



Blount County Detention Facility

CODE OF ETHICS



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By order of: Sheriff James L. Berrong	

CODE OF ETHICS

As an employee of the Blount County Sheriff's Office, my fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property, to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and, to respect the constitutional rights of all persons to liberty, equality, and justice.

I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all; maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop self-restraint; and, be constantly mindful of the welfare of others, honest in thought and deed in both my personal and official life. I will be exemplary in observing the laws of the land and the regulations of my agency. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature, or that is confided to me in my official capacity, will be kept secret, unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty.

I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, animosities, or friendships to influence my decisions. With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without unnecessary force or violence, and will never accept gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to these objectives and ideals, dedicating and affirming myself to my chosen profession.

Enforcement Courtesy

Courtesy is definitely a science of the highest degree, consisting of quiet, unassuming behavior based on a sincere consideration for the feelings of others. Race, religion, gender, color, or creed, do not influence the practice of courtesy. Courtesy presupposes an attitude of desiring to please or desire to serve. One can be firm and conscientious in carrying out duties and still be courteous.

Approach

Courtesy is most frequently expressed in the initial approach to citizens or inmates. Facial expression, tone of voice, the manner in which one walks, is all considered an indication of one's attitude of mind.

To approach citizens or inmates with a scowl and a threatening gesture is to immediately antagonize. The response will be resentment and a desire to argue and "fight it out." However, a friendly, cheerful approach, not at all apologetic, but interested and pleasant, is usually far

more disarming. It is the manner in which someone says or does something that discloses character, especially if that someone is an officer of the law. It is the expression given to someone's thoughts and feelings by looks, tones, and gestures rather than by deeds or words that determine judgment of an employee.

There are times when patience may become frayed after long hours of work. This does not excuse sarcasm or discourtesy. Courtesy does not preclude someone from becoming indignant or aggravated, but it does require an employee to express such indignation in a professional manner.

Every employee of the Blount County Sheriff's Office should bear in mind that an act of discourtesy or offensive conduct reflects on all employees of the agency, and tends to destroy the public confidence we are working so hard to gain. Agency personnel should watch carefully their approach and note particularly the affect of various kinds of approaches upon different people. A uniform and badge, or being an employee of the Blount County Sheriff's Office, does not give a right to indulge in abusive oratory or display personal vindictiveness. Overbearing methods should be replaced by courtesy and politeness. An employee can be courteous to everyone without exception and still be firm and sincere in efforts to get the job done.

Courtesy is essential to any successful person. It is equally important to be courteous to the foreign-speaking, the "down and out," and the less fortunate. An employee of the Sheriff's Office to them represents this country, the law, and the attitude of the government, and can be influential in helping such people understand what is required of them, and to gain their cooperation in law enforcement efforts. Most people feel better after having handled a situation courteously than they do after being rude or abrupt. There is a feeling of pride in knowing that a person contacted goes away with a feeling of warmth and friendliness towards the employee and the Sheriff's Office, rather than feelings of resentment or indignation. There is no such thing as a small enemy.

Attitude

Attitude and conduct must be in line with the position assumed. Uniform and badge do not give anyone the right to act in an officious, sarcastic, or tough manner. An efficient employee of the Sheriff's Office does not need to be abusive to show authority, and should never let their line of associations with criminals warp their own personality and attitude toward the public that they are serving.

Causes of Discourtesy

Employees in uniform are always seen by a great many more people than they see. Curious crowds watch them. In other words, they live in a "glass house." A feeling of self-importance sometimes follows the donning of a uniform. This feeling of self-importance may make the employee take each violation of the law as a personal offense, as if offenders were purposely doing something to annoy them. Reaction, then, is one of "getting even" rather than impartial enforcement of the law.

With the strain of duty and the many responsibilities that an employee has, there may be a loss of sleep. Fatigue may make one irritable and easily upset. The employee should be on guard to see that physical condition is not an excuse for "taking it out" on the public or inmates.

An employee may not be discourteous because an individual being dealt with has been discourteous. Offenders are usually on the defensive when approached by an employee, and may open an attack with abusive language and discourteous behavior. Employees who can maintain self-control under such situations, and deal both firmly and courteously with offenders, show themselves to be superior and are far more effective. In other words, do not lower yourself to their level.

Discourtesy is sometimes due to lack of knowledge and understanding. Courtesy is something which is acquired through continuous practice, imitation, and thoughtfulness based on a sincere consideration for the feelings of others. It becomes a more intimate part of the personality and captures goodwill wherever the person possessing it goes.

