



LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORING PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Notice: June 10, 2025

Learning for Life, Exploring, and Scouting America are updating the standard regarding Ride-Alongs for all programs, including but not limited to Law Enforcement Exploring. When youth under 18 years of age participate in Ride-Alongs, all parties involved must adhere to all current Safeguarding Youth policies and guidelines (formerly known as Youth Protection) for all participants. This includes ensuring that at least two registered adult leaders, each 21 years of age or older and trained in Safeguarding Youth or Youth Protection, are present for the Ride-Along. If the Ride-Along includes a female youth participant, at least one of the registered adult leaders participating in the Ride-Along must also be female..

This standard is mandatory and takes effect on June 30, 2025; however, it should be implemented as soon as possible. While we acknowledge that this change may pose challenges in certain Ride-Along scenarios, it must be strictly enforced to guarantee the safety of both our youth participants and adult leaders.

We will update other documents that refer to Ride-Alongs soon. In the meantime, please ensure that your units participating in Ride-Alongs are notified about the standard and its effective date. Additionally, remind the Participating Organization to verify that all adults, including young adult participants (aged 18-20), are current with their Youth Protection Training or promptly complete the Safeguarding Youth training. You may access the training at: <https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/>

If you have any questions concerning this update, please reach out to your local council.



LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORING PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide important information concerning program development, policy and procedures for Law Enforcement Explorer Posts. These guidelines also contain links for downloading various program forms.

1.1 Law Enforcement Exploring

The purpose of Law Enforcement Exploring is to provide young adults who may be interested in a career in law enforcement with a comprehensive program of training, competition, service and practical experiences. Character development, physical fitness, good citizenship and patriotism are integral components of the overall program. Through their involvement in the program, Explorers develop an awareness of the purpose, mission and objectives of law enforcement agencies. The support of the chief executive officer of the agency, along with a dedicated cadre of law enforcement professionals and adult volunteers who provide adult leadership, is essential to the success of any Post. Although Exploring depends on volunteer leadership, professional Exploring/Learning for Life executives are available to provide assistance and support.

1.2 Program Objectives

- To provide a program of training that educates young adults on the purpose, mission and objectives of law enforcement agencies.
- To provide an opportunity for service, practical experiences, competition and recreation.
- To help prepare Explorers become better citizens and community members through character development, physical fitness, good citizenship and patriotism.

Several approaches are used to achieve the objectives of Law Enforcement Exploring. One of these is regular meetings at which representatives of various law enforcement agencies (federal, state, county, and local) provide Explorers with training and practical, hands-on, activities.

Another approach is the Ride-Along program. At the discretion and direction of the agency, Explorers can observe firsthand patrol operations and community policing. Law Enforcement Exploring has defined criteria within this document that will serve as a guide to developing agency policy and standard operating procedures for the Ride-Along program. These criteria serve to maintain the effectiveness of the field officer, while at the same time provide for the safety of the Explorer.

Ideally, the program for a Law Enforcement Explorer Post should include a combination of educational/training, practical, competitive and recreational activities. It is through such activities that Explorers are able to broaden their understanding and knowledge of the law enforcement profession in general and learn the challenges and rewards of providing police services in their own community.

Many departments use Law Enforcement Explorers to assist in such areas as crime prevention, traffic/crowd control, recordkeeping, and telecommunications. These forms of assistance are always conducted under the supervision of law enforcement officers and serve to demonstrate that Explorers can be beneficial to the agency and the community.

A well-managed Law Enforcement Explorer Post can have a positive influence on the department and the community through demonstration of the many valuable contributions that can be offered by Explorers. Exploring provides the law enforcement profession an opportunity to further an investment in its own future through constructive relationships with young adults contemplating a career in the field of criminal justice.

The adult and youth leadership of new Posts are encouraged to contact established Law Enforcement Explorer Posts in the area for guidance and assistance in developing their own Post. Most progressive Law Enforcement Explorer Posts will freely offer advice and share program information with new Posts. Many Law Enforcement Explorer Posts over the years have joined together to form local, regional and state [Law Enforcement Explorer Associations](#) in an effort to offer mutual assistance, exchange program ideas, share training opportunities, engage in competitive and

recreational events, and conduct other activities for the betterment of Law Enforcement Exploring. These associations, known by many different names, have as their common purpose the promotion of Law Enforcement Exploring or other related activities. It is important to note that Law Enforcement Exploring recognizes only those associations that have been certified by the national office as operating in accordance with established policy and procedure.

2.0 PROGRAM

2.1 Eligibility Requirements

Law Enforcement Exploring is open to young adults ages 14, and graduated from the eighth grade, through 20, or age 15 through 20 years.

Due to the sensitive nature of law enforcement operations, most agencies establish additional eligibility standards for prospective Explorers. Additionally, it is a fact that the ability of a Post to maintain the support of the agency, and to be effective, is dependent upon attracting well-qualified members. These standards often include, but are not limited to:

- As a prerequisite for joining a hold harmless and release form for the agency and Learning for Life must be executed by the parents or legal guardian and/or the Explorer if of legal age to sign such a form.
- Must not have a prior conviction for a criminal offense or serious traffic offense.
- Must have and maintain a minimum of a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) in high school or college to remain in the Post.
- Must complete a basic training course, to include Youth Protection: Personal Safety Awareness training, and a probationary period.
- Must undergo a thorough background review to assess character and integrity that will include interviews with neighbors, teachers and employers.
- Must keep body weight in proportion to height and maintain a high level of physical fitness.

2.2 Training

Law Enforcement Exploring is intended to provide young adults with an educational and practical orientation into the law enforcement profession. In order for Explorers to have the type of quality experience that will permit them to better understand and appreciate the law enforcement profession, and to facilitate their acceptance by departmental personnel, it is essential they undergo some form of a basic training program followed by periodic in-service training sessions. In many instances, school districts and colleges will grant academic credit for completion of a comprehensive basic training course. It is suggested that representatives from Law Enforcement Explorer Posts with excellent training curricula be contacted for ideas on development of a training program for a new Post. Also, the primary training officer for the agency should be consulted for suggestions and assistance with developing a basic training and in-service curriculum.

