

UNBIASED POLICING

December 2015

Members of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office will not allow bias in any form to affect agency operations or service to the community. Sheriff's Office employees will not discriminate against, nor harass, or profile any citizen for any reason.

Race, age, economic status, familial status, homelessness, national origin, political ideology, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender identity and disability in any form will not be considered when rendering service. The men and women of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office hold every citizen in high regard as they are sworn to serve and protect all people.

"As a leader in the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office, I commit myself to perform honorably my duties with respect for the dignity of all people, integrity to do right and fight wrongs, wisdom to apply common sense and fairness in all I do, and courage to stand against injustice."

Sheriff's Office Preamble to Mission, Vision, Values statement

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to emphasize this agency's commitment to unbiased, equitable treatment of all persons.

II. POLICY

Persons having contact with members of this agency shall be treated in a fair, impartial, equitable, and objective manner, in accordance with law, and without consideration of their individual demographics as defined in this policy.

III. DEFINITIONS

Biased Policing: Discrimination in the performance of law enforcement duties or delivery of police services, based on personal prejudices or partiality of officers toward classes of individuals or persons based on individual demographics.

Fair and Impartial Treatment: The belief that persons, irrespective of race or other distinctions, shall be treated in the same basic manner under the same or similar circumstances. This does not mean that all persons in the same or similar circumstances can or must be treated identically. Reasonable concessions and accommodations may be, and sometimes should be made, when dealing with individuals with physical or mental disabilities, injury, illness, or similar conditions, or when information about them necessitates different treatment.

Individual Demographics: For the purposes of this policy, personal characteristics, to include, but not limited to race, ethnic background, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, age, disability, cultural group, or political status.

Police Services: Sometimes referred to as community caretaking functions, these are actions and activities that may not directly include enforcement of the law, but that contribute to the overall well-being and safety of the public. These include, but are not limited to, such tasks as assistance at fire scenes, traffic accidents, and medical emergencies; lifesaving services; crime prevention; preventive patrol; traffic control; public information; education; and similar activities.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Fair and Impartial Treatment

1. Biased policing is prohibited both in the enforcement of the law and the delivery of police services.
2. Officers shall take equivalent enforcement actions and provide equal services to all persons in the same or similar circumstances.
3. Officers shall not consider individual demographics when performing law enforcement duties or delivering police services except when such characteristics are part of a specific subject description.
4. Unless exigent circumstances exist, officers shall not engage in a law enforcement matter when it involves a family member, friend, relative, or other person with whom he or she has a personal relationship, such that the officer's objectivity may be, or may appear to be, compromised. In situations where the officer is personally involved, he or she will summon other officers for assistance.

B. Compliance

1. Officers who witness or who are aware of instances of biased policing shall report the incident to a supervisor without delay. Also, where appropriate, officers are encouraged to intervene at the time the biased policing incident.
2. All instances of bias based complaints or infractions shall be forwarded to the Office of Professional Responsibilities for investigation.
3. The Office of Professional Responsibilities shall maintain data relating specifically to complaints of biased policing. The information shall be provided to the Sheriff or designated authority in a manner most suitable for administrative review, problem identification, and development of appropriate corrective actions.

C. Training

All employees will receive basic and periodic in-service training and, where deemed necessary, remedial training on subjects related to police ethics, cultural diversity, police-citizen interaction, standards of conduct, conducting motor vehicle stops, implicit bias, and related topics suitable for preventing incidents of biased policing.