Bearing

There is strength in calmness; therefore, employees should maintain composure despite trying conditions. In a time of stress and disaster, there are those who may become distracted and excited. Employees can best execute their responsibilities when they can take charge of situations with calmness and an appearance of knowing what should be done. An employee with good bearing stimulates confidence.

An attitude of blustering, cross-grained officiousness gains nothing except the ill will of those whom the employee should be serving. Cultivate the ability to meet people easily and employ tact and consideration. These attitudes will be helpful in any task that is performed.

Courtesy is built on the ability to show respect to others in both trivial and important contacts. Thus, respect is invited in return. By making a sincere effort to understand the other person's point of view, the key to understanding and good judgment is acquired in all contacts.

Sexual Harassment/ Sexual Abuse

Sexual harassment and Sexual abuse of any kind is not acceptable behavior and is inconsistent with the commitment of the Sheriff's Office Corrections Division to create a work and living environment in which every employee, visitor, vendor, inmate, detainee, or resident can coexist without being harassed. Due to this commitment the Sheriff's Office Corrections Division has a **Zero Tolerance** policy towards sexual harassment and violations may lead to sanctions up to and including dismissal and criminal charges where applicable.

Sexual harassment includes:

- 1) Repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by one inmate, detainee, or resident directed toward another; and
- 2) Repeated verbal comments or gestures of a sexual nature to an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, visitor, contractor, vendor, or volunteer, including demeaning references to gender, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing, or obscene language or gestures

Sexual abuse includes:

- 1) Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by another inmate, detainee, or resident; and
- 2) Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer.

Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by another inmate, detainee, or resident includes any of the following acts, if the victim does not consent, is coerced into such act by overt or implied threats of violence, or is unable to consent or refuse:

- 1) Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight;
- 2) Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus;
- 3) Penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument; and

- 4) Any other intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks of another person, excluding contact incidental to a physical altercation.

Tennessee Code Annotated 39-16-408 states it is an offense for a law enforcement officer, correctional employee, vendor or volunteer to engage in sexual contact or sexual penetration, as such terms are defined in § 39-13-501, with a prisoner or inmate who is in custody at a penal institution as defined in § 39-16-601, whether the conduct occurs on or off the grounds of the institution. A violation of this T.C.A. code is a Class E felony. Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, vendor, or volunteer includes any of the following acts, with or without consent of the inmate, detainee, or resident:

- 1) Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight;
- 2) Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus;
- 3) Contact between the mouth and any body part where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
- 4) Penetration of the anal or genital opening, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
- 5) Any other intentional contact, either directly or through the clothing, of or with the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, visitor, contractor, vendor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
- 6) Any attempt, threat, or request by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer to engage in the activities described in paragraphs (1)-(5) of this section;
- 7) Any display by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer of his or her uncovered genitalia, buttocks, or breast in the presence of an inmate, detainee, or resident, and
- 8) Voyeurism by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer.

Voyeurism by a staff member, visitor, contractor, vendor, or volunteer means an invasion of privacy of an inmate, detainee, or resident by staff for reasons unrelated to official duties, such as peering at an inmate who is using a toilet in his or her cell to perform bodily functions; requiring an inmate to expose his or her buttocks, genitals, or breasts; or taking images of all or part of an inmate's naked body or of an inmate performing bodily functions.

Employees/detainees who believe that the Zero Tolerance policy may have been violated should immediately report the matter in writing. A report should be submitted no matter how slight the actions may seem if it appears to violate this policy. Employees will accept reports of possible violations of this policy verbally, in writing, anonymously, and from outside third parties. Employees will also take reports of abuse from detainees with allegations of abuse from an outside facility and forward reports to that agency.

All reports will be investigated and, where appropriate, remedial action may be taken. This may result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination. The Blount County Sheriff's Office will protect the confidentiality of employees/detainees making complaints about suspected violations of this or any other policy to the extent possible consistent with our investigation and applicable law. Knowingly filing a false claim can lead to criminal charges under T.C.A. code 39-16-502. This is a class D felony and can lead to jail time.

No one will be penalized or retaliated against for reporting improper conduct, harassment, or other actions that you sincerely believe violate this policy.

The Sheriff's Office will enforce the Zero Tolerance policy against Sexual harassment and Sexual abuse. However, violations of this policy cannot be resolved unless reported. All concerns about possible policy violations should be brought to the attention of an on duty staff member so that appropriate actions can be taken to address any concerns.