Recognizing that many law enforcement agencies may not have the individual resources to conduct their own training programs, some agencies will join forces to conduct a multi-city or regional basic training curriculum for Explorers on a periodic basis. In developing training resources, each agency should consider the assistance available from outside agencies as well as their own. Many organizations (in particular federal law enforcement agencies) are willing to support requests for specialized training or other forms of assistance.

Typical Law Enforcement Explorer basic training curriculums include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- A. The history of law enforcement
- B. Patrol procedures
- C. Criminal Law
- D. Juvenile Law
- E. Arrest, Search & Seizure

- F. Report Writing
- G. Crisis Intervention
- H. Ethics
- I. Self-Defense
- J. Traffic control/Crowd Control
- K. Accident investigation
- L. Traffic Stops – Misdemeanor and Felony
- M. Basic first aid & CPR
- N. Radio communication procedures
- O. Crime prevention techniques
- P. Crime scene search techniques
- Q. Community/public relations
- R. Dangerous Drugs and Narcotics
- S. Criminology

2.3 Scope of Activities

Law Enforcement Explorers, through completion of a basic training curriculum, periodic in-service training courses, and practical experiences, often can be involved with more complex and challenging activities within the agency. However, each agency, in order to provide for a well-managed program and effective risk management, should have written policy and standard operating procedures to govern their Explorer program. The policy and standard operating procedures should include limitations and prohibitions for Explorer involvement in law enforcement and related activities, as dictated by the participating agency as well as adherence to all applicable Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring policies. Such policies would include the Learning for Life “[Safety First Guidelines](#)” that contain certain provisions applicable to Law Enforcement Explorer Posts as well as limitations and/or restrictions on various recreational and other activities. The chief executive officer of the agency should approve the agency’s Law Enforcement Exploring program policy and standard operating procedures.

In developing written policy and standard operating procedures, each agency should strive to permit Explorers to engage in as many practical activities as possible so as to make their experience in the program meaningful, while at the same imposing limitations and prohibitions that will minimize or avoid their exposure to high-risk situations. High-risk situations would include felony-in-progress calls, high-speed pursuits and certain crisis intervention matters. Keeping in mind potential legal issues with regard to federal and state statutes regulating criminal law and procedure, as well as privacy and confidentiality concerns, Explorers should not be permitted to participate in interviews, interrogations, the handling or processing of evidence, or the intake or transfer of persons taken into custody. Additionally, to the extent possible, Explorers should not be placed in situations where they may be called as a witness in a criminal or civil proceeding.

Law enforcement patrol operations and calls for service often involve spontaneous situations that require an aggressive and risk inherent response; or, just as likely, a seemingly mundane patrol procedure or call for service escalates into a situation requiring the same type of response.

Typical types of patrol operations, calls for services and other law enforcement assistance that trained Law Enforcement Explorers can provide with relatively minimal risk include, but are not limited to:

- A. Crime prevention services.
- B. Citizen tours of police facilities.
- C. Perimeter security checks.
- D. Bicycle safety inspections.
- E. Disabled motorist assists.
- F. Complaint reception.
- G. Child identification fingerprinting for parents/legal guardian.
- H. Agency information booth at career fairs and community events.
- I. Agency telecommunications/dispatch center assistance.
- J. Assistance with organized searches for lost/missing persons.

- K. Traffic/crowd control at parades, festivals and other community events.

There are numerous police operations and procedures that must not intentionally involve Law Enforcement Explorers due to the considerable potential for legal complications or for an aggressive and risk inherent response. The law enforcement officer that is responsible for the Explorer must use his/her best professional judgment with respect to the safety and security of the Explorer and should never intentionally place an Explorer in a high risk or legally precarious situation. Such operations and procedures include, but are not limited to:

- A. Arrests.
- B. Felony in-progress calls.
- C. Breathalyzer/sobriety tests.
- D. Custodial interviews or interrogations.
- E. Traffic or foot pursuits.
- F. Searches & seizures (to include direct Explorer involvement in a routine stop and frisk).
- G. Surveillances.
- H. Processing evidence or involved in the chain of custody of same.
- I. Field testing of narcotics or other controlled substances if such test is part of a criminal investigation.
- J. Handling, intake or transfer of persons taken into custody.

2.4 Uniform

In addition to learning about a career in law enforcement, one of the major attractions to an Explorer Post for young people is the opportunity to wear a uniform that provides them identity with the agency and the respect of their peers and community. Normally, the privilege of wearing the uniform of the Post is not granted until the basic training program has been completed, so the uniform also serves as a badge of honor that demonstrates the Explorer has made a commitment to the program and successfully passed the training course. Each department decides the type of uniform (or uniforms as some Posts have several types: dress, duty, training, etc.) Explorers are allowed to wear. In some cases the uniform(s) are provided to the Explorer by the agency, while other agencies require Explorers to purchase their own uniforms.

As a means of avoiding confusion on the part of the general public, it is recommended that the type of uniform(s) approved for Explorers be distinguishable (in terms of color and/or design) from the uniform of the law enforcement officers of the department. It is also recommended the uniform include a Law Enforcement Explorer patch, or a modification of the agency patch that contains the word "Explorer," or some other accoutrement that identifies the individual wearing the uniform as an Explorer. The written policy and standard operating procedures for the agency should set clear rules for how and when the uniform(s) is worn and, just as importantly, when it cannot be worn or displayed.

2.5 Equipment

The agency should include in its written policy and standard operating procedures the type of equipment and accessories that Explorers are permitted to carry or use while they are involved in Post activities; both while in uniform or otherwise. Generally speaking, Explorers should be restricted to carrying or using equipment or accessories that are functional and support their involvement with the Post and agency. Such equipment and accessories would include, but are not limited to, notebook, pen, non-tactical flashlight, and whistle. It is recommended that Explorers wear a high visibility reflective vest or other reflective item of clothing when assisting with traffic control functions. The agency may determine that it is permissible for Explorers to carry handcuffs as they can be considered a valuable aid to a law enforcement officer in the event, during a spontaneous situation, an additional set of handcuffs is needed (i.e. a second person taken into custody or a large framed individual requiring two sets of handcuffs). It is recommended that if the agency permits handcuffs to be carried that Explorers do so only while in uniform and the handcuffs must be in a closed carrying case (cuffs not visible until the flap of the case is opened) attached to the uniform belt.

