

Number: TBD
EFFECTIVE DATE: November 13, 2000

PROCEDURE STATEMENT

Policy Area: Safety

Issue: Safety Procedures for Conducting Work with Offenders off CSOSA Premises

Action/Guidance: Staff Safety – Accountability Tours

Context: In 1998, CSOSA and the Metropolitan Police for the District of Columbia (“MPDC”) signed an interagency agreement that launched the Community Justice Partnership project. As part of the Community Justice Partnerships, MPDC staff and CSO’s share information and work as a team for purposes of increasing offender accountability, providing assistance in offender rehabilitative efforts, and improving public safety. One aspect of this strategy involves Accountability Tours. These are face-to-face field contacts with offenders conducted jointly by a CSO and an MPDC officer. The Staff Safety procedure for Accountability Tours was completed in collaboration with officers from the MPDC training division, office for organizational development, and patrol officers experienced in working with CSO’s in the community.

Procedures to minimize safety risks while conducting Accountability Tours center on adequate preparation and adherence to safety guidelines. Minimization of risk to all CSO’s and CSOSA employees and the people with whom they interact is the goal of the agency’s safety policies. This procedure is intended to support the CSOSA-MPDC partnership by enabling individuals to be prepared to work together effectively in the field.

I. Procedure:

A. Offender Orientation to the Partnership

1. Treat all offenders and anyone else with whom you have contact with dignity and respect.
2. Discuss accountability tours and other fieldwork with offenders during initial office contacts while reviewing the orientation checklist, subsequent office visits with the offender, mass offender orientations, and initial visits with offenders after case transfers to a new CSO. Emphasize that Accountability Tours include a CSO and police officer working together and that the tours may be scheduled or unannounced. Also, emphasize the following goals (for a detailed list of fieldwork rationale, see policy on Fieldwork Safety):
 - a) Goals:
 - (1) Increase accountability through reinforcing the message that MPDC officers and CSO’s are working together and sharing information.
 - (2) Increase the visibility of the police-supervision partnership among offenders and other residents in the community.
 - (3) Develop and share resources in order to improve delivery of case management services to prevent future crime and to enable offenders to maintain productive, law-abiding lives.

- b) Caveat: Accountability Tours are not intended to circumvent individual's Fourth Amendment rights or MPDC or CSOSA policy regarding lawful search and seizure.

B. Preparation between the CSO and the Police Officer

1. Prior to conducting Accountability Tours, CSO's shall have completed CSOSA safety training and shall have participated in sessions that emphasize staff safety during Accountability Tours. The safety procedure for Accountability Tours was completed with input from the MPDC training division and patrol officers experienced in working with CSO's in the community.
2. Establish a code word or phrase that each of you understands to mean, "This situation presents imminent danger to our safety. It's time for us to end the visit and leave the scene."
 - a) The code should be simple and clear, such as:
 - (1) "I'm hungry, let's eat now."
 - (2) "I have a meeting downtown."
 - b) Upon using the code word and leaving the scene, discuss the situation that prompted the use of the code word.
 - c) Discuss what action, if any, should be taken next.
3. Radio and Safety Equipment:
 - a) Ensure that the CSO knows how to operate the police cruiser radio and portable radio.
 - b) The police officer must tell the CSO his/her call sign (a four digit number that automatically identifies the police officer to MPDC Dispatch and other officers).
 - c) CSO's need to follow simple steps to request assistance using a cruiser or portable radio:
 - (1) Press and hold the talk button,
 - (2) Count, "one thousand one" while holding the button down,
 - (3) Keep holding the button down while beginning to speak, and
 - (4) State the police officer's call number, 1033 (which means, officer needs assistance), and your location (the address at which you are standing). For example, you would say, "3039, 1033, 1425 S Street, Northwest."
 - d) Prior to making contact with an offender, the police officer shall radio MPDC Dispatch that an Accountability Tour is active and provide the address of the Accountability Tour and the offender's phone number inside the residence.

- e) The police officer shall update MPDC Dispatch on the status of active Accountability Tours at 15-minute intervals. If the dispatcher has not received an update within 15 minutes, he or she will send a police cruiser to check the situation as a safety precaution.
- 4. The police officer shall make arrangements to use a marked MPDC cruiser for Accountability Tours, since a major goal of the partnership is to increase the visibility of the fact that CSOSA and MPDC work as a team to ensure public safety.
- 5. Discuss Approach Styles
 - a) The CSO and police officer working together must understand how each will position him or herself and interact with offenders or others while conducting accountability tours.
 - b) Work out an arrangement between the CSO and police officer that works for both of you prior to starting an Accountability Tour. CSO's and police officers working together shall discuss their preference for sitting or standing while working inside someone's residence. Some CSO's and some police officers prefer to remain standing while interacting with offenders or others inside a residence. Other CSO's and police officers prefer to sit if the offender or other is sitting.
 - c) The cardinal rule remains. Treat all offenders and each other with respect and dignity at all times.

