



Town of Lexington

Police Department

Subject: Goals and Mission

Reference: 1.2.6

Effective Date:
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Review Date:
Annually

By Order of: Mark J. Corr, Chief of Police

**Policy &
Procedure**

1A

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The mission of the Lexington Police Department is to enforce the laws of society, maintain order in the community, protect life and property, and to assist the public-at-large. This must be done in a manner consistent with the rights and dignity of all persons as provided for by law and under the constitutions of the United States and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Consistent with this mission statement, the Department shall prepare on an annual basis organizational goals and objectives. These goals and objectives shall represent the organization's purpose and direction, as well as providing standards by which to measure the performance of the Department.

Formalized agency goals and objectives shall define the Department's functional role in the community. Formalization will also provide Department members with an awareness of actions and attitudes expected of them and thus allowing them to act without hesitation in harmony with agency policies. The annual reexamination of the goals and objectives will allow the Department to be responsive to the changing needs and concerns of the community.

Attainment of the goals and objectives shall be accomplished through the joint efforts of every Department member. Written policy and procedure will provide guidