Ride-Along Program

405.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The ride-along program provides an opportunity for persons to experience the law enforcement function firsthand. This policy provides the requirements, approval process and hours of operation for the ride-along program.

Any person requesting to accompany or "ride-along" with a sworn officer assigned to patrol duties, or who otherwise wishes to accompany an officer or civilian member while the member is on-duty and engaged in the performance of their work activities, shall follow the provisions outlined in this policy and then obtain authorization to do so from a Shift Commander. The Shift Commander is responsible to review, approve or deny all requests, and ensure that the ride-along is conducted in conformity with this policy.

405.1.1 ELIGIBILITY

The Fargo Police Department ride-along program is offered to residents, students, and those employed within the City of Fargo. The Department shall make reasonable efforts to accommodate interested persons; however, the Department may deny requests as outlined in this policy and may disqualify any applicant without cause from participating in the program.

Factors that shall prohibit an applicant include, but are not limited to:

(a) Being under 18 years of age.

(b) Being a convicted felon, convicted of a misdemeanor offense of domestic violence or otherwise prohibited from possessing a firearm by state or federal law.

(c) Currently on state or federal probation or parole.

(d) Currently a registered sex offender.

(e) Currently the subject of any pending criminal action in municipal, state or federal court.

(f) Prior criminal history that indicates violence, narcotics or other behavior that may affect the safety of the officer or other member conducting the ride-along.

(g) Currently has a pending lawsuit with the City or personnel complaint with the Department.

(h) Other factors as determined by the Shift Commander in conformity with this policy.

405.1.2 AVAILABILITY

The ride-along program is available any day of the week. The ride-along times are restricted to no more than four (4) consecutive hours. Exceptions to this schedule may be made as approved by the Shift Commander.

405.2 PROCEDURE TO REQUEST A RIDE-ALONG

Ride-along requests should be scheduled by a Shift Commander. The participant shall complete and sign a ride-along waiver form. Information requested shall include a copy of a valid photo drivers license or state-issued identification card, address, date of birth, and telephone number.

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The requirements described above may be waived by the Chief of Police for the purpose of having a dignitary, public official, or representative of the news media accompany an on-duty sworn officer or civilian employee. In addition, nothing in this policy shall prevent or preclude an on-duty law enforcement officer from another jurisdiction from accompanying or assisting any department member in the performance of their work activities.

The Shift Commander receiving the request shall schedule a date and time, based on availability, and enter comments on the daily roster indicating which officer or civilian employee the rider will be assigned to. The Shift Commander shall forward all ride-along requests and waiver of liability agreements, including those which have been denied, to the Office of the Chief where the forms shall be retained for a period of one year.

In conformity with this policy, Shift Commanders shall have the discretion to approve or deny any requests they receive from a person who wishes to accompany an on-duty sworn officer or civilian employee while the officer or employee is engaged in the performance of their work activities. If the ride-along is denied after the request has been made, the Shift Commander denying the request shall contact the person and advise them of the denial.The Shift Commander shall also attach a brief written explanation as to why the request was denied to the corresponding ride-along request form.

Any person participating in a department-authorized internship, work-study, or other similar program, in which they will be involved in a ride-along, shall complete and submit a single ride-along request/waiver of liability agreement prior to beginning any such program. Attached to the agreement shall be a department memorandum authored by the supervising department member describing all of the activities associated with the program, to include any time the person requests to ride-along with a sworn officer assigned to patrol duties, or time requested with any other on-duty officer or civilian employee.

405.2.1 RIDE-ALONG CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK

Except as otherwise provided for in this policy, all ride-along applicants who are not sworn law enforcement officers are subject to a criminal history check. The criminal history check shall include a local records check, a North Dakota Criminal Justice Information Sharing (CJIS) check, and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) warrants check prior to approval as a ride-along participant. Applicants shall obtain the record check at their cost and prior to participating in a ride-along. Criminal history checks shall be obtained electronically through the FBI database at: https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/identity-history-summary-checks. The results of the criminal history check, or a response indicating there is no record, shall be provided to the Shift Commander for review and approval prior to the ride-along.

In addition, the Shift Commander shall ensure a check of law enforcement records is conducted to determine if the applicant meets any of the disqualifying factors in subsection 405.1.1 and shall ensure that necessary proof of identification has been provided.

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405.2.2 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Once approved, community participants should be allowed to ride no more than once every six months. Exceptions for community participant frequency may be made with the approval of the Shift Commander. Fargo Police Department applicants may be scheduled by the PSD, Training and Development Unit (TDU) as needed to meet recruitment needs in conformity with this policy.

The Shift Commander should ensure that no more than one citizen is participating in a ride-along during any given four-hour time period. No more than one participant shall be allowed in a department vehicle at a given time.

