



Best Practices for Interactions with Transient Citizens

The Columbia Police Department will provide professional and ethical service in protection of all citizens while preventing crime and reducing the fear of crime through problem solving partnerships





Best Practices for Interactions with Transient Citizens

Purpose

Best Practices for Interactions with Transient Citizens was created to assist business owners and citizens in developing a safe atmosphere for all citizens without making allowances for illegal activity. The Columbia Police Department (CPD) has adopted and expanded guidelines that are meant as a general road map; suggestions and information to aid citizens that come into contact with transient or homeless individuals. With all encounters, each situation will have its own nuances. Therefore, information included in this document may require adjustments to fit the needs of a particular establishment. Included with the best practices are details on how to respond to criminal incidents.

Inalienable Rights Granted for All Citizens

The Declaration of Independence gives three examples of inalienable rights, in the well-known phrase, “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” These fundamental rights are endowed on every human being by his or her Creator, and are often referred to as “natural rights.” Only under carefully limited circumstances can such natural rights be taken away as people have the freedom to exercise them as they choose. (legaldictionary.net/inalienable-rights) All citizens are protected by inalienable rights and subject to the same criminal laws. Law enforcement is involved when these

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criminal laws are violated; regardless of the socioeconomic standing of the offending suspect. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law for any offense they are arrested for. CPD will provide professional and ethical service in protection of citizens while preventing crime and reducing the fear of crime through problem solving partnerships. While there is no tolerance for criminal behavior, compassion, understanding and respect can be the best prevention to many situations and behaviors.

Incident Response

Call 9-1-1 when an incident occurs!

Establishments must call 9-1-1 to report criminal activity, notify police for assistance in these circumstances, and/or report serious medical emergencies for proper resources to actively respond to the situation and location.

- 1** Establishments should safeguard evidence connected with commission of a crime on the premises and should maintain the integrity of any crime scene.
- 2** Identifying information on ejected and/or arrested individuals should be retained on a “banned list” database. These individuals should not be allowed subsequent entry.
- 3** Digital video of any unlawful conduct should be identified and provided to CPD when requested.
- 4** Witnesses should be encouraged to wait for the police to arrive in order to assist with the investigation. At a minimum, they should be asked to provide their identifying information so that they may be contacted by the police in the future. They should also be encouraged to make a statement to establishment personnel regarding the incident, if the establishment so requests.

- 5 Establishments should act as complainants in appropriate cases.
- 6 Establishments should encourage employees and witnesses to go to court and testify when requested, and pay wages to them for their time.
- 7 All of those awaiting admission into the establishment during the incident should be placed in a line, not blocking the sidewalk.
- 8 All individuals on admission lines should be informed that if they are not orderly then will not be admitted.
- 9 Individuals who will not be admitted should be encouraged to leave the area.

Incident Response for establishments with Security Guards

- If an establishment uses the services of a security guard company rather than employing its own security guards, the security company must be licensed by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division.
- It is recommended that security guards be distinctively and uniformly attired – very easily identified.

- Establishment policies should mandate that security separate and remove all potentially violent individuals in a manner, consistent with the law that is designed to prevent a continuation of violent activity inside or outside the club.
- Security guards should be trained in techniques to de-escalate potential violent encounters and difficult situations.
- If a perpetrator is identified during an incident, they should be detained by security through lawful means.

Smartphone Initiative Expansion ---

Community Response Teams have been the spearhead of utilizing smartphone technology to improve the capabilities of CPD to address crime concerns. This initiative is now entering a new phase by expanding to all patrol officers.

This will greatly enhance an officer's ability to obtain and process actionable information. The end result will be that officers will be better equipped to serve the citizens of Columbia by utilizing this technology driven initiative to provide exceptional customer service.

Scenarios

While there is a possibility that different events may take place, listed below are two possible scenarios and the response you need to take to assist us in our response to address the issues.

Incident Scenario 1 - Disorderly and Aggressive Individual

An individual enters an establishment and begins to use inappropriate language, yell at other individuals in the establishment and threaten staff. The actions of this individual are causing a disruption to the normal flow of business and interfering with others movements due to the aggressive attitude of the offending individual. The following actions should be taken in this instance.