Explorers are not permitted to carry offensive or defensive weapons to include firearms, tasers, nightsticks, batons (collapsible or otherwise), saps or sap gloves, tactical flashlights (i.e. large metal or other heavy duty material flashlights that may be used as a nightstick or baton), knives with blades in excess of four inches, chemical repellents or electrical shock devices. It is to be noted that Explorers may use firearms during approved training programs or competitive events while under the direct supervision of a certified firearms instructor.

2.6 Covert Activities Policy

Explorers are prohibited from directly or indirectly engaging in covert operations (i.e., serving in an undercover capacity) and should not be used as confidential informants or sources. These activities are fraught with potential legal complications and are risk inherent for the agency and the Explorer. Further, they are inconsistent with the career education and orientation objectives of Law Enforcement Exploring. Any agency electing to utilize Explorers as private citizens in covert operations does so with the clear understanding that its unit of government is solely responsible for any civil damages and legal or medical complications that might arise from such an activity.

2.7 Driving Policy

Law Enforcement Explorers (whether or not in uniform) are not permitted to drive marked police vehicles or other motorized police conveyances. The exception to this policy is when Explorers are participating in an authorized training program or competition and are under the direct, onsite, supervision of a law enforcement officer.

2.8 Blood borne Pathogens Policy

Learning for Life has adopted the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for minimizing exposure to Blood borne Pathogens (29 CFR Section 1910.1030) as it relates to adult and youth participants, volunteers and participating agencies. The following guidance is for participants who may be exposed to blood and body fluids during the course of their Learning for Life or Exploring program activities. Examples of where there may be a higher probability of coming into contact with blood and body fluids would include participants of Posts with specialties in medicine, fire or rescue, law enforcement, and volunteer first-aid providers at organized community events or group activities.

It is to be noted that OSHA standards and regulations apply only to employees in jobs that involve "occupational exposure" to blood borne pathogens. The rules do not apply to volunteer participants of Posts or other organizations. However, as a precautionary measure, Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring recommends the following for Posts that engage in activities that may inadvertently result in participants being exposed to blood or body fluids.

- A. A qualified representative of the participating agency should brief all adult and youth participants on blood borne pathogens and make them aware of the possible inadvertent exposure to blood or body fluids during the course of their activities with the Post.
- B. As a precautionary measure, adult and youth participants should be advised to obtain a Hepatitis B vaccination. The cost of the vaccination must be paid by the adult or youth participant. Learning for Life and the participating agency are not required to underwrite the cost of the vaccination. In some cases, the participating agency may be able to arrange for the Hepatitis B Vaccination to be administered at a reduced rate or free of charge.
- C. Adult or youth participants who decline the vaccination for whatever reason must sign a Hepatitis B Vaccine Declination form. Declination forms for participants must be maintained by the participating agency for a minimum of five years.
- D. Learning for Life also recommends all participants be advised of the following:
 - Treat all blood as if it were contaminated with blood borne viruses.
 - Do not use bare hands to stop bleeding; always use a protective barrier.
 - Always wash exposed skin areas with hot water and soap immediately after treating an injured person.

E. The following items are to be included in all first aid kits and used when rendering first aid to those in need:

- Latex or vinyl gloves, to be used when stopping bleeding or dressing wounds.
- A mouth-barrier device, for rendering rescue breathing or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Plastic goggles or other eye protection, to prevent an injured person's blood from getting into rescuer's eyes in the event of serious arterial bleeding.
- Antiseptic, for use in sterilizing or cleaning exposed skin areas, particularly if no soap or water is available.

2.9 Media Relations Policy

Law Enforcement Exploring is committed to providing accurate information to the news media regarding its purpose, objectives, and activities. The intent of this policy is to prevent the dissemination of inaccurate or misrepresented information about Law Enforcement Exploring through effective and coordinated communications with the media. Post Advisors and/or Explorers occasionally may be asked to respond to media inquiries to include requests for comments, interviews or photo/video coverage pertaining to their respective Law Enforcement Explorer Post. All news media inquiries relating to Law Enforcement Exploring with respect to the activities of a particular Post should be coordinated with the designated public information officer for the participating law enforcement agency to ensure adherence to department protocol for interaction with the media. Additionally, the local Learning for Life representative, who can provide assistance as needed to the public information officer, should be informed of any media inquiries. In some instances, particularly where media coverage is extensive or may generate substantial attention, the public information officer is encouraged to coordinate with the national director for Law Enforcement Exploring. Any news media inquiry regarding Law Enforcement Exploring in general, or its programs, policies and procedures must be referred to the national director for Law Enforcement Exploring.

2.10 Training, Practical Exercises and Simulated Scenarios Policy

Law Enforcement Exploring is a career orientation program and as such it is expected that participating agencies and other associated organizations would provide Explorers with various types of law enforcement training, to include practical exercises and simulated scenarios. It is the position of Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring that all training for Explorers have a reasonable career related or educational learning objective and that it is conducted in a properly supervised and safe environment. All training, practical exercises and simulated scenarios always should be presented in a manner that reinforces the rule of law, principals of democracy and a respect for cultural, religious, ethnic and lifestyle diversity.

2.11 Use of Non-Lethal Training Firearms Policy

The use of Non-Lethal Training Firearms (NLTF) by Law Enforcement Explorers in a controlled and supervised environment is recognized as having a legitimate training purpose in teaching situational awareness, defensive procedures, strategic practices and judgmental decision making.

NLTF are described as replicas of firearms that are designed to look and feel authentic and may discharge a non-lethal laser beam or solid projectile (i.e., paintball or plastic pellet such as used in the popular Airsoft simulated firearms). NLTF that discharge metal projectiles are prohibited. The use of simulated non-lethal hand-grenades, distraction devices (commonly called flashbangs), M203 style launchers (i.e. RPG's LAW's AT4's, etc.), sniper rifles, fully automatic firearms, Claymore or similar type mines or other non-handheld firearm devices are strictly prohibited. Additionally, NLTF that have been altered (often referred to as "Hop Up") to increase the velocity of the projectile are prohibited.

