

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PEACE OFFICERS

**Developed by:
California Peace Officers' Association**



FORWARD

Like other professions, law enforcement must establish minimum standards of ethical conduct for its incumbents. The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics was jointly developed in 1959 by the California Peace Officers' Association (CPOA) and the Peace Officers' Research Association of California (PORAC). Although the Code remains a universally accepted and valid statement of peace officer conduct, there is need for more detailed ethical standards for peace officers of all ranks and types. This Code of Professional Conduct and Responsibilities is intended as a vital supplement to the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics.

This Code was developed by the Standards and Ethics Committee of the California Peace Officers' Association. With representation from every peace officer rank, the Code required more than three years effort to develop. Special recognition is given to Donald Oliver, Undersheriff of San Diego County Sheriff's Department (Retired), whose efforts and leadership were essential to its development.

To provide recognition to California's peace officers that is so richly deserved, this Code has been copyrighted by CPOA in their behalf. Permission for reprinting this Code is granted for non-profit purposes. Copies may also be purchased from CPOA.

Prepared by the
Standards and Ethics Committee

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CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEACE OFFICERS

I. PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, peace officers are vested with a public trust which requires that they consistently demonstrate the highest degree of integrity and good moral character; and

WHEREAS, the need to maintain high standards of moral character, integrity, knowledge, and trust requires the establishment of a Code of Professional Conduct and Responsibility for Peace Officers as a matter of the highest significance to the health, welfare, and safety of the citizens of this state; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a Code of Professional Conduct and Responsibility for Peace Officers, which includes Canon of Ethics and minimum standards, requires the granting of authority to enforce these standards of professional conduct through disciplinary action as necessary for the protection of the health, welfare and safety of the public; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the need to maintain high standards of moral character, integrity, knowledge and trust require the peace officers establish and confirm to a Code of Conduct and Responsibility for Peace Officers.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT

Peace Officers are granted a public trust which requires that they consistently demonstrate the highest degree of integrity. To be worthy of this public trust, and to ensure that their professional conduct is above reproach, members of the peace officer profession must not only conform to a Code of Ethics but must also abide by these Canons of Ethics and Ethical Standards which constitute this Code of Professional Conduct and Responsibility as a means of internal regulations.

The essence of a profession that requires that in addition to prescribing a desired level of performance, it must also establish minimum standards of ethical conduct with prescribed rules of internal discipline to ensure compliance. Accordingly, this Code of Professional Conduct and Responsibility is established for the peace officer profession.

Nothing in the Code of Professional Conduct and Responsibility for Peace Officers is intended to limit or supersede any provision of law relating to the duties and obligations of peace officers or the consequences of a violation thereof. Whereas these rules specify certain conduct as unprofessional, this is not to be interpreted as approval of conduct not specifically mentioned.

Nothing in this Code is intended to limit the authority of an agency to adopt and enforce rules and regulations that are more stringent or comprehensive than those that are contained in this Code of Professional Conduct and Responsibility for Peace Officers.

Standard 2.2

Peace officers shall truthfully, completely, and impartially report, testify, and present evidence in all matters of an official nature.

Standard 2.3

Peace officers shall follow legal practices in such areas as interrogation, arrest or detention, searches, seizures, use of informants, and collection and preservation of evidence.

Standard 2.4

Peace officers shall follow the principles of integrity, fairness, and impartiality in connection with their duties.

CANON THREE

Peace officers regard this discharge as a public trust and shall recognize their responsibilities to the people whom they are sworn to protect and serve.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Standard 3.1

Peace officers, as professionals, shall maintain an awareness of those factors affecting their responsibilities.

Standard 3.2

Peace officers, during their tour of duty, shall diligently devote their time and attention to the effective and professional performance of their responsibilities.

Standard 3.3

Peace officers shall ensure that they are prepared for the effective and efficient undertaking of their assignment.

Standard 3.4

Peace officers shall safely and efficiently use equipment and material available to them.

Standard 3.5

Peace officers shall be prepared to and shall respond effectively to the demands of their office.

Standard 3.6

Peace officers, with due regard for compassion, shall maintain an objective and impartial attitude in official contacts.

Standard 3.7

Peace officers shall not allow their personal convictions, beliefs, prejudices, or biases to interfere unreasonably with their official acts or decisions.

Standard 3.8

Peace officers shall recognize that their allegiance is first to the people, then to their profession and the governmental entity or agency that employs them.

