Community Relations

340.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

(a) The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for fostering positive relationships between the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office and the community. Every member of this agency shares responsibility for building trust and engaging the public through professional conduct, respectful interactions, and collaborative problem-solving.

(b) Certain specialized responsibilities for community engagement are assigned to the Patrol Division and the Special Operations Division (SOD). These sections develop, manage, and coordinate programs and activities that enhance and support the agency's overall community relations mission.

340.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office that:

(a) All members are expected to contribute to positive community relations in the course of their daily duties.

(b) Deputies and staff shall always treat community members with dignity and respect.

(c) The Patrol Division and SOD have program-specific responsibilities, but the duty to maintain public trust and strong relationships applies agency wide.

(d) The agency will engage the community in problem-solving, safety initiatives, and transparent communication.

340.3 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of the Sheriff's Office share responsibility for maintaining positive community relations. Deputies should, as time and circumstances reasonably permit:

(a) Make casual and consensual contacts with community members to promote positive relationships.

(b) Maintain familiarity with the schools, businesses and community groups within their assigned areas.

(c) Address community concerns as part of routine patrol and enforcement activity.

(d) Conduct periodic foot patrols or premise checks to improve visibility and accessibility.

(e) Refer issues requiring organized outreach or specialized programs to the appropriate District Commander or division supervisor.

340.4 PATROL COMMUNITY RELATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

Patrol District Commanders have primary responsibility for organized community outreach within their respective districts. Duties may include:

(a) Overseeing community engagement within all districts.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/11/06, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office

(b) Coordinating Neighborhood Watch and other community crime prevention programs.

(c) Planning and managing large-scale community events, including National Night Out.

(d) Assigning Community Oriented Policing (COPs) deputies and/or coordinating with supervision from Patrol Operations or other divisions to designate deputies; to attend meetings, events, and outreach activities.

(e) Using crime analysis to identify problem areas and implement proactive strategies.

(f) Supporting deputies in their day-to-day community engagement activities.

(g) The Project Lifesaver Program shall be managed by a Canine Unit member as assigned by the Canine Administrative Lieutenant.

(h) Attending County Commissioner and other community meetings to obtain information on community relations needs.

(i) Oversee School Engagement Teams – Private and Elementary Schools.

340.5 SPECIAL OPERATIONS DIVISION RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) The Special Operations Division shall retain oversight of the following community programs and initiatives:

1. Office-sponsored athletic programs.
2. Child safety seat inspections.
3. Law Enforcement Challenge Seatbelt Campaign.
4. School Resource Deputy program.
5. D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)/Camp D.A.R.E.
6. TRIAD/SALT (Seniors and Lawmen Together).
7. Teen Court.
8. Tech Center Criminal Justice Program.

(b) Patrol and SOD supervisors shall regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their respective programs to ensure continued alignment with agency objectives and community needs.

340.6 INFORMATION SHARING

(a) All members should promote transparency through positive communication with the public. Information gathered through community engagement should be communicated up the chain so it can be addressed and, when appropriate, shared publicly.

(b) The Patrol Division and SOD will coordinate with the Public Information Officer to:

1. Share updates, trends, and safety information identified through community meetings and engagement efforts, so the PIO can distribute accurate information to the public through social media, the agency website, or other channels.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/11/06, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office

2. Ensure that relevant community feedback received by deputies during patrol or other duties is passed along to District Commanders for awareness and follow-up.
3. Provide program and activity information originating from District Commanders or SOD to the PIO for dissemination to the public.

340.7 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS EDUCATION

The Patrol Division and SOD shall look for opportunities to educate community members on law enforcement practices to improve mutual understanding. Methods may include:

(a) Informational materials and online resources.

(b) School presentations.

(c) Ride-along opportunities.

(d) Scenario/simulation exercises with community participation.

(e) Youth focused education or academy style programs.

(f) Assist with Citizen Police Academies

1. The Technology and Operational Support Commander will be responsible for coordinating the Citizen Police Academies to include citizen applications, scheduling of personnel, demonstrations, simulations/scenarios, and tours.
2. The Executive Administrative Assistant will provide support as needed.

340.8 SAFETY AND PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

Deputies organizing or supervising community programs shall:

(a) Ensure the safety of participants and avoid exposing them to risk.

(b) Obtain waivers when required, especially for youth participants.

(c) Conduct criminal history checks for sensitive activities (e.g., citizen police academies).

340.9 CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

(a) The Sheriff may establish a Citizen Advisory Board composed of volunteers, community members, community leaders, and other stakeholders such as representatives from schools, businesses, churches, and social service organizations. The makeup of the Board should reflect the demographics of the community as much as practicable.

(b) The Board will:

1. Provide input on public safety issues.
2. Collaborate with the agency to develop solutions.
3. Assist in outreach and communication with the public.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/11/06, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office

(c) Board members shall receive training relevant to their responsibilities. The Sheriff may consult the Board during policy review or on community concerns.

340.10 TRANSPARENCY

The Sheriff's Office will make reasonable efforts to publish statistical data, program information, and relevant policy updates for public review.

340.11 TRAINING

(a) Subject to available resources, all members should receive training in community relations principles, including:

1. Professional communication and social interaction.
2. Cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity.
3. Community policing and problem-solving.
4. The impact of enforcement actions on public trust.

(b) Community representatives may participate in training when practicable to provide additional perspectives.

340.12 STATE REQUIREMENTS

The Sheriff's Office shall comply with all state-mandated community policing reporting requirements, including those of the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC). The Patrol Division Commander or designee is responsible for ensuring these reports are completed and submitted as required.

340.13 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT

(a) Each District Commander shall maintain a process for obtaining and evaluating community feedback regarding agency performance, professionalism, and public trust.

(b) Community feedback may be collected on an ongoing basis through surveys, comment cards, electronic submissions, or other appropriate methods during community events, public contacts, or agency programs.

(c) The Patrol Division Commander or designee shall periodically review and compile collected feedback to assess community perceptions relating to:

1. Overall agency performance.
2. Professional competence of members.
3. Attitude and conduct of members.
4. Community trust and confidence in the agency.
5. Public safety concerns or other community-identified issues.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/11/06, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office

(d) An annual summary of significant findings shall be forwarded to the Sheriff no later than January 15th of each year for review and consideration in planning, training, and community engagement strategies.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/11/06, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office