The use of NLTF is authorized for training only and must be in conformance to Section 2.10 (Training, Practical Exercises and Simulated Scenarios Policy) of these guidelines. NLTF may not, under any circumstances, be used for recreational activities where there is no clear learning objective(s), close

supervision or justifiable training purpose.

NLTF may only be used while under the supervision of specially trained law enforcement officers designated by his or her agency as a firearms instructor, or by NRA law enforcement and/or NLTF certified instructors or range safety officers. Law Enforcement Explorers under the age of 18 must provide to the Post Advisor written permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate in NLTF practical exercises.

The following safety standards and protocol are, as indicated, mandatory or recommended for use of NLTF that discharge paintballs or plastic projectiles.

- a) Safety Briefing: A certified law enforcement firearms instructor and/or range safety officer must conduct a safety and rules of engagement briefing for all participants prior to the initiation of the training activity. At a minimum, the briefing will include the elements outlined in the NLTF Safety Briefing Requirements located in the Appendix section of these guidelines.
- b) Site Selection/Security: Prior to the commencement of any NLTF exercise, the training area must be inspected for any hazards (i.e., trip/fall risks, broken glass, sharp objects, etc.) that may cause injuries to participants. Static vehicles, if used in the training exercise, must be searched for live weapons and other prohibited items.
- c) Prohibited Items: Real fire weapons and/or live ammunition, impact devices, knives, chemical repellents and electrical shock devices are prohibited in the training area.
- d) Participant Inspection: All participants, instructors, role players, and monitors must enter and exit the training area via a single checkpoint where each individual will be inspected by a certified instructor or range safety officer for live ammunition or other prohibited items. No one may enter or re-enter the training area without undergoing a thorough inspection. As an added precaution, the loading of non-lethal ammunition into NLTF and magazines must be conducted by certified law enforcement instructor or range safety officer.
- e) Supervision: The training exercise will closely be monitored by a certified law enforcement instructor or range safety officer, as well as designated assistants and role players, to ensure the safety of all participants and adherence to the learning objectives for the activity.
- f) Clothing: All participants must be attired in long sleeve shirts and long pants, preferably made of thick material or layered. All exposed skin must be covered by clothing or other protective items.
- g) Chest Protection: All participants must wear a chest protector or protective vest.
- h) Eye Protection: Proper eye protection must be worn by all participants at all times in the training area and is defined as full-sealing industry standard goggles, meaning no gaps between the face and lens/frame, with a lens rating of ANSI Z87.1-2003 (also known as Z87.1+). Shooting glasses that are not full-sealing, shop glasses, or regular sun glasses do not provide adequate protection and are prohibited.
- i) Face Protection: Full face masks capable of defeating non-lethal projectiles with a velocity of up to 400fps must be worn by all participants in the training area. As an added measure of protection and to help prevent whelping of the skins, Balaclavas are recommended for use at all times, but required for indoor training events, or for outdoor activities where the activity will be conducted in close quarters and participants will be in close proximity to one another.
- j) Neck Protection: The use of a neck protector is required for all participants.
- k) Hand Protection: The use of protective gloves is required for all participants.
- l) Groin Protection: The use of a groin protector is required for all participants.
- m) Footwear: The use of law enforcement/military boots is recommended for all participants; especially for activities that will be conducted in outdoor, wooded or uneven terrain.
- n) Knee/Elbow Pads: The use of knee and elbow pads is recommended for all participants.
- o) Weapon Velocity: Semi-automatic gas, electric or spring pistols are restricted to a maximum velocity of 400fps or 1.13J, although a lesser velocity is recommended.
- p) No Fire Zones: A no fire zone, or zones, will clearly be established by the instructor or range safety officer as areas for players to take a break, adjust their safety equipment or cease participation in the training exercise for whatever reason. Participants will not engage another participant retreating to a no fire zone or once inside the no fire zone. All NLTF must properly be cleared (ammunition removed with no projectile in the chamber) and holstered prior to

entering a no fire zone.

- q) Distinguishable Marking for Simulated Firearms: It is highly recommended that all NLTF have a highly visible permanent marking (i.e. bright orange, red or blue) on the muzzle tip and/or grip to clearly distinguish them from actual firearms.

2.12 Use of Oleoresin Capsicum (Pepper Spray) in Training Policy

As set forth in Section 2.5 of these Guidelines, Law Enforcement Explorers are prohibited from carrying or using all forms of chemical repellents; however, the possibility exists that Explorers inadvertently may be exposed to Oleoresin Capsicum (commonly known as OC or Pepper Spray) during a Ride-Along, crowd control detail or other activity. It is understood that an Explorer who has been exposed to OC during a controlled training exercise is less likely to panic, overact or take action that may cause harm or further complicate a situation while engaged in an authorized Law Enforcement Exploring activity with the participating agency.

Therefore, with the permission of the participating agency, Law Enforcement Explorers are permitted to volunteer, with certain restrictions, to be exposed to OC for familiarization purposes in a controlled training exercise. Such restrictions include, but are not limited to, training must be conducted under the direct supervision of a qualified instructor (as determined by the participating agency) who is, at a minimum, familiar with the chemical properties of OC as well as its effects, its proper use in law enforcement operations, and first aid and decontamination procedures for exposure. Additionally, in advance of exposure to OC the instructor will provide all participants a briefing on the effects of exposure to OC, safety procedures for the training exercise, and first aid and decontamination protocols. Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring prohibits the intentional spraying of OC directly into the eyes, nose, ears or face of participants. Finally, all Law Enforcement Explorers are required to have medical clearance for exposure to Oleoresin Capsicum in a manner determined by the participating agency, and those under the age of 18 must also provide to the Post Advisor written permission from a parent or legal guardian to volunteer to be exposed to OC.

