

FPCA CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE

A police chief occupies a position of unusual trust and leadership, and must be an individual of good character, applying high ideals in the daily practice of the profession. Therefore, it is incumbent that a professional Police Chief adheres to certain guidelines regarding personal and professional actions.

The Florida Police Chiefs Association recognizes that a Chief must embody the virtues of temperance, discipline, justice, wisdom, integrity, courage, compassion, and fortitude. To that end the Association establishes the following guidelines governing the conduct of its members.

Each member is accountable to the Association for any violations of this code. Police Chiefs, by nature of their position, are also responsible for unethical behavior by subordinates, where it can be demonstrated that the Chief should have known of the conduct and failed to take appropriate action.

PERSONAL CONDUCT

Members shall consistently act with integrity, recognizing their unique leadership and executive roles. Judgments concerning agency and personal conduct must be guided by rules of honesty and fair dealing.

Members shall conduct themselves in public and in private in a manner consistent with the dignity and responsibility of their office. Conduct should always be beyond reproach and above suspicion.

Members shall not solicit or accept gifts, or things of value from persons or organizations doing business with their agency for personal gain.

Members shall be prohibited from taking action in agency matters that involve financial gain for a member or his/her family.

Members shall not solicit political contributions from employees. Nor shall they appear in public in uniform at campaign or fund raising events in support of a political candidate running for office nor shall members individually endorse in their official capacity, a political candidate for office.

Members shall not use their official position to endorse commercial products for compensation. However, members may endorse books, publications, professional development, or educational services provided by nonprofit membership organizations and recognized educational institutions, but without compensation.

Members shall not participate in any conduct which reflects negatively or could in any manner bring disrepute to the Association or any of its members. A sustained internal investigation for conduct unbecoming or any other Department rule or policy violation, or an arrest resulting in anything other than an acquittal or dismissal may be grounds to deny membership or revoke membership.

Members or prospective members are required to report any conduct falling under these guidelines to the FPCA Executive Director within 45 days.

TREATMENT OF THE PUBLIC

Members shall ensure that justice and restraint are practiced by their agencies, and that all segments of the population receive equal protection under the law.

Members shall ensure that the agency does not discriminate in policy or practice based on sex, race, creed, sexual orientation or national origin.

Members shall provide appropriate policy and leadership to control the use of coercion and force by employees of the agency, limiting their use to the minimum required.

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LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS

Members shall ensure that their agency supports, protects, and defends the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida.

Members shall endeavor to support and cooperate with all levels of law enforcement, whether federal, state, or local, for the efficient and professional delivery of law enforcement services.

Members shall not take, or allow to be taken, any action or actions by any member of their agency which would interfere with the agency's commitment to the prevention and deterrence of crime.

Members shall not take, or allow to be taken, any action or actions by members of their agency which would intentionally interfere with the health, safety, or legal rights of any citizen or group of citizens.

Members shall endeavor to improve the quality of community life within their jurisdiction.

Members shall not take, or allow to be taken, any action or actions by members of their agency which would be intentionally detrimental to the protection of the public or the maintenance of public order.

Members shall provide appropriate policy and leadership to ensure that agency employees enforce the law and provide police services in a consistent, fair, and equitable manner, without regard to personal prejudice or influence.

MANAGEMENT

Members shall be accountable for the orderly management, administration, and operations of their agencies, in accordance with all applicable laws, policies, and procedures.

Members shall be accountable for the proper use of property and funds entrusted to their care.

Members shall provide appropriate policy and leadership to ensure that all employees are treated with dignity and respect in a fair and equitable manner.

Members shall neither tolerate nor condone any form of corruption in their agencies, or among their employees.

Members shall ensure that reports of official misconduct or corruption by public officials are properly investigated and follow current Florida Statutes §§ 112.532, 112.533, and 112.534, entitled Law Enforcement Officers and Correctional Officers Rights, along with relevant parts of Florida Statute Chapter 112.

Members shall ensure that their agencies recruit, hire, and promote persons in a manner consistent with the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.

Members shall ensure that all employees are provided appropriate training and supervision.

Members shall be responsible to stay abreast of modern police practices, procedures, and technology, and make diligent efforts to ensure their agencies have proper equipment, policies, and procedures to meet the needs of their community.

OPEN GOVERNMENT

Members shall ensure that agency records are maintained and available to public scrutiny as required by the Constitution and Laws of the State of Florida and the United States of America.