- 1 Call 9-1-1 immediately.** Advise the 9-1-1 Dispatcher that there is an aggressive, disorderly subject at your location. Provide the 9-1-1-Dispatcher a physical description of the individual to include, sex, race, approximate height, approximate weight, clothing description and any other identifying marks or indicators. These include, but are not limited to, tattoos, facial hair, scars, birth marks, visible injuries, etc.

- 2 Stay on the line with the 9-1-1 Dispatcher for as long as possible.** If the subject is threatening staff and/or patrons, make sure that they know that Police are on the way. Often this will cause the offending individual to leave; which will defuse the immediate situation and ensure that there is no further potential for harm or disruption.
- 3 If the offending individual does leave, make sure to provide the 9-1-1 Dispatcher with a direction of travel.** This will aid the responding police officers when they are searching. Do not needlessly put yourself or staff in harm's way to by following an aggressive individual. Safely keep them in sight for as long as possible and update Dispatch as information changes or develops.
- 4 The 9-1-1 Dispatcher will ask you several questions.** This is to obtain as much specific information as possible to provide to the responding police officers. In stressful situations, this can sometimes frustrate callers. Remain calm and answer any questions they may have. Again, this is to aid the police officers that are responding to assist you.

- 5 Inform the 9-1-1 Dispatcher if you would like to make contact with an officer.** Some callers do not want to speak with a police officer; they simply want the situation to be concluded without any further involvement. If you wish to talk with an officer and file a report, make sure to let the Dispatcher know. They will update the police officer that there is a complainant that wishes to make contact and/or file an incident report.
- 6 The responding police officer will make contact with you and update any information to any circulating police officers that are in the area.** The police officer on scene will then begin to investigate the incident and establish any and all laws that were violated. If probable cause can be established for an arrest, the officers will do so. It will be important for all parties involved to cooperate with the prosecution of the case. This may include providing video evidence, witness statements, and testifying in court. Failure to cooperate may jeopardize the integrity of the case.
- 7 In the absence of any established probable cause developed through the course of the investigation, the officer can file an incident report.** You can then obtain a copy of the incident report and sign a Courtesy Summons. Once signed, the offending party will be served and a court date will be established. You will present your case to the presiding judge, who will decide the outcome.

Incident Scenario 2 - A Possible Drug Transaction

While at your place of business, you witness what appears to be a possible drug deal take place. The following actions should be taken in this instance.

- 1 Call 9-1-1 immediately.** Advise the 9-1-1 Dispatcher that you believe that you witnessed a possible drug transaction. It is important to note that you can remain anonymous if you do not wish to be identified, meet with a police officer, or be involved in any further investigations. Please understand that this could have a negative impact on any case or investigation. Provide the 9-1-1 Dispatcher a physical description of the individual to include, sex, race, approximate height, approximate weight, clothing description, and any other identifying marks or indicators. These include, but are not limited to, tattoos, facial hair, scars, birth marks, visible injuries, etc.
- 2 If the offending individuals leave, make sure to provide the 91-1 Dispatcher with a direction of travel.** This will aid the responding police officers when they are searching. Do not needlessly put yourself or staff in harm's way to by following the individuals. Safely keep them in sight for as long as possible and update Dispatch as information changes or develops.

- 3 The 9-1-1 Dispatcher will ask you several questions.** This is to obtain as much specific information as possible to provide to the responding police officers. In stressful situations, this can sometimes frustrate callers. Remain calm and answer any questions they may have. Again, this is to aid the police officers that are responding to assist you.
- 4 Inform the 9-1-1 Dispatcher if you would like to make contact with an officer.** Some callers do not want to speak with a police officer; they simply want the situation to be concluded without any further involvement. If you wish to talk with an officer and file a report, make sure to let the Dispatcher know. They will update the police officer that there is a complainant that wishes to make contact and/or file an incident report.
- 5 The responding police officer will make contact with you and update any information to any circulating police officers that are in the area.** The police officer on scene will then begin to investigate the incident and establish any and all laws that were violated. If probable cause can be established for an arrest, the officer will do so. It will be important for all parties involved to cooperate with the prosecution of the case. This may include providing video, witness statements, and testifying in court. Failure to cooperate may jeopardize the integrity of the case.

