

# Annapolis Police Department



## GENERAL ORDER

**Number: C.28**

**Issue Date: January  
2019**

**TO:** All Personnel

**SUBJECT:** Field Interviews

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines for conducting and reporting field interviews. Field Interviews can contribute greatly to crime analysis/solution if the information obtained is properly recorded, collected and reviewed. In addition, the field interview program may deprive actual and potential offenders of some of their initiative in selecting the time, place and circumstances of crimes.

### **POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Annapolis Police Department that when field interviews are conducted, police officers must understand the legal basis and authority for these actions

#### **I. Field Interviews**

- A. As a source of information: the field interview is based on the principle that the opportunity to apprehend criminals and to prevent crimes increases with the number and frequency of persons interviewed. One way a police officer can expand his/her power of observation is to develop sources of information from persons living or working in their patrol area.
- B. As a means of identifying the suspect: an on-view arrest is not always based upon the immediate recognition of a wanted criminal. Frequently, it is the outgrowth of the action taken by an officer who stops to question a person acting suspiciously. Information obtained during the field contact may also be used at a later date to identify a criminal.
- C. As a means of obtaining suspects or witnesses: the value of reported field interviews

becomes pronounced when a crime is committed and there are but a few leads. The investigator must then rely on the Field Interview Reports to sift out pertinent information.

- D. As a means of crime prevention: the effectiveness of the patrol activity is brought to the attention of the criminal element. The criminal element can also observe the activities of the police and conclude the likelihood of escaping detection and apprehension is not favorable.

## II. Conducting the Field Interview

- A. Normal contacts between the citizen and the police which amount only to an inquisitive, non-custodial contact or field interview are permissible with no mandatory reporting. The demeanor of the officer is an important factor when determining whether or not the contact is voluntary/non-custodial.
1. When conducting a field interview or a non-custodial contact, be guided by the fact that, absent cause for an actual stop, the person is free at any time to terminate the interview, not answer any questions and to leave.
  2. If at any time during the field interview the person wishes to leave, do not restrict their freedom of movement. Do not stop them from leaving and do not compel the person to answer any questions. Unless you have reasonable belief that a crime has been, is being or about to be committed, you lack the legal authority to detain the person.
- B. During the field interview **reasonable suspicion** is the key on which the officer should base further action beyond a mere interview. Factors to be considered are:
1. Is it a public place, or a place the officer has a legal right to be.
  2. The officer reasonably suspects that the person has committed or is about to commit a crime.
  3. The officer reasonably suspects that the person is carrying a concealed weapon and intends to do bodily harm.

These are factors that may lead to a pat down, a temporary involuntary stop (Terry Stop) and/or an arrest. When going beyond a field interview officers will be guided by Constitutional standards and the appropriate General Orders.

- C. The unusual or suspicious actions of people should trigger a field interview. Felony arrests are made consistently by officers who are quick to recognize something suspicious in the actions or the appearance of a person or a vehicle.
- D. The person not fitting the place or time should be questioned. Personal appearances,

the area, time of day, the information being sought, and other factors will determine who is to be questioned.

### **III. Approaching the Subject**

- A. As many field interviews result in arrest, the locations must be selected with care. Give consideration to the possible escape routes, to the lighting, and to the safety of bystanders, as well as to your own safety. Furthermore, the approach must afford the greatest element of surprise. On foot or in a vehicle, the approach is usually made from the rear. This technique provides a tactical advantage. At night, the headlights of the police vehicle can be used to provide illumination, but be aware of the tactical disadvantage of silhouetting or blinding yourself or other Officers. It is imperative to have decided upon a plan of action before attempting to stop a suspect. Vigilance must be maintained to guard against any violent or evasive action.
- B. The purpose of the field interview will determine the method of contacting the subject. It may vary from an authoritative command of “Stop, Police” to a diplomatic request of “Good evening, may I speak to you?” Officers working in civilian dress have the added responsibility of identifying themselves as police officers before stopping a person for questioning.

### **IV. When to Use the Field Interview Reports**

- A. Upon concluding the field interview, a Field Interview Report (FIR) is mandatory when resulting from an investigative or involuntary stop (see General Order C.4, II, E). However, when documentation is in the best interest of the citizen, the member, the Department or when directed by a supervisor a Field Interview Report will be completed.
- B. A Field Interview Report may be completed on a subject who is charged with a traffic violation or who is stopped on a routine traffic stop if the situation appears to warrant such a report. This will be largely a matter of the officer’s judgment.
- C. A Field Interview Report may also be used as a field observation. In these instances, the officer should fill out the report as completely as possible, using prior knowledge of the individual or vehicle. Examples of instances when the field observation report should be used include, but are not limited to the following:
  - 1. An officer stops an individual for the purpose of conducting a field interview, but the individual refuses to give the officer any information and the officer has no reasonable suspicion to pursue the matter further.
  - 2. An officer wants to document a subject in a specific place at a specific time and the officer has completed a Field Interview Report on the individual on a prior occasion.

- 3. An officer observes a vehicle which arouses his/her suspicion, but the owner of the vehicle cannot be interviewed.
- 4. An officer observes a known criminal in or at a place and time, under suspicious circumstances, but is not able to talk to the individual.

**V. Field Interview Files**

- A. Field Interview Reports will be completed in the Field Based Reporting (FBR) system and submitted without undue delay.
- B. Supervisors will review their subordinates' Field Interview Reports.

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Scott Baker  
Chief of Police

References
1. Accreditation Standards 41.2.4

**Revision:** This General Order replaces General Order C.28, dated September, 2008.