It is to be noted this policy applies only to OC. Law Enforcement Explorers are prohibited from being intentionally exposed to CS gas (chemically known as 2-chlorobenzalmalonitrile, and commonly known as tear gas) in training exercises or other program activities.

3.0 RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM

3.1 Purpose

- To provide qualified Law Enforcement Explorers the opportunity to observe and gain practical experience with regard to the methods and techniques used in patrol operations and related police services. To supplement basic and in-service classroom training in patrol operations and related police services.
- To provide Explorers with a greater appreciation for the challenges and benefits of patrol operations and a better understanding of the importance of law enforcement services within the community.

3.2 Ride-Along Policy and Standard Operating Procedures

Each agency that seeks certification for its Ride-Along program must include in its policy and standard operating procedures for Explorers the protocol for spontaneous situations that require an aggressive and risk inherent response on the part of the law enforcement officer, and address the parameters set forth in Section 3-7 of this document.

3.3 Prerequisite Training for Ride-Along

Training for Explorers participating in a Ride-Along program should, at a minimum, include completion of the agency's basic training curriculum for Explorers, along with methods and techniques used in patrol operations and related police services, traffic control, telecommunications procedures, patrol vehicle/conveyance systems and equipment familiarization, policy and standard operating procedures

for Explorers, and spontaneous emergency protocols. Explorers must also undergo Youth Protection: Personal Safety Awareness training, to include assertive and practical prevention and cessation procedures. Youth Protection training materials are available through the local Learning for Life representative.

Training for law enforcement officers who have been designated by the agency to have Explorers accompany them on patrol operations should undergo an orientation that, at a minimum, includes a verbal and/or written overview of the objectives of Law Enforcement Exploring, agency Ride-Along program policy and standard operating procedures for both Explorers and Law Enforcement Officers. Officers must also undergo the self-guided [Youth Protection Training](#) course for adults.

3.4 Ride-Along Scope of Activities and Responsibilities

The prevailing authority for Explorers participating in a Ride-Along program, as well as the scope of permissible activities, will be the agency's policy and standard operating procedures that will, at a minimum, include the parameters outlined in Section 3-7 of this document. Explorers will remain under the supervision of a law enforcement officer at all times during a Ride-Along. The types of activities that Explorers are typically allowed to assist with during a Ride-Along include, but are not limited to:

1. Traffic control.
2. Crowd control.
3. Telecommunications support.
4. Administration of first aid assistance.
5. Perimeter control at accident or crime scenes.
6. Note taking that may aid the law enforcement officer or assistance with completing incident or other forms.

3.5 Ride-Along Log/Records and Limitations on Participation

The Ride-Along program is so popular with Explorers that it sometimes becomes the primary or only activity in which they want to participate. Many Posts find it beneficial to place prerequisites on participating in the program that include, but are not limited to, Explorers must attend regular meetings and training sessions, and must participate in a minimum amount of other Post activities in order to be permitted on a Ride-Along. Some Posts also set a maximum amount of allowable Ride-Along opportunities per Explorer, per month to make sure that every qualified member of the Post has an opportunity to participate in the program.

In order to monitor participation in the Ride-Along program, and to have a record of which Explorer accompanied which Officer on a Ride-Along, a logbook should be maintained by the agency. This logbook should include, at a minimum, the date, starting time/ending time, name of Explorer, name of accompanying law enforcement officer, and a section for any comments by the law enforcement officer for each Ride-Along session. A list of Explorers permitted to participate in the Ride-Along program, along with their respective hold harmless/release form and their medical release for emergency medical treatment form should be maintained in a notebook or folder near where the logbook is maintained and available to law enforcement personnel involved with the Ride-Along program. Typically, the logbook and approved list/release forms book would be maintained in the area of the patrol operations briefing room.

3.6 Development of Emergency Protocols for Ride-Along

Each agency must develop its own protocols that are to be instituted in those situations where an Explorer participating in a Ride-Along is accompanying an officer who is dispatched to a high-risk call or when a seemingly routine patrol procedure or call for service escalates into a situation requiring an aggressive and risk inherent response. Reference is made to Section 3-7 of this document for further guidance on the development of Ride-Along program policy and standard operating procedures.

It is understood that it is not possible to foresee every possible contingency for Explorers participating in the Ride-Along program. Ultimately, the law enforcement officer responsible for the Explorer must,

based upon the circumstances presented, use his/her best professional judgment with respect to the safety and security of the Explorer. There are some emergency situations where it may be safe and practical for an Explorer to be dropped off at a location before the law enforcement officer arrives at the scene of the incident. Another law enforcement officer would then retrieve the Explorer as soon as possible and transport him/her to the police station or other safe location. There are other situations where it may be safer for the Explorer to remain in/on the patrol vehicle/conveyance or on the scene of the incident.

3.7 Ride-Along Program Certification

As previously mentioned, the Ride-Along program provides Explorers with an opportunity to observe law enforcement field activity by accompanying a police officer on patrol operations. Patrol operations are defined as routine policing functions where an Explorer accompanies a law enforcement officer in a marked police vehicle, in/on special police conveyances (i.e., bike patrol, equestrian patrol, marine patrol or other police patrol conveyance with the exception of motorcycles, motorized personal watercraft or motorized personal all-terrain vehicles), or on foot patrol. The Ride-Along program, to Explorers, is one of the most attractive features of Law Enforcement Exploring. Most young adults consider the privilege of accompanying a law enforcement officer on patrol operations the highlight of their Explorer experience. Due to the potential risks involved with Explorers participating in the Ride-Along program, each agency must, at a minimum, adhere to the following parameters and include them in their written policy and standard operating procedures.