Members shall maintain an open and candid relationship with their communities through a commitment to

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informing the community and news media of events within the public domain handled by or involving their agency.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

In accordance with the Association Bylaws, the President shall appoint a Professional Standards Committee Chairman. If possible, members of the committee should be representative of the different geographic regions of the state as well as various sized agencies. The Professional Standards Committee functions as an investigative body, which initiates an investigation at the direction of the Board of Directors and reports its findings to the Board of Directors. In complaints against prospective applicants for membership or active Association members, the Professional Standards Committee functions as a fact-finding body, which based on the action of the employing agency and/or Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, reports its findings, to the Board of Directors.

RECEIPT OF COMPLAINTS

Complaints of misconduct, arrest, or of agency sustained policy violations as the result of an internal investigation, against any current or prospective Association member may be submitted by any person, group of persons, or organization to any member of the Association. Any member receiving such a complaint shall forward it to the Executive Director.

Upon receipt of a complaint against any Association member, the Executive Director or designee shall notify the member of the complaint in writing, provide a copy of all complaint materials received, and provide the member against whom a complaint was filed the opportunity to submit a written response within 30 days of receipt of the notice. Upon receipt of a self-disclosure by an Association member, the Executive Director or designee shall provide the self-disclosing member the opportunity to submit a written response within 30 days of receipt of the notice. If a CJSTC Internal Investigation Report (CJSTC Form 78) was completed, a copy, if applicable, should be provided to the FPCA Executive Director. The complaint, CJSTC Internal Investigation Report, and written response, if any, will be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration at the next regularly scheduled or specially set board meeting. The Board, by majority vote, may determine if a violation of Association rule or Code of Conduct occurred or may vote to send the matter to the Professional Standards Committee for further factual development. Should the Board determine it has sufficient information from which to make a decision, it may vote to determine if a violation of Association rule or Code of Ethics was violated and to impose non-disciplinary guidance or discipline.

Ordinarily, the Association does not accept complaints or referrals from the public because there are more appropriate agencies or entities to investigate complaints against FPCA members for violations of law, rule, regulation, or policy. However, the Board of Directors may review all complaints received and decide if the complaint warrants further investigation by the Association. To the extent further investigation is warranted to determine if a violation of Association rule or the Code of Ethics occurred, the Professional Standards Committee may be directed to review or investigate a complaint. Under no circumstances will the Association investigate allegations of law, rule, regulation, or policy other than alleged violations of this Code or Association rules. In the case of an active Association member, the Board of Directors may refer a complaint to the member's employing agency upon a majority vote of the Board. No review or referral shall commence without the consent of the Board of Directors.

INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

The Professional Standards Committee shall be a fact-finding body. The Committee, when conducting an investigation, may, but is not required to, interview witnesses, review documents, and engage in other investigative activity to reach a determination and recommendation. All investigations shall be completed in an expeditious manner, and reports should be submitted to the Executive Director for presentation to the Board of Directors within three (3) months. Extensions may be granted by the Board. Any findings or recommendations by the Professional Standards Committee shall be determined by the majority vote of the Committee before being submitted for consideration.

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The Professional Standards Committee shall report their findings to the Board of Directors, as follows:

- **UNFOUNDED** - The alleged act did not occur, and no other violations occurred;
- **EXONERATED** - The alleged act occurred, but was not a violation;
- **NOT-SUSTAINED** - The alleged act cannot be proven or disproved;
- **SUSTAINED** - The allegation is true, or other violations were discovered during the investigation.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Discipline will be the responsibility of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will convene either physically, virtually, or telephonically within thirty (30) days of submission of a Professional Standards Committee report. The Board will review the Professional Standards Committee report and recommendations, and by majority vote determine if guidance or disciplinary action is necessary. Guidance may be in the form of a non-disciplinary letter. If disciplinary action is necessary, the Board may take one or more of the following actions (determined by majority vote):

- Reprimand;
- Probation;
- Letter of Censure;
- Suspension of membership from the Association;
- Termination of Membership.

OPEN RECORDS

All investigative materials shall be confidential until such time as the Board of Directors makes its determination or the employing agency has completed its investigation or (forty-five) 45 days has passed from the initiation of the investigation. Thereafter, all materials shall be open to public scrutiny.

I have read and understand the above FPCA Code of Ethics and do hereby agree to comply with the high standards of professional ethics contained therein to include reporting any violations to the Professional Standards Chair and FPCA Executive Director

Name (please print) _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Agency _____

This document is now in effect for all FPCA members as of June 2025. New members will acknowledge electronically.

If not completed electronically, please complete, sign, and return to FPCA Headquarters for our records.

Mailing address:

FPCA, P.O. Box 14038, Tallahassee, FL 32317-4038.