answer openly and diplomatically, avoiding any appearance of concealment. In cases in which the speaking member is not in possession of the answer sought, the questioner should be assured that he will be re-contacted with some kind of reply. An obligation to do this must be taken seriously and, if appropriate, the reply, written or oral, should also be furnished to the organization sponsoring the forum.

e. Speakers shall not be assigned to address political or fund-raising functions, unless the latter are clearly for charitable purposes.

3. School programs - The OCSO is committed to making children aware of the need to be safety conscious and to have respect for the law. Programs conducted chiefly by the Juvenile Aid Section (JAS) include:

a. Protect-A-Kid (An identification program through fingerprinting);

b. Deputy Friendly (Grades K through 6);

c. Bike safety (K through 5);

d. "Take a bite out of crime," McGruff (K - 6);

e. Rap with a cop (7 through 12); and,

f. DARE (5 and 6).

4. Crime prevention - The JAS shall also have responsibility for the presentation of programs which address the prevention, resistance and suppression of crime within Ontario County. These are designed to be proactive and to heighten crime awareness in the community. The programs include but are not limited to:

a. Neighborhood Watch;

b. Burglary prevention, both home and business; and,

c. Safety for the elderly. See ¶ E. below.

5. Victim assistance - Members of the OCSO shall be aware of and comply with the Fair Treatment Standards for Crime Victims as stated in the New York State Executive Law. (See "Victim/Witness Assistance," this Manual)

6. Identification cards - The Ontario County Deputy Sheriff's Benevolent Association (DSBA) has been authorized to provide photo ID cards to private citizens upon request. Cards may be obtained on Tuesdays and Thursdays between the hours of 1:00 and 4:00 PM by persons who present themselves at the receptionist's window and are in possession of a birth certificate (original or certified copy) and one other form of identification showing a date of birth. A nominal fee for this service is charged by the DSBA.

Inasmuch as the card issuing process will require the requester to enter secure space within the OCSO, such person will be considered to be a visitor under the charge of the DSBA representative performing the service. All provisions contained in the directive "Security of Personnel & Facilities" as they affect visitors passes, escorts and movement within the OCSO shall be strictly adhered to.

7. Community offices - For the convenience of the public and OCSO members, both road patrol and investigators, the OCSO maintains

unattended office space at the following locations: (Future office space in public schools to be considered)

Bristol Town Hall (585) 229-2400 6740 County Road 32
Canandaigua, New York 14424

Eastview Mall (585) 425-2531 (#610 Main Floor store front)

2-12-11

7979 Route 96 Live Scan fingerprinting Victor, New
York 14564

Geneva Town Hall (315) 789-8870 3750 County Road 6 Geneva, New
York 14456

Richmond Town Hall (585) 229-5757 8690 Route 20A
Honeoye, New York 14471

Seneca Town Hall (old) (585) 526-5172 4224 South Street Stanley, New
York 14561

Victor Village Hall (585) 924-9329 60 East Main Street Victor, New York
14564

D. School Resource Officer – By resolution, the Ontario County Board of Supervisors created the position of School Resource Officer(SRO) to be filled within the discretion of the Sheriff. The objectives, duties and responsibilities of the SRO are described hereafter:

1. An SRO is a certified law enforcement officer, usually selected from the ranks of the Road Patrol, and who is assigned full-time to a school district. The objective of the position is to provide a positive role model for school children K through 12 by the officer's performance as an educator, a law enforcer and a counselor.
2. Although the SRO's priority is to the school district to which assigned, the SRO is first and foremost an employee of the Ontario County Office of Sheriff, and may always be utilized in emergency situations. In the event the school district is closed on a regularly scheduled school day due to weather or other emergency, the SRO will report to the A-line Sergeant for road patrol assignment.
3. On a daily basis, when school is in session, the SRO will be in regular contact with a designated school official. The SRO's supervisor at the OCSO is the Lieutenant having responsibility for community policing.