- A. A statement addressing the agency objectives of the Ride-Along program.
- B. A hold harmless and release form for the agency and Learning for Life executed by the parents or legal guardian and/or the Explorer if of legal age to sign such a form.
- C. Prohibition of Explorers under the age of 18 from participating in the Ride-Along program between 12 midnight and 6 AM.
- D. Prior to participating in the Ride-Along program, Explorers must have completed the agency's basic training course, to include policy and standard operating procedures while accompanying a law enforcement officer on patrol operations and spontaneous emergency protocols, and be provided with an orientation of patrol vehicle/conveyance systems and communication equipment. The agency basic training course must include Youth Protection: Personal Safety Awareness training and emphasize assertive and practical ways in which an Explorer can prevent and stop inappropriate behavior from adults or other Explorers. Posts that permit Ride-Alongs in/on authorized special police conveyances must include training requirements and protocols for each conveyance.
- E. Explorers are not permitted to carry offensive or defensive weapons to include firearms, tasers, nightsticks, batons (collapsible or otherwise), saps or sap gloves, tactical flashlights (i.e. large metal or other heavy duty material flashlights that may also be used as a nightstick or baton), knives with blades in excess of four inches, chemical repellents or electrical shock devices.
- F. Explorers on a Ride-Along where authorized special police conveyances are used must wear the same safety equipment (i.e., helmet for bike patrol, personal flotation device for marine patrol, etc.) required for law enforcement officers.
- G. Ride-Along officers must have completed their field training program and probationary period, and be in good standing with their agency, before being allowed to supervise Explorers participating in the Ride-Along program. Ride-Along officers must also be provided a briefing on agency policy and standard operating procedures for Explorers participating in the Ride-Along program, and spontaneous emergency protocols prior to being permitted to having Explorers accompany them on patrol operations. Additionally, Officers must undergo the self-guided [Youth Protection Training](#) course for adults. The agency will determine which officers are approved to participate in the Ride- Along program.
- H. Medical release form permitting authorized agency representatives to approve emergency medical treatment for Explorers.
- I. Adherence to Law Enforcement Exploring policy on driving police vehicles, blood borne pathogens, Hepatitis B vaccination declination, covert activities and other applicable policies.

Participating agencies participating in the Ride-Along program should give consideration to the following recommendations:

1. It is strongly recommended every Explorer be required to wear a protective vest while accompanying a law enforcement officer on patrol operations.
2. Whenever possible and practical, the Ride-Along officer and Explorer should be of the same gender.

3.8 Events that Require Submission of New Application for Certification

Ride-along certification remains valid until such time as one or both of the following events occur; the agency's Ride-Along Policy and Standard Operation Procedures are amended, or a new head of agency (Chief of Police, Sheriff, or director of the agency) is appointed. Should either of these events occur the participating agency must submit a new Ride-Along Certification Application and supporting documentation.

4.0 LIABILITY INSURANCE

Learning for Life provides primary liability insurance to the participating agency of Law Enforcement Explorer Posts. Coverage for this insurance is contingent upon adherence to Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring policies and procedures, to include certification of Ride-Along program if offered to Explorers by the participating agency.

4.1 Incident Reporting

An incident is defined as any situation where an Explorer or adult involved in a Law Enforcement Exploring related activity, or other individual not involved with the program (i.e., observer, person in area of activity, etc.), was injured and/or significant property damage was incurred as a result of the activity. Additionally, an incident would include any situation where an Explorer, adult or other individual are the victim of a crime that may be associated with their involvement in Law Enforcement Exploring.

All incidents should be reported by the participating agency, via telephone, to the local Learning for Life representative within 24 hours of the occurrence. As soon thereafter as possible, an Incident Information Report should be completed and transmitted, via fax or e-mail, both to the national office for Exploring and the local Learning for Life office. This report may be found online at www.exploring.org/training-safety. The national office will coordinate with the legal counsel or other authorized representative from the participating agency with regard to applicable liability insurance coverage.

Reference is made to Section 2.9 (Media Relations Policy) of these Guidelines as it relates to incidents involving Explorers, adults or other individuals involved with Law Enforcement Exploring.

4.2. Risk Management: Potential/Avoided Incident Reporting

The national office for Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring regularly reviews program activities as part of its risk management process. This process is designed to provide the best possible program with the least amount of risk to participants and the participating agency. In order to evaluate activities for risk potential and, if possible, to mitigate risks through development of defined policies and procedures, it is important to analysis those situations where there was a strong potential for an incident to have occurred and/or an incident was avoided.

Accordingly, each participating agency should submit a Near Miss Incident Information Report for every situation in which there was a strong potential for an incident (as defined in Section 4.1) to have occurred and/or an incident was avoided. This report may be found online at www.exploring.org/training-safety. This report should be completed as soon as possible after the occurrence and transmitted via fax or e-mail, both to the national office for Exploring and the Local Learning for Life office.

5.1 APPENDIX: PROGRAM INFORMATION AND FORMS

- Non-Lethal Training Firearms Safety Briefing
- Sample Ride-Along Policy and Standard Operation Procedures

LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORING NON-LETHAL TRAINING FIREARMS SAFETY BRIEFING REQUIREMENTS

Introduction: Section 2.11 (Use of Non-Lethal Training Firearms Policy) of the Law Enforcement Exploring Program Guidelines mandates that a safety briefing be presented to all participants prior to the commencement of any training exercise where Non-Lethal Training Firearms (NLTF) will be used. The primary purpose of the briefing is to ensure no real firearms or live ammunition is brought into the training area, validate that participants are outfitted with the required safety equipment, and to review the training exercise protocols and procedures. The briefing must be conducted by a certified law enforcement firearms, NLTF instructor or range safety officer and, at a minimum, must address the following elements:

- A. The objective of NLTF training exercise is to teach/reinforce situational awareness, defensive procedures, strategic practices and judgmental decision making.
- B. At all times during a NLTF training exercise the certified law enforcement instructor or range safety officer, and his/her assistants or role players, will be in control of the training environment and participants must obey all of their directions and commands without question or hesitation. At any time, an instructor, safety officer, role player or participant may stop the training exercise by a pre-determined verbal command (i.e., "Cease Fire," "Out of Role," etc.) or audible signal such as a whistle or air horn. All participants must immediately stop engaging in the exercise when one or more of these signals are heard.
- C. Real weapons and/or live ammunition, impact devices, knives, chemical repellents and electrical shock devices are strictly prohibited in the training area. All participants will be inspected for real weapons and/or live ammunition or other prohibited items prior to being permitted in the training area and each time they re-enter the area after departing the for any reason. The use of a hand-held magnetometer is recommended to assist in identifying any prohibited items.
- D. All NLTF must be treated with the same degree of safety and responsibility afforded to real firearms and live ammunition. NLTF ammunition, pre-loaded by a certified law enforcement instructor or range safety officer, will not be placed into NLTF until directed by an instructor.
- E. All participants must wear required safety equipment at all times during the training exercise and such equipment may not be removed without permission of an instructor, safety officer or role player, and then only in a pre-determined no-fire zone. In the event a required piece of safety equipment becomes dislodged or otherwise ineffective during the training exercise a participant must immediately protect his/her person by covering the exposed area and shout one of the pre-determined verbal commands to stop the exercise until the safety equipment is in its proper place.
- F. Pre-determined no-fire zones will be established within the training area. Participants will not engage another participant retreating to a no fire zone or once inside the no fire zone. All NLTF must be cleared properly (ammunition removed with no projectile in the chamber) and holstered prior to entering a no fire zone.
- G. Participants are not to intentionally target the head, face or neck of another participant and should aim for center mass at all times. Participants are prohibited from discharging their NLTF if they are closer than 3 feet to another participant.
- H. Participants are prohibited from blind firing (i.e. blindly firing above, below or around an obstacle without seeing where the muzzle is pointed and the intended target). Indiscriminate discharging a NLTF, as well as unsafe or reckless behavior, is also prohibited.
- I. All injuries must immediately be reported to an instructor, safety officer, role player or other staff member.

**JUSTICE POLICE DEPARTMENT
LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORER POST #911
RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM**

General Policy

- 1.1 Authority:** The policy and standard operating procedures contained herein for the Justice Police Department (hereafter referred to as JPD), Law Enforcement Explorer Post #911 (hereafter referred to as Post #911), Ride-Along program have been approved by the Chief of Police and supplement the rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the JPD.
- 1.2 Purpose and Objectives:** The purpose of JPD Post #911 is to provide a comprehensive training, competition, service, practical, and recreational experience to young adults interested in a career in law enforcement or a related field. Toward that end, the objectives of the Ride-Along program are to offer qualified Explorers the opportunity to accompany a police officer on patrol to observe and gain practical experience with regard to the methods and techniques used in patrol operations and related services. This program also provides Explorers with valuable knowledge of the challenges and benefits of patrol operations and a better understanding of the importance of police services within the City of Justice.
- 1.3 Risk Management and Acceptance of Liability:** The JPD recognizes the potential risks to participants involved with Post #911 activities, to include personal injury and/or inadvertent involvement with dangerous situations. All JPD personnel, or approved volunteers, involved with Post #911 will make every effort to minimize risk to Explorers through training, supervision, adherence to policy and standard operating procedures, and proactive risk management. As a condition of acceptance into Post #911, the parents or legal guardian of every Explorer, or the Explorer if of legal age to do so, must sign a hold harmless and release form acknowledging they have been advised of the risk potential and waive any right to initiate a legal cause of action against the City of Justice, the JPD, and Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring, or any of their representatives.
- 1.4 Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment:** Prior to participation in the program, the parents or legal guardian of every Explorer in Post #911, or the Explorer if of legal age to do so, must sign a medical release form authorizing JPD representatives to approve emergency medical treatment.

*Example Ride-Along Policy and Standard Operating Procedures
for Law Enforcement Explorer Posts*

- 1.5 Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring Policies:** The policies and standard operating procedures for JPD Post #911 shall remain consistent with current policies established by Learning for Life/Law Enforcement Exploring with respect to Explorers driving police vehicles, covert activities, bloodborne pathogens, Hepatitis B vaccination declination, or any future policies pertaining to Law Enforcement Exploring.
- 1.6 Participation limitations:** Explorers under 16 years of age are not authorized to participate in the Ride-Along program. Explorers under 18 years of age may not accompany officers on a Ride-Along between 12 midnight and 6 AM. In order ensure that Explorers partake in all activities of the Post, and to provide an equal opportunity for all members, Explorers will be limited to participating in the Ride-Along program based on the number of hours expended on other Post activities. Upon accruing eight hours of time involved in Post meetings, training, competition or other approved activities, an Explorer can spend an equal amount of time participating in the Ride-Along program. The Post Advisor, or his designee, can make an exception to this policy as needed.

Training

- 2.1 Prerequisites for Explorers:** As a prerequisite for participating in the Ride-Along program, an Explorer must have successfully passed the JPD Post #911 basic training course, completed the required probationary period, and not be the subject of any disciplinary action (to include not being on academic probation for failure to maintain a 2.0 cumulative GPA). Additionally, Youth Protection: Personal Safety Awareness, presented to Explorers during basic training, will be reviewed prior to an Explorer being authorized to participate in the Ride-Along program.
- 2.2 Specialized Training for Explorers:** Prior to being designated as qualified for the Ride-Along program, Explorers will receive specialized training in methods and techniques used in patrol operations and related services, traffic control, crowd control, telecommunications procedures and basic first aid/CPR. Explorers also will be provided with familiarization training on all patrol vehicle systems and equipment.
- 2.3 Officers:** In order for an Officer to be considered for the program they must have completed their field training program and probationary period, and be in good standing with no pending disciplinary actions or other adverse matters. JPD personnel approved for participation in the Ride-Along program must undergo an orientation that includes an overview of Law Enforcement Exploring, agency policy and standard operating procedures for Officers and Explorers. Officers must also undergo the self-guided Youth Protection Training course for adults.

Uniforms and Equipment

- 3.1 Uniform:** Explorers will report for a Ride-Along well groomed in a clean and pressed Class B uniform (unless otherwise notified), and their hat. Explorers should have other uniform items as dictated by weather or other factors (i.e. rain coat, coat, boots, etc), along with a reflective vest or other approved reflective clothing item to be used when in engaged in traffic control functions.
- 3.2 Authorized Equipment:** Explorers will have with them on every Ride-Along a notepad, pen and pencil, flashlight, whistle, and handcuffs contained in an approved carrying case. Explorers should wear a protective vest (personally owned or, if available, a JPD owned vest) under their uniform shirt.
- 3.3 Prohibited Equipment:** Explorers may not carry any offensive or defensive weapons; to include firearms, tasers, nightsticks, batons (collapsible or otherwise), saps, sap gloves, tactical flashlights (i.e., large metal or other heavy duty flashlights that may be used as a nightstick or baton), knives with blades in excess of four inches, chemical repellents or electrical shock devices.