C. Scheduling Accountability Tours

- 1. Schedule joint visits for all new cases received by the PSA team.
- 2. Identify which offenders are scheduled for joint community contacts at the weekly team meeting prior to following week's Accountability Tours.
- 3. **Note: The team should schedule a minimum of five (5) joint contacts for each accountability tour. However, special circumstances or needs may dictate less community contact than the recommended minimum.**
- 4. In special situations, where unforeseen events arise, CSO's or the MPD officer may contact one another and schedule a special joint community contact.
- 5. Prior to making a joint community contact, the CSO identifies the following on the Case Presentation Form:
 - a) Offender's name, alias(es), date of birth, PDID number, DCDC number (if applicable), sex, race, scars/marks/other ID marks
 - b) Offender's address
 - c) Offender's CSO and CSO's phone number
 - d) Offender's current charge(s)

- e) Offender's supervision start and end dates
 - f) Past assaults or weapons charges, if any
 - g) Conditions of release
 - h) Warrant data (if any outstanding warrants currently apply)
 - i) CSO's name and phone number(s)
6. Do some intelligence gathering and analysis
- a) Know the case history of the offender you intend to visit – consult the case file, criminal record, past investigations, and/or speak to other Community Supervision Officers familiar with the case.
 - (1) REMEMBER: Agency procedures, statutes, and regulations require that without a written consent, certain types of sensitive offender file information such as drug treatment, mental health, and/or HIV/AIDS information cannot be shared. CSO's who make such disclosures may be subject to criminal and/or civil penalties.
 - (2) In the course of working with police or other law enforcement officers, CSO's must remember that they
 - (a) May disclose general demographic information (see the Case Presentation Form),
 - (b) May disclose supervision conditions, unspecified drug history, and possible relapse to other law enforcement personnel,
 - (c) May not disclose drug treatment, mental health, and/or HIV/AIDS information to the public individually or in community meetings, and
 - (d) May not disclose any written records with other law enforcement personnel except for case presentation forms.
 - (3) If a CSO is asked to respond to specific questions about an individual offender's drug treatment, mental health, and/or HIV/AIDS information, CSOSA recommends that he or she respond, "Without an express written consent, I'm prohibited by law and federal regulations from sharing such information. If I do, I am subject to criminal and/or civil penalties."
 - b) Watch for evidence of assault or abusive behavior, particularly against "authority."
 - c) Be aware of signs of deteriorating behavior or mounting pressure on the offender that could cause a "blow-up."

- d) If danger signals are present, indicate the nature of those signals to each other prior to going on the Accountability Tour.
7. CSO's shall leave their travel itinerary (names, addresses, and phone numbers of offenders or any other individuals you intend to visit) and mobile phone numbers with your office by filling out a field contact sheet before the visits and signing out of the office on the field sheet.

D. Roles of CSO's and Police Officers during Accountability Tours

- 1. Generally, CSO's shall take the lead in initiating contact with offenders during Accountability Tours.
- 2. Generally, CSO's shall briefly introduce themselves, the police officer, and the reason for conducting an accountability tour. Remind the offender that CSO's and police work in partnership and that your shared goal is for the offender to succeed in maintaining a law-abiding and productive life that contributes to improved public safety.
- 3. In situations that warrant police action, the police officer will take appropriate steps in accordance with MPDC policy.
 - a) Generally, police officers will be out of regular service while on Accountability Tours.
 - b) MPDC officers must respond to back-up calls if they arise. If MPDC has to respond, the CSO shall allow the police officer to conduct his/her official business.

E. Parking

- 1. Selecting your parking spot
 - a) Keep the car moving until you have selected a spot.
 - b) Survey the entire area if you are unfamiliar, even if you have to go around the block.
 - c) Get as close to your destination as possible.
 - d) If dark or near dark, try to park under a light if possible.
 - e) Leave enough room to easily pull out of the parking spot and to avoid getting blocked in.
 - f) Do not park illegally. Do not linger in the car after parking.
 - g) Lock your car. Be sure to hide or remove any loose items, valuable or invaluable, from plain view.

