

	Houston Independent School District Police Department Directives	DIRECTIVE:
		EFFECTIVE DATE: June 2, 2022
	SUBJECT: Ride Along Program	REVISED DATE: January 8, 2023

PURPOSE

The HISD Police Ride Along Program shall provide citizens, civilians, and law enforcement personnel opportunities to accompany HISD police officers on duty. This directive applies to all employees.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Only the Chief of Police or designee may approve participants in the Ride-Along Program. Guest participation in the Ride-Along Program depends on the availability of qualified host officers. If host officer participation is limited, requests shall be prioritized in the following order:

- a) Individuals with a mission-specific need.
- b) Employees who need the experience to perform their job function better (e.g., emergency communications personnel).
- c) Criminal justice students and potential police recruits.
- d) Citizens or volunteers involved with criminal justice activities and members of the media.
- e) All other requests.

CITIZEN ATTIRE

Comfortable business attire is required (neckties are not recommended). No shorts, jeans, tank tops, beach clothing, or similar attire are allowed.

CITIZEN OBSERVER CARD

Each citizen ride-along guest shall be issued a Citizen Observer card. The card shall be worn by each guest and visible to the front.

The host officer is responsible for the following:

- a) Obtaining a Citizen Observer card for the guest before the ride.
- b) Returning the card to the host captain after the ride is completed.
- c) A card that is lost or damaged during the ride.

Criminal History Check

All persons requesting to participate in the Ride-Along Program as guests shall be checked through NCIC, TCIC, SETCIC, and local records for criminal and warrant history. Citizens 16 years of age shall also be checked to determine if a law enforcement agency has handled them.

Persons having a final conviction of a Class B misdemeanor or higher offense shall not be allowed to participate in the program. Any person with outstanding warrants shall be handled as required by law.

IMPLIED POLICE AUTHORITY

Unless normally granted by federal or state laws, no police powers, implied or real, shall be given to civilians or citizens.

RIDE-ALONG ORIGINATIONS

A ride-along shall originate and end at the host officer's police station. No other location shall be accepted unless approved by the Chief of Police.

RELEASE AND INDEMNIFICATION FORM RIDE-ALONG FORM

Citizens and off-duty civilians participating in the Ride-Along Program shall complete the *HISD Authorization to Participate in the Ride-Along Program and Release of Liability form (liability form)*. Only HISD police officers and on-duty civilians are exempt from filling out this form. Once approved, this form shall be valid only for the dates specified on the form.

The *guest shall complete the liability form* and notarize it at least 48 hours before the scheduled ride-along. After the form has been notarized, the *Police Department Information Section* of the form shall be completed and signed by the shift sergeant.

If the participant is less than 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian must also participate in the ride-along. The parent or legal guardian must complete both:

- a) The parent or guardian portion of the guest's *liability form*.
- b) A separate *liability form* for themselves, signed, notarized, and authorized as stated above.

These parents or guardians shall be under all requirements and restrictions as if they were participating in the program alone.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LIABILITY FORM

The *liability form* shall be distributed in the following manner:

- a) The original form shall be maintained by the division hosting the ride.
- b) A copy of the completed form shall be provided to the guest.

WEAPONS AND HANDGUN LICENSES

All civilians and citizens are prohibited from carrying any weapon or firearm while participating in the Ride-Along Program, even if they hold a concealed handgun license,

HOST OFFICERS

Officer participation in the Ride-Along Program is voluntary. Officers must have at least two years of seniority to participate in the program as hosts. Officers with a ride-along guest on board shall notify the dispatcher they are a host unit when they sign on duty.

Host officers shall not volunteer for an overtime assignment unless an emergency exists. Host officers shall not exchange guests during their shifts. Guests shall remain with their host officer for the ride-along assignment.

REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICERS FROM OTHER AGENCIES

The approval of the Patrol Commander is required for officers from other agencies to participate in the Ride-Along Program. Guests who are certified, full-time police officers from other agencies shall complete the *liability form*. Such participants shall be considered citizens and are subject to the guidelines and restrictions outlined in this directive.

It is requested that guest police officers from other agencies wear their official uniforms, but it is not mandatory. These officers shall retain all their powers and privileges as police officers unless prohibited by state or federal law. If these officers are prohibited from carrying a weapon by state or federal law or do not wish to carry a weapon, they shall not wear their uniform during the ride-along.

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE RESTRICTIONS

Civilian employees directed to participate in the Ride-Along Program for the department's benefit (e.g., improving job performance) shall be considered on duty and on a temporary assignment.

Civilian employees who volunteer to participate in the Ride-Along Program shall be considered off-duty and shall not be compensated or entitled to workers' compensation benefits for the ride-along. Off-duty civilians shall not wear their assigned uniform but shall dress according to the "Citizen Attire" of this directive.

RIDE-ALONG DUTIES AND RESTRICTIONS

Civilian and citizen ride-along participants must obey the lawful orders of police officers and may be denied access to crime scenes. Civilian and citizen ride-along participants are subject to the following duties and restrictions. Ride-along guests may be used to fulfill various duties the host officer determines. These duties may include:

- a) Traffic or crowd control (if the ride-along participant is in uniform).
- b) Radio operation.

- c) Motorist assistance.
- d) Gathering information or completing routine paperwork that will not be used in court action.
- e) Protection of a crime scene (if the ride-along participant is uniform).
- f) Acting as an interpreter.
- g) Being listed as a witness to an offense.

Unless an unavoidable emergency exists, civilian and citizen ride-along guests shall not be allowed to:

- a) Conduct criminal or witness interrogations or interviews.
- b) Participate in an arrest or be left in charge of a prisoner.
- c) Accompany an officer inside any structure where a suspect may still be hiding.
- d) Leave the police vehicle unless otherwise directed by an officer.
- e) Assist at a crime scene except as specifically directed by an officer.
- f) Sign any report (e.g., arrest, incident, crash), traffic citation, or other legal document.
- g) Provide cover or backup.

Officers shall deny ride-along participants access to scenes or situations inappropriate for their age (e.g., bar raids and scenes of violent acts).

HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS WITH CIVILIAN OR CITIZEN RIDE-ALONG

The host officer shall leave a civilian or citizen guest at the nearest police facility in a high-risk call. If the incident warrants an immediate response, the host officer shall leave the guest at the first convenient and safe location. The host officer shall promptly notify the dispatcher if the guest is released. The dispatcher shall immediately assign a unit to retrieve and transport the guest to the host officer's police station. After the incident has ended, the host officer and the guest can resume the ride-along.

If a high-risk situation is unavoidable, the guest shall remain in the police vehicle until police personnel advises the situation is safe. The host officer shall make every effort to ensure the safety of the ride-along participant.

If a host unit initiates a pursuit, the dispatcher shall immediately assign a replacement unit. When that unit arrives, the host unit shall turn off its emergency equipment and return to a safe and prudent position. The host unit shall not assume the position of the secondary unit even if a secondary unit is unavailable

MEDIA GUEST REQUIREMENTS

Authorization for media members to participate in any aspect of the Ride-Along Program may be granted by only the Chief of Police and must be coordinated through the office of the Chief Engagement Officer.

Media members shall complete the Liability and Media Notification forms to participate in the Ride-Along Program.

Persons with credentials identifying as media members can utilize audio/visual recording devices during any authorized ride-along.

Approved By



Pedro Lopez Jr., Chief of Police