Standard Operating Procedures

- 4.1 Reporting for a Ride-Along:** Explorers will report for their Ride-Along at least 15 minutes before their scheduled time in their complete uniform and with the required equipment. Explorers must not have any prohibited equipment as defined in Section 3.3 of this policy.
- 4.2 Ride-Along Logbook/Release Records:** A Ride-Along logbook will be maintained in the Patrol Division briefing room and will be completed by the supervising officer each time an Explorer accompanies him/her on a Ride-Along. The logbook will contain the following information about the Ride-Along: date, start time, end time, Explorer's name, supervising officer's name and any comments deemed appropriate by the supervising officer. A records book will also be maintained in the Patrol Division briefing room that will contain a current list of Explorers qualified to participate in the Ride-Along program, along with a copy of their hold harmless and release form as well as their medical release form that permits JPD representatives to approve emergency medical treatment. It is the responsibility of the Post Advisor, or his designee, to make sure the logbook is maintained properly and the release records book is up to date.
- 4.3 Unacceptable Behavior on Ride-Along:** Explorers may not eat or drink (except while on a break with supervising patrol officer); use tobacco products; use any electronic device such as a cell phone, personal digital

*Example Ride-Along Policy and Standard Operating Procedures
for Law Enforcement Explorer Posts*

assistant, music device or game; or engage in any other behavior that would distract the supervising officer or interfere with the objectives of the Ride-Along program. The only exception to this policy is the use of a cell phone, or other communication device, in an emergency situation.

- 4.4. **Prohibited Actions:** Due to potential legal issues with federal and state statutes regulating criminal law and procedure, civil law, and privacy and confidentiality concerns, Explorers are not permitted to participate in interviews, interrogations, the handling or processing of evidence, or the intake or transfer of persons taken into custody. Further, Explorers are forbidden from responding to any opinion or judgment questions posed to them by the public (i.e., at a scene of a traffic accident someone asks, “Who do you think was at fault?” “What type of citation should be issued?,” etc.). Conversations with citizens will be limited to comments made necessary by direct inquiry and do not require an opinion or judgment, or as otherwise directed by the supervising officer. If avoidable, Explorers should not be placed in situations where they may be called as a witness in a criminal or civil proceeding.
- 4.5 **Supervision of Explorer:** At all times during a Ride-Along the Explorer will adhere to the commands and direction given to him/her by the supervising officer or, in the supervising officer’s absence or incapacity, any other law enforcement officer. The Explorer shall, to the extent possible, remain in the patrol vehicle as an observer during a Ride-Along unless otherwise directed by the supervising officer or other law enforcement officer
- 4.6 **Permissible Activities on Ride-Alongs:** Explorers, as directed by the supervising officer, may assist with telecommunications, traffic control, crowd control, perimeter control, completion of incident report forms or any other activity that is considered by the supervising officer to be routine and low-risk for the Explorer.
- 4.7 **Prohibited Activities on Ride-Alongs:** Explorers are prohibited, due to the considerable potential for legal complications or for an aggressive or risk inherent response, from participating in arrests, felony-in-progress calls, high-speed traffic pursuits, foot pursuits, domestic crisis calls, civil unrest or drinking establishment disturbances, sobriety tests or any other high risk or legally precarious situation. Should, during the course of a Ride-Along, the supervising officer have enough advance notice of a high risk or legally precarious call as it relates to the Explorer, he/she will transport the Explorer to a safe location or make arrangements for the Explorer to be transported to a safe location.
- 4.8 **Spontaneous Emergency on Ride-Along:** Patrol operations and calls for service often involve spontaneous situations that require an aggressive and risk inherent response; or just as likely a routine call for service escalates

*Example Ride-Along Policy and Standard Operating Procedures
for Law Enforcement Explorer Posts*

into a situation requiring the same type of response. In that it is not possible to foresee every possible contingency for Explorers participating in the Ride-Along program the supervising law enforcement officer responsible for the Explorer must, based upon the circumstances presented, use his/her best professional judgment with respect to the safety and security of the Explorer.

As a general rule, if the supervising officer is confronted with such a situation and able, he/she should make arrangements for another law enforcement officer to transport the Explorer to the police station or other safe location. In some situations it may be safer for the Explorer to remain in the patrol vehicle. It is the responsibility of the Explorer to remain as uninvolved as possible during a spontaneous emergency. In the event the supervising officer is in need of emergency assistance, the Explorer will contact the police dispatch center by police radio or cell phone and relate as clearly as possible the location and situation. If the Explorer's safety is in jeopardy, and he/she can be of no further assistance to the supervising officer or other law enforcement personnel, the Explorer should remove himself/herself from the immediate area and, without unnecessary delay, report to the police station. Subsequent to the spontaneous emergency, the supervising officer and the Explorer must each prepare a written report detailing the spontaneous emergency and the actions of the supervising officer and Explorer. This report must be prepared as soon as possible after the spontaneous emergency, but no later than 24 hours after the incident, and submitted to the Shift Commander and a copy to the Post Advisor.

- 4.9 Injuries/potential legal situations: The supervising officer, or any other JPD personnel or volunteer involved with Post #911, must report to the Shift Commander and Post Advisor any injury that occurs to an Explorer, or any situation that may have legal consequences, arising from the Explorer's participation in a Ride-Along or any other Post #911 activity. This report must be made as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the injury or incident.
- 4.10 Infractions of Policy: The supervising officer shall immediately terminate the Ride-Along for any infraction of this policy. Infractions of this policy, or any other JPD policy and procedure, by an Explorer must be reported to the Post Advisor as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the incident(s) so appropriate follow-up and/or disciplinary action can be initiated.