CPD & Yellow Shirts

The Main Street District's Clean and Safe Ambassadors, also known as "Yellow Shirts," are those knowledgeable, helpful folks in the yellow shirts riding and walking around downtown Columbia.

They work from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. daily throughout the business improvement district. They've been on the job since 2002, shuttling people to their cars, helping them find their way, spotting potential problems and just generally being visible and helpful in whatever way they can.

The roles of CPD and the Yellow Shirts are complimentary, however, each group is responsible for specific tasks;

- CPD monitors criminal activity, takes part in community patrols to deter crime, responds to emergency calls, issues tickets, makes arrests, investigates crimes and testifies in court as needed.
- Yellow Shirts assist in monitoring suspicious activity, take part in community patrols to deter crime and to notify CPD in the event of criminal activity.

Behavioral Challenges/Indicators

There are many indicators of behavioral challenges, and being able to recognize these symptoms will assist individuals attempting to engage and deescalate incidents.

Signs of mental health concerns:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable “highs” or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality

- Abuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing “aches and pains”)
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

Signs of alcohol intoxication:

- Speech slurred, thick, confused, abusive, profane, antagonistic or incoherent
- Appearance in disarray, clothing stained
- Balance unsteady, or body swaying, using a wall or furniture as a prop
- Face pale or flushed
- Eyes bloodshot, red, puffy
- Fumbling or dropping of glass, ID, case, etc. or misjudging distance
- Unusual physiological symptoms, e.g., vomiting, excessive hiccuping, losing focus, sleepy or fainting

Signs of opioid abuse:

- Confusion, delirium, or acting drunk
- Frequent vomiting
- Pinpoint pupils
- Extreme sleepiness, or the inability to wake up
- Intermittent loss of consciousness
- Breathing problems, including slowed or irregular breathing
- Respiratory arrest (absence of breathing)
- Cold, clammy skin, or bluish skin around the lips or under the fingernails

Signs of cocaine abuse:

- Dilated pupils
- Runny nose
- Overconfidence
- Unusual excitement
- Aggressiveness
- Paranoia
- Poor judgment
- Delusions
- Hallucinations

Serious Criminal Incidents Response

These best practices are designed to apply to serious criminal incidents, usually assaults that are physical and/or sexual of nature. For these purposes assaults are deemed serious when the victim of the assault is either unconscious, or in need of immediate medical treatment, for a serious life threatening injury, such as a stabbing or slashing. This is more serious in nature than a bar fight with minor injuries. An exception to this general rule is sexual assault crimes where the victim may have no visible injuries. Sexual assaults are serious criminal incidents, and as such fall within purview of these guidelines.

Post-Incident:

- 1 Call 9-1-1 immediately** once the incident occurs.
- 2** If the perpetrators or witnesses leave, the direction and means they left, and the identity or description of people they left with should be provided to the responding police officers.
- 3** Establishments should make it clear to all staff members and private contractors that they are expected to tell the truth to the police investigators.

- 4** Do not clean the crime scene. Protect it from any changes. Crime scenes can be protected by temporarily surrounding them with velvet ropes or yellow “caution” tape using chairs, velvet rope stanchions, or even potted plants to support the tape. To this end, inexpensive “Caution Tape” should be kept in the establishment.
- 5** Establishment employees should be aware that important physical evidence may not be readily visible or obvious. Incidents involving sexual assault will rarely have recognizable evidence at the scene of the occurrence. Establishments should “over protect” the area of the crime by safeguarding an area larger than they initially believe the crime scene to be.
- 6** Immediately identify and preserve financial transaction information for all parties involved or who was believed to be witnesses. This includes debit and credit transactions.
- 7** Involved parties or witnesses should be detained if possible. There are several techniques to accomplish this, from asking them to stay, to asking for and retaining their identifications and giving them to the responding police officers.
- 8** Establishments should know what parking facilities are commonly used by their patrons and provide this information to police investigators.