Any person authorized to ride-along with an on-duty sworn officer or civilian member shall be attentive and courteous at all times. The person shall follow all lawful instructions provided to them by any member of the Department. Failure to comply with this requirement shall be sufficient cause for the Department member conducting the ride-along or the Shift Commander to immediately dismiss the person from accompanying an officer or civilian employee.

405.2.3 SUITABLE ATTIRE AND BALLISTIC VEST REQUIREMENT

Any person approved to ride-along is required to wear a department-provided ballistic vest. A supply of ballistic vests for those participating shall be maintained by the Quartermaster and shall be stored in a manner allowing availability for any shift.

Any person approved for a ride-along should be suitably dressed in appropriate attire. Business casual or professional attire is preferred. However, blue jeans, tennis shoes, and other casual attire is acceptable. Clothing shall be free of offensive words, logos, or graphics, and in good repair. Ride-along participants shall dress to be outside for short or extended periods in a variety of weather conditions. The Shift Commander may refuse a ride-along to anyone not properly dressed or wearing offensive attire as determined by the Shift Commander.

405.2.4 PEACE OFFICER RIDE-ALONGS

Off-duty members of the Fargo Police Department shall not be permitted to ride-along with on-duty officers unless authorized by the Chief of Police.

Unless authorized by the Chief of Police, no person other than a currently certified law enforcement officer may carry or otherwise have in their possession a firearm or other dangerous weapon while they are accompanying an on-duty sworn officer or civilian employee of the Department while the officer or employee is engaged in the performance of their work activities. The Shift Commander shall confirm the credentials and firearm carried by any certified officer who is involved in a ride-along, as well as approve any other dangerous weapon in conformity with department policy 306 (Firearms), prior to allowing the ride-along to commence. The Shift Commander may limit the carrying of other dangerous weapons as deemed appropriate.

Nothing in this policy prohibits duly authorized partnerships in which regional peace officers ride along with Fargo officers in furtherance of official duties or in conjunction with any authorized joint powers agreement or mutual aid request.

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405.2.5 RIDE-ALONG SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In order to facilitate robust recruitment, provide relevant training and exposure to other criminal justice partners or support services, or allow for direct family of department members to better understand the work environment, the following persons may participate in a ride-along without requiring a criminal history check under the following circumstances:

(a) Police officer applicants who are in the background phase of the process and have completed a criminal history background check, no more than once every three months.

(b) Currently employed dispatch or fire personnel, who are not involved in an active internal investigation, no more than once annually.

(c) City of Fargo Commissioners no more than quarterly.

(d) Fargo Police chaplains no more than once a month.

(e) Fargo Police civilian staff no more than once quarterly.

(f) Fargo Police interns, work study or other volunteers who have previously completed a criminal history background check, as required by the program or agreed to by the Department.

(g) Direct family of department members no more than once quarterly.

    1. Direct family members include: Spouse, father, mother, step-father/mother, father/mother-in law, brother, sister or brother/sister in-law.

405.3 DEPARTMENT MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members conducting a ride-along shall consider the safety of the participant at all times and shall be responsible for ensuring the rider is not negligently exposed to hazards associated with the officer or civilian member's work activities.

Members should use sound discretion when encountering a potentially dangerous situation, such as a high-speed pursuit. The participant should be let out of the vehicle in a safe, well-lit place prior to engaging. The dispatcher should be advised of the situation and as soon as practicable another unit should respond to pick up the participant at that location. The ride-along may be continued or terminated at this time.

Sworn officer or civilian employees may ask a Shift Commander to dismiss a request to ride-along or a current ride-along from accompanying them further, if the officer or civilian member believes the person is in violation of this policy, or for other reasonable cause. The Shift Commander receiving any such request shall have final authority over any such decisions.

Members shall take all reasonable steps to ensure sensitive information is not shared with the ride-along to include criminal intelligence or information detrimental to any on-going cases.

405.4 CONTROL OF RIDE-ALONG

The assigned member shall maintain control over the participant at all times and clearly instruct the rider as to any conditions that will limit participation. These instructions shall include the following:

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(a) The participant shall follow the directions of the member performing the ride-along.

(b) The participant shall not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, discussions with victims or suspects, or handling any police equipment or weapons.

(c) The participant may terminate the ride at any time and the member may return the observer to his/her home, the place of the ride-along origin, or to the station if the participant interferes with the performance of the member's duties.

(d) Ride-along participants may be allowed to continue riding during the transportation and booking process, provided this does not jeopardize their safety. Under no circumstances shall a ride-along have any physical contact or verbal communication with an arrestee.

(e) Members shall not knowingly allow any ride-along participant to be present in any residence or situation that would jeopardize his/her safety or cause undue stress or embarrassment to a victim or any other person.

(f) Under no circumstance shall a ride-along participant be permitted to enter a private residence with a department member without the express consent of the resident or other authorized person.

405.5 REVISION DATE 01/20/2025

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