

Procedure Number: 102.1
Procedure: Code of Ethics
Effective Date: 08/01/2011
Revision Date: 02/01/2017
Approved by: Scott Forshee, Chief of Police

PROCEDURE:

I. Law Enforcement Code of Ethics:

A. Primary Responsibilities of a Montana State University Police Officer:

A MSUB police officer acts as an official representative of government, required and trusted to work within the law. The officer's powers and duties are conferred by statute. The fundamental duties of a Police Officer include serving the public; safeguarding lives and property; protecting the innocent; keeping the peace; ensuring the rights of liberty, equality and justice to all.

B. Performance of the Duties of a Montana State University Police Officer:

Efforts are concentrated on the activities of the campus community with focus on campus properties. A university police officer shall perform all duties impartially, without favor or affection or ill will and without regard to status, sex, race, religion, political belief or physical/mental ability. All citizens will be treated equally with courtesy, consideration and dignity. Officers will never allow personal feelings, animosities or friendships to influence official conduct. Laws will be enforced appropriately and courteously and, in carrying out their responsibilities, officers will strive to obtain maximum cooperation from the public. They will conduct themselves in appearance and deportment in such a manner as to inspire confidence and respect for the position of public trust they hold.

C. Discretion:

A police officer will use the discretion vested in the position and exercise it responsibly within the law. The principle of reasonableness will guide the officer's determinations and the officer will consider all surrounding circumstances in determining whether any legal action shall be taken. Consistent and wise use of discretion, based on professional policing competence, will do much to preserve good relationships and retain the confidence of the public. There can be difficulty in choosing between conflicting courses of action. It is important to remember that a timely word of advice rather than arrest, which may be correct in appropriate circumstances, can be a more effective means of achieving a desired end.

D. Use of Force:

A police officer will never employ unnecessary force or violence and will use only such force in the discharge of duty as is reasonable in all circumstances. Force should be used only with greatest restraint and only after discussion, negotiation, and persuasion have been found to be inappropriate or ineffective. While the use of force is occasionally unavoidable, every police officer will refrain from applying the unnecessary infliction of pain or suffering and will never engage in cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment of any person. (See Policy #103.1).

E. Confidentiality:

Whatever a police officer sees, hears or learns, which is of a confidential nature, will be kept secret unless the performance of duty or legal provision requires otherwise.

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F. Integrity:

A police officer will not engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will an officer condone such acts by other police officers. The public demands that the integrity of police officers be above reproach. Police officers must, therefore, avoid any conduct that might compromise integrity and thus undercut the public confidence in a law enforcement agency. Officers will refuse to accept any gifts, presents, subscriptions, favors, gratuities or promises that could be interpreted as seeking to cause the officer to refrain from performing official responsibilities honestly and within the law. Police officers must not receive private or special advantage from their official status. Respect from the public cannot be bought; it can only be earned and cultivated.

G. Cooperation with Other Officers and Agencies:

University police officers will cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives in the pursuit of justice. An officer or agency may be one among many organizations that may provide law enforcement services to a jurisdiction. It is imperative that a police officer assist colleagues fully and completely with respect and consideration at all times.

H. Personal/Professional Capabilities:

University police officers will be responsible for their own standard of professional performance and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve their level of knowledge and competence. Through study and experience, a police officer can acquire the high level of knowledge and competence that is essential for the efficient and effective performance of duty. The acquisition of knowledge is a never-ending process of personal and professional development that should be pursued constantly.

I. Private Life:

University police officers will behave in a manner that does not bring discredit to the University Police Department, Montana State University, or themselves. A university police officer's character and conduct while off duty must always be exemplary, thus maintaining a position of respect in the community in which he or she lives and serves. The officer's personal behavior must be beyond reproach.

RULES:

In accordance with Montana Administrative Rules 23.13.203, all MSU Billings Police Officer's will swear to and sign the Code of Ethics Oath as is delineated on University Police Form 102.1.2 (Code of Ethics).