- 9** The table or area where the involved parties sat or stood, including their beverage glasses, utensils, and any other evidence should be preserved and left untouched inside of the establishment. This material should be identified to the responding officers immediately. Employees of establishments should be cognizant that in certain circumstances, tampering with physical evidence can be a crime.

- 10** Video of people inside the establishment during the evening the crime took place should be preserved for the police, even if it appears to have no probative value. Often these videos can be enhanced to reveal important evidence. To increase the usefulness of these images in establishments which are often dark, one area of the establishment, such as a hallway immediately outside of the restroom, should have enhanced lighting. This will make the image of people passing through that area more identifiable. It is recommended that properly working and maintained digital cameras be mounted in front of the establishment (both inside and outside), at all entry doors, and outside of the bathroom doors. These digital videos should be recorded, maintained, and provided to the responding police investigators.

11 Serious assaults should always be the subject of a uniform incident report being completed by a managerial level employee of the establishment who was present at the time of the incident. This manager needs not be a witness to the incident, but is responsible for interviewing the witnesses to the incident, and completing the report. The report should be maintained by the establishment for a minimum of the three-year statute of limitations for negligence law suits.

12 Obviously, these best practices apply to serious incidents that occur inside the establishment. However, important evidence may exist inside the establishment even though the crime occurred outside, and therefore there will be circumstances where these best practices apply to incidents that take place outside of the establishment. For example, if the circumstances of an assault are such that the involved parties were in the establishment before the assault, and the assault subsequently took place outside of the establishment, the evidence that the involved parties left behind must be safeguarded. This includes:

1. Financial records of their purchases
2. Video images of involved parties
3. Glasses and utensils used by the involved parties, which may yield identifying information such as fingerprints and DNA
4. Observations of witnesses which may aid in a subsequent ID of involved parties

Relevant State & Municipal Laws

Sec. 14-03 Begging; Obstructing Pedestrian or Vehicular Traffic

Sec. 14-105 Urban Camping and Improper Use of Public Places

Sec. 14-05 Prohibited Acts in City Owned Parking Facilities and Lots

Sec. 15-01 Prohibited Acts in a Park

Sec. 14-31 Assault and Battery; Fighting

56-05-3160 Unlawful Pedestrian on the Roadway

Sec. 14-91 Disorderly Conduct

Sec. 14-97 Loitering

Sec. 14-98 Drunkenness

Sec. 14-99 Possession or Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages on Public Property

Sec. 14-104 Unlawful Urination or Defecation

Resources & Contact Information

- **Columbia/Richland Dispatch** – 911 (Emergency) or (803) 252-2911 (Non-Emergency)
- **Transitions** – (803) 708-4861
- **United Way of the Midlands** – 211 or 1-800-892-9211
- **Mental Illness Recovery Center** – (803) 873-4661
- **Alcohol & Drug Abuse Council** – (803) 726-9300
- **Palmetto Health ACT Team** – (803) 733-5108
- **Cooperative Ministry** – (803) 799-3853
- **Project Hope** – (803) 251-3315
- **Columbia Free Medical Clinic** – (803) 765-1503
- **Columbia Housing Authority** – (803) 254-3886
- **Columbia Area Mental Health** – (803) 898-8888MIRCI
– (803) 786-1844
- **Sistercare** – (803) 765-9428
- **Veterans Affairs Regional Office** – 1-800-827-1000
- **Christ Central Ministries** – (803) 765-1998
- **USC Supportive Housing** – 343-3437
- **Alston Wilkes Society** – 587-0287
- **City Center Yellow Shirts** – (803) 309-7758



Facebook: @Columbiapd.net

Twitter: @ColumbiaPDSC

Instagram: @Columbiapdsc

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“Policing Excellence through Community Partnerships”

www.ColumbiaPD.net