

Ride-Along Policy

404.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The California Department of State Hospitals' (DSH) Ride-Along Program provides an opportunity to experience the law enforcement function first hand. This policy provides the requirements, approval process, and hours of operation for the Ride-Along Program.

404.1.1 ELIGIBILITY

The Ride-Along Program is offered to eligible persons who have submitted an application, are approved, and sign a non-disclosure form. Every attempt will be made to accommodate interested persons however any applicant may be disqualified without cause.

The following factors may be considered in disqualifying an applicant and are not limited to:

- Being under 15 years of age
- Prior criminal history
- Pending criminal action
- Pending litigation against DSH
- Denial by any supervisor

404.1.2 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

DSH upholds the confidentiality, privacy, and security of patient information which is protected by federal and state laws. A confidential and signed non-disclosure form will be required of all Ride- Along participants.

404.1.3 AVAILABILITY

The Ride-Along Program is available on most days of the week, with certain exceptions. Exceptions may be made as approved by the Hospital Police Chief.

404.2 PROCEDURE TO REQUEST A RIDE-ALONG

Generally, ride-along requests will be scheduled by the Watch Commander. The participant will complete a Ride-Along waiver form in addition to the non-disclosure form. Information requested will include a valid ID or California driver's license, address, and telephone number. If the participant is under 18 years of age, a parent/guardian must be present to complete the Ride- Along Forms.

The Watch Commander will schedule a date, based on availability, at least one week after the date of application. If approved, a copy will be forwarded to the Hospital Police Chief as soon as possible for his/her scheduling considerations.

If the ride-along is denied, a representative of DSH will contact the applicant and advise him/her of the denial.

404.2.1 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Once approved, Ride-Along participants will be allowed to ride no more than once every six months. Exceptions may be made by the Watch Commander.

An effort will be made to ensure that no more than one citizen will participate in a ride-along during any given time period. Normally, no more than one Ride-Along participant will be allowed in the officer's vehicle at a given time.

404.2.2 SUITABLE ATTIRE

Any person approved to ride along is required to be suitably dressed in collared shirt, blouse or jacket, slacks and shoes. Sandals, T-shirts, tank tops, shorts and ripped or torn blue jeans are not permitted. Hats and ball caps will not be worn in the hospital vehicle. Any person approved to ride along is also required to review, and comply with, additional dress code restrictions that may apply at each hospital. The Watch Commander or field supervisor may refuse a ride along to anyone not properly dressed.

404.2.3 PEACE OFFICER RIDE-ALONGS

Off-duty DSH/OPS employees or any other law enforcement agency will not be permitted to ride- along with on-duty officers without the expressed consent of the Watch Commander. In the event that such a ride-along is permitted, the off-duty employee shall not be considered on-duty and shall not represent themselves as a peace officer or participate in any law enforcement activity except as emergency circumstances may require.

404.2.4 RIDE-ALONG CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK

All ride-along applicants are subject to a criminal history check. The criminal history check may include a local records check and a Department of Justice Automated Criminal History System check through CLETS prior to their approval as a ride-along with a law enforcement officer (provided that the ride-along is not an employee of DSH (CLETS Policies, Practices and Procedures Manual § 1.6.1.F.2)).

404.3 OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITY

The officer shall advise the dispatcher that a Ride-Along participant is present in the vehicle before going into service. Officers shall consider the safety of the Ride-Along participant at all times. Officers should use sound discretion when encountering a potentially dangerous situation, and if feasible, let the participant out of the vehicle in a well-lighted place of safety. The dispatcher will be advised of the situation and as soon as practical have another hospital unit respond to pick up the participant at that location. The ride-along may be continued or terminated at this time.

The Watch Commander is responsible for maintaining and scheduling ride-alongs.

404.4 CONTROL OF RIDE-ALONG

The assigned employee shall maintain control over the Ride-Along participant at all times and instruct him/her in the conditions that necessarily limit their participation. These instructions should include:

- (a) The Ride-Along participant will follow the directions of the officer
- (b) The Ride-Along participant will not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, discussions with victims or suspects, or handling any hospital equipment
- (c) The Ride-Along participant may terminate the ride at any time and the officer may return the observer to the station if the Ride-Along participant interferes with the performance of the officer's duties
- (d) Ride-Along participants may be allowed to continue riding during the transportation and booking process provided this does not jeopardize their safety
- (e) Officers will not allow any Ride-Along Participants to be present in any situations that would jeopardize their safety or cause undue stress or embarrassment to a victim or any other citizen
- (f) Under no circumstance shall a civilian Ride Along participant be permitted to enter a private residence with an officer without the expressed consent of the resident or other authorized person