4. Typical activities for an SRO may include but are not limited to:

a. Serving on district committees related to health and/or safety.

b. Assisting district social workers with truancy related matters.

c. Developing violence prevention strategies.

d. Promoting the development of positive attitudes toward law enforcement personnel.

e. Enabling liaison with other law enforcement agencies. f. Providing a resource to faculty and staff on crime prevention issues.

5. The regular workday for the SRO will be from 7:00am to 4:00pm, a nine-hour day, compatible with the hours and days of the school calendar. In addition, the SRO will be expected to attend official school functions held at other than regular school hours. The conditions of employment affecting the SRO's position are described in a Memorandum of Agreement subscribed by Ontario County and the Civil Service Employees Association bargaining unit.

6. The SRO will call the OCSO 9-1-1 Center when reporting for duty at the school district, when leaving the district for the day, and when officially off-duty.

7. The SRO is required to notify both the OCSO and the school district when not reporting for duty for any reason.

8. The SRO may engage in traffic control activities and the transportation of students if relevant and necessary in the role of law enforcement officer. The SRO will not act as a school crossing guard or truant officer; however, may assist the truant officer if requested by the school administration.

9. Specific equipment and clothing issued to the SRO is listed in the MOI section "Personal Equipment and Apparel." Other items believed necessary to the position may be provided by the school district.

E. Seniors and Lawmen Together (SALT) Council – The Sheriff of Ontario County, along with the Chiefs of Police in the county's municipalities, have pledged their cooperation and assistance to identify and address safety and security concerns of the elderly in our community. Representatives of the AARP Chapters, the Ontario County Office of the Aging and any other groups of "senior citizens" are

encouraged to meet with the Council to learn of programs that are in place to notify police of the need for help in an emergency. Some of these are the “blue light” signaling that aid is needed at the location immediately and the Tel-a-Tend program, administered by the 9-1-1 Center and providing regular assurance that all is well.

F. S.T.O.P.P.E.D (A Program to Promote Young Driver Safety) – An acronym standing for “Sheriffs Telling Our Parents & Promoting Educated Drivers,” this is a voluntary program wherein parents may register with the OCSO and receive an identification decal for any motor vehicle that may be operated by a driver under the age of 21. The decal is affixed to the windshield of each registered vehicle. If, for any reason, the registered vehicle is stopped by a Sheriff’s Deputy and is being operated by a driver under the age of 21, the officer will complete a notification card recording:

1. Time and location of stop,
2. Driver’s name and the number of passengers,
3. Reason for stop, and
4. Whether any tickets were issued.

Notifications will be mailed directly to parents to make them aware of potential problems and enable them to enforce any parental rules that often coexist with teen-age driving privileges.

G. "Offender Watch" – In 2008 the OCSO acquired the web-based program "Offender Watch" from the Louisiana company, Watch Systems. It is a computerized, automated process that provides enhanced capabilities to the public and OCSO members accessing information regarding registered sex offenders. The sex offender management and community notification system allows for high community visibility, mapping and reporting, convenient citizen links and community awareness tools. "Offender Watch" is maintained by a clerical person with administrative oversight by the Chief Deputy.

H. "Citizen's Police Academy" – In our effort to provide community policing programs by specifically inviting the public to take a closer look at the operations of the OCSO, the Sheriff has developed the Citizen's Police Academy. The first, inaugural class of 25 residents was begun on September 22, 2009, and three-hour sessions were conducted for six weeks concluding with graduation on October 27, 2009.

The academy's mission is to improve the relationship of the OCSO with the community that it serves. The objective is to present information to the attendee's for a better understanding of the OCSO operations and the myriad of duties of it's law enforcement officers.

Participants of the academy will learn the many facets of the office, including administration and training, as well as operational procedures applicable to criminal investigations and crime-scene processing. As an example, deputies make presentations about the use of radar, dwi breath analysis, firearms safety and canine searches.

Residents must register and apply in writing to attend (applications are on the web site or call the Sheriff's Secretary), be at least 18 years of age and successfully complete an applicable background investigation. Felony convictions or a combination of other criminal convictions may bar a person from attending.