CANON FOUR

Peace officers will so conduct their public and private life that they exemplify the high standards of integrity, and morality demanded of a member of the peace officer profession.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Standard 4.1

Peace officers shall refrain from consuming intoxicating beverages to the extent that it results in impairment which brings discredit upon the profession or their employing agency, or renders them unfit for their next tour of duty.

Standard 4.2

Peace officers shall not consume intoxicating beverages while on duty, except to the degree permitted in the performance of official duties, and under no circumstances, while in uniform.

Standard 4.3

Peace officers shall not use narcotics, hallucinogens, or any other controlled substance, except when legally prescribed. When such controlled substances are prescribed, officers shall notify their superior officer prior to reporting for duty.

Standard 4.4

Peace officers shall maintain a level of conduct in their personal and business affairs in keeping with the high standards of the peace officer profession. Officers shall not participate in any incident involving moral turpitude.

Standard 4.5

Peace officers shall not overtake financial obligations which they know or reasonably should know they will be unable to meet and shall pay all just debts when due.

Standard 4.6

Peace officers shall not engage in illegal political activities.

Standard 4.7

Peace officers shall not permit or authorize, for personal gain, the use of their name or photograph and official title identifying them as a peace officer in connection

with testimonials or advertisements for any commodity, commercial enterprise, or commercial service which is not the product of the officer involved.

Standard 4.8

Peace officers shall not engage in any activity which could create a conflict of interest or would be in violation of any law.

Standard 4.9

Peace officers shall at all times, conduct themselves in a manner which does not discredit the peace officer profession or their employing agency.

Standard 4.10

Peace officers shall not be disrespectful, insolent, mutinous, or in subordinate in attitude or conduct.

Standard 4.11

Peace officers shall be courteous and respectful in their official dealings with the public, fellow officers, superiors and subordinates.

Standard 4.12

Peace officers shall not engage in any strike, work obstruction or abstention, in whole or in part, from the full, faithful and proper performance of their assigned duties and responsibilities, except as authorized by law.

Standard 4.13

Peace officers shall maintain a neutral position with regard to the merits of any labor dispute, political protest, or other public demonstration, while acting in an official capacity.

CANON FIVE

Peace officers shall recognize that our society holds the freedom of the individual as a paramount precept which shall not be infringed upon without just, legal, and necessary cause.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Standard 5.1

Peace officers shall not restrict the freedom of the individuals, whether by detention or arrest, except to the extent necessary to legally or reasonably apply the law.

Standard 5.2

Peace officers shall recognize the rights of individuals to be free from capricious or arbitrary acts which deny or abridge their fundamental rights as guaranteed by law.

Standard 5.3

Peace officers shall not use their official position to detain any individual, or to restrict the freedom of any individual, except in the manner and means permitted or prescribed by law.

CANON SIX

Peace officers shall assist in maintaining the integrity and competence of the peace officer profession.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Standard 6.1

Peace officers shall recognize that every person in our society is entitled to professional, effective, and efficient law enforcement services.

Standard 6.2

Peace officers shall perform their duties in such a manner as to discourage double standards.

Standard 6.3

Peace officers shall conduct themselves so as to set exemplary standards of performance for all law enforcement personnel.

Standard 6.4

Peace officers shall maintain the integrity of their profession through complete disclosure of those who violate any of the rules of conduct, violate any law, or who conduct themselves in a manner which tends to discredit the profession.

Standard 6.5

Peace officers shall have responsibility for reporting to proper authorities any known information which would serve to disqualify candidates from transferring within or entering the profession.

Standard 6.6

Peace officers shall be responsible for maintaining a level of education and training that will keep them abreast of current techniques, concepts, laws, and requirements of the profession.

Standard 6.7

Chief executive peace officers shall accept the responsibility of utilizing all available resources and the authority of their office to maintain the integrity of their agency and the competency of their officers. These Canons and Ethical Standards shall apply to all legally defined peace officers regardless of rank.

Standard 6.8

Peace officers shall assume a leadership role in furthering their profession by encouraging and assisting in the education and training of other members of the profession.

CANON SEVEN

Peace officers shall cooperate with other officials and organizations that are using legal and ethical means to achieve the goals and objectives of the peace officer profession.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Standard 7.1

Peace officers, within legal and agency guidelines, shall share with personnel both, within and outside their agency, appropriate information that will facilitate the achievement of criminal justice goals or objectives.

