



**Policy Number: 402 – Ride-Along Program**  
**Effective Date: August 30, 2020**  
**Revision Date: August 30, 2020**  
**Approved By: Denis Otterness, Chief of Police**

---

## **402.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for a ride-along program for the Montana State University Billings Police Department (Department). This policy provides the requirements, approval process, hours of operation and Department member responsibilities for ride-alongs.

## **402.2 POLICY**

Ride-along opportunities will be provided to members of the public, State employees and members of this Department to observe and experience, first-hand, various functions of the Department. The term “ride-along” includes riding as a passenger with an officer on patrol or observing the work day of members engaged in other functions within the Department.

## **402.3 ELIGIBILITY**

The Montana State University Billings Police Department accepts ride-along requests from all members of the community. Efforts will be made to accommodate requests, however, any applicant may be disqualified.

Factors that may be considered in disqualifying an applicant include, but are not limited to:

- Being under 15 years of age.
- Prior criminal history.
- Pending criminal action.
- Pending lawsuit against this Department or the State.
- Denial by any supervisor.
- At the recommendation of an officer due to past ride-along history.

Spouses and relatives of Department employees may participate in ride-alongs.

## **402.4 REQUESTS TO PARTICIPATE**

Generally, ride-along and job observation requests will be maintained and scheduled by the Patrol Sergeant. The applicant will complete and sign a police ride-along program request form. If the applicant is under 18 years of age, a parent or guardian must be present to complete the waiver form. Information requested will include a valid state-issued identification card or driver’s license, birthdate, address and telephone number.

The Patrol Sergeant will schedule a date based on officer availability.

If the request is denied, a representative of this Department will advise the applicant of the denial.

## **402.5 PROCEDURES**

Once approved, ride-along applicants will be allowed to participate no more than once every six months. An exception may apply to the following law enforcement-involved participants:

- Volunteers
- Department interns
- Chaplains
- City/County Dispatch Personnel
- Montana State University Billings Police Department applicants
- Any others with approval of the Patrol Sergeant

No more than one ride-along participant will be allowed in Department vehicles at a given time.

### **402.5.1 OFF-DUTY PARTICIPATION**

Off-duty members of this Department or any other law enforcement agency, and employees of the State, will not be permitted to participate in a ride-along with on-duty members of this Department without the express consent of the Patrol Sergeant.

In the event that such participation is permitted, the off-duty Department member, other law enforcement agency personnel or State employee shall not:

- a. Be considered on-duty.
- b. Represent him/herself as a member of this Department or any other law enforcement agency.
- c. Participate in any law enforcement activity except as emergency circumstances may require.

### **402.5.2 CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK**

All ride-along applicants are subject to a criminal history check. The criminal history check may include a local records check and a Montana Department of Justice Criminal Justice Information Network (CJIN) check prior to approval of the ride-along.

### **402.5.3 SUITABLE ATTIRE**

Any person approved to participate in a ride-along is required to be suitably dressed in a collared shirt, blouse or jacket, slacks and shoes. Sandals, t-shirts, tank tops, shorts and ripped or torn pants are not permitted. Hats and ball caps will not be worn without the express consent of the Patrol Sergeant. The Patrol Sergeant, or other Department supervisor, may refuse a ride-along to anyone who is not dressed appropriately.

## **402.6 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

The assigned Department member shall consider the safety of the ride-along participant at all times. The member shall maintain control over the participant and shall instruct the individual about the conditions that necessarily limit his/her participation. Instructions should include:

- a. The participant will follow the directions of the Department member.
- b. The participant will not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, discussions with victims or suspects, reading an individual's criminal history or other protected information, or handling any Department equipment.
- c. Participation may be terminated at any time by the member if the participant interferes with the performance of the member's duties.
- d. Participants may be allowed to continue a ride-along during the transportation and booking process, provided it does not jeopardize their safety.
- e. Members will not allow participants to be present in any location or situation that would jeopardize the participant's safety or cause undue stress or embarrassment to a victim or any other member of the public.
- f. Participants who are not law enforcement officers shall not be permitted to accompany the Department member into a private residence without the express consent of the resident or other authorized person.
- g. The member assigned to provide a ride-along shall advise City/County Dispatch that a ride-along participant is present in the vehicle before going into service.
- h. An officer with a ride-along participant should use sound discretion when encountering a potentially dangerous situation, such as a high-speed pursuit.

Conduct by a person participating in a ride-along that results in termination of the ride, or is otherwise inappropriate, should be immediately reported to the Patrol Sergeant. The member should enter comments regarding the reasons for terminating the ride-along on the waiver form.

Upon completion of the ride-along, the member shall return the waiver form to the Patrol Sergeant.