F. Approaching the Residence

1. Familiarize yourself with the neighborhood. If you are unfamiliar with the neighborhood, pass through the neighborhood once before parking to survey the situation.
2. Get the “big picture” of the area. If you see danger, make arrangements to return for a home visit at a later time during the Accountability Tour.
3. Use your mobile phone to call the offender inside the residence. Identify yourself, and let the offender or person answering the phone know you’ll be at the door with a police officer for an Accountability Tour within a matter of minutes.

G. At the Doorway

1. Use the “off-the-side” approach (do not stand directly in front of the door as you knock/ring the bell).
2. Be mindful of the need for your eyes to adjust to possible changes in light; extreme changes can be blinding.
3. Stop, look, and listen.
 - a) Stop outside.
 - b) Look inside. (Are lights on? Can you see anyone? How many people? Can you see their locations? Do you recall the general layout of the dwelling from your past visits? Do you spot any unusual activities?)
 - c) Listen. (Any conversations? What tone? Any factors such as dogs, music, etc.?)
 - d) Be wary of any indications of alcohol or drug use – these can lead to problems.
 - e) Develop a mental picture of what’s going on inside.
4. Knock in a normal fashion. Remember the “off-the-side” approach.
5. If your knock is not answered, use your mobile phone again to call the offender inside the residence. Identify yourself, and indicate that you will be knocking on the door again.
6. When your knock is answered:
 - a) Identify yourself by name, title, and organization.
 - b) Do not enter if any invitation is called out. Wait for the door to be opened to you.
7. As the door is opened, look through the opening for the number of occupants, their location, and any signs of danger.

8. If the environment feels or looks dangerous, leave. For example, too many people with whom you are not familiar may be present. Make arrangements to talk to the offender and return when fewer people are present or meet with the offender in the office.
9. Be courteous and thank the person for letting you into their home.

H. Once You Have Made Entry

1. Continue to stay off to the side of the door. The outside door should be closed. Be aware of when individuals leave the room. Avoid having to interact with anyone in the kitchen. It is strongly recommended that the CSO and police officer should maintain sight of one another at all times.
2. Ensure that the CSO and police officer never lose sight of each other.
3. Quickly survey the entire area for other residents, any signs of trouble, dogs (or other loose pets), and potential weapons.
4. Be aware of alternate escape routes.
5. Be wary of hidden weapons (e.g., in sofa, kitchen, or bed), particularly if a crisis is developing.
6. Position yourself so an exit(s) is readily accessible. One person should stay near the exit/doorway, but do not stand in open doorways.
7. If there are any animals loose in the home, you may politely ask a resident to have them restrained.
8. If a physical confrontation between residents is in progress, allow the police officer to take appropriate police action, or use the safety code word, leave, and make arrangements for appropriate response when additional police support can arrive.

I. If a Threat to Safety Emerges

1. If the CSO or the police officer uses the safety code word at any time, end the visit immediately. Indicate to the offender or person you are meeting with that you have no further business at the moment, and leave the residence.
 - a) Once you are in the car or a more secure location, discuss what prompted the use of the safety code word.
 - b) Upon discussing the scenario, the CSO and police officer shall make a decision about what should happen next. For example,
 - (1) The CSO may recommend that he/she call the offender into the office to discuss the matter in a more secure setting.
 - (2) The CSO and police officer may agree to return to the residence at a later time.

- (3) The police officer may discern that the situation warrants immediate police action and request backup. Likewise, he or she may choose to document the situation and pursue appropriate police action at a later date.

J. Incidents during Accountability Tours

1. Complete a Critical Incident Report and submit it to your supervisor within 48 of the incident.
2. If the incident involved use of deadly force, complete and submit a Critical Incident Report to your supervisor within 24 hours of the incident.

II. Statutory Authority: Section 11233(b)(2)(B) of the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997 (“Revitalization Act”), Pub. Law 105-33, 111 Stat. 712, D.C. Code § 24-1233(b)(2)(B) (1996 Repl., 1999 Supp.) (Director’s authority); D.C. Code § 24-103 (1996 Repl.) (Probation’s authority).

III. Procedural References/Supercedes:

▪ **References:**

Federal Judicial Center. (unknown). *Staff Safety: Workbook for Participants*. Washington, DC: Federal Judicial Center.

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Kipp, Richard A. (1995). *Safety Awareness Workbook: Anticipating, Identifying, and Resolving the Potential Victimization of Probation and Parole Officers*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Thorton, Robert L. and Shireman, John H. (1993). *New Approaches to Staff Safety*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Virginia Department of Corrections. Division of Operations. Community Corrections. (1999). *Strategies, Training, Equipment, & Policy for Staff Safety*. Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Corrections.

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▪ **Supercedes:** N/A