Standard 7.2

Peace officers, whether requested through appropriate channels or called upon individually, shall render needed assistance to any other officer in the proper performance of their duty.

Standard 7.3

Peace officers shall, within legal and agency guidelines, endeavor to communicate to the people of their community the goals and objectives of the profession, and keep them apprised of the conditions which threaten the maintenance of an ordered society.

CANON EIGHT

Peace officers shall not compromise their integrity, nor that of their agency or profession, by accepting, giving or soliciting any gratuity.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Standard 8.1

Peace officers shall refuse to offer, give, or receive gifts, favors or gratuities, either large or small, which can be reasonably interpreted as capable of influencing official acts or judgments. This standard is not intended to isolate peace officers from normal social practices, or to preclude gifts among friends, associates, or relatives, where appropriate.

Standard 8.2

Peace officers shall not consider their badge of office as a license designed to provide them with special favors or consideration.

CANON NINE

Peace officers shall observe the confidentiality of information available to them through any source, as it relates to the peace officer profession.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Standard 9.1

Peace officers shall be aware of and shall meticulously observe all legal restrictions on the release and dissemination of information.

Standard 9.2

Peace officers shall treat as confidential the official business of their employing agency, and shall release and disseminate such information solely in an authorized manner.

Standard 9.3

Peace officers shall treat as confidential that information confined to them personally. They shall disclose such information as required in the proper performance of their duties.

Standard 9.4

Peace officers shall neither disclose nor use for their personal interest any confidential information acquired by them in the course of their official duties.

Standard 9.5

Peace officers shall treat as confidential, all matters relating to investigations, internal affairs, and personnel.

V. INVESTIGATIVE PROVISIONS

(Optional provisions of this section may require legislation)

- A. INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES. Peace officers under investigation for an alleged violation of any of these standards or agency disciplinary rules shall be afforded, as a minimum, the rights established by law and contract, to ensure fair and just treatment in the enforcement of disciplinary rules of conduct or agency rules.
- B. EXERCISE OF RIGHTS. By reason of the lawful exercise of rights, officers shall not be discharged, disciplined, demoted, transferred, or denied promotion or reassignment, or discriminated against with regard to employment, nor threatened with any such action.
- C. CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION. When the investigation focuses on an officer for prosecution of a criminal offense, the officer shall be afforded the same constitutional rights, privileges, or guarantees enjoyed by any person. This section, however, shall not deprive the agency of the right to pursue the investigation administratively.

- D. AGENCY APPEAL OR REVIEW PROCESS. To ensure due process, officers shall be provided with an internal administrative appeal or review process or procedure. This process shall be in addition to any external appeal process the employing agency may have established for the review of disciplinary cases.

VI. RECOMMENDED PROVISIONS REQUIRING STATE LEGISLATION

- A. ADMISSIBILITY. No Canon or Ethical Standard, or the enforcement of a Canon, Ethical Standard, or agency disciplinary rule, shall be admissible as evidence of a standard of care of negligence in any civil action other than administrative or disciplinary proceedings.
- B. CONFIDENTIALITY OF INVESTIGATIVE FILES. To promote the complete investigation and reporting of complaints against peace officers, the (state/county/city) finds that the need to preserve and protect the work product of an agency outweighs the public interest in full or partial disclosure, discovery, or production in any manner of an agency's investigative files pertaining to complaints against officers. Accordingly, administrative investigative files, records, reports, or other documentation may be subpoenaed in either criminal or civil proceedings only in accordance with existing law.
- C. CONSTRUCTION AND SEVERABILITY. The provisions of this code shall be severable and if any phase, clause, sentence or provision of this Code is declared to be unconstitutional or the applicability thereof to any agency, person, or circumstances is held invalid, the constitutionality of this Code and the applicability of thereof to any other agency, person or circumstances shall, with respect to all severable matters, not be affected thereby. It is intended that the provisions of this Code be reasonably and liberally constructed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT CODE OF ETHICS

As a Law Enforcement Officer, my fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the Constitutional Rights of all men to liberty, equality and justice.

I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all; maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop self-restraint; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. Honest in thought and deed in both my personal and official life, I will be exemplary in obeying the laws of the land and the regulations of my department. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confined to me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty.

I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, animosities, or friendships to influence my decisions. With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice or violence and never accepting gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of the police service. I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself before God to my chosen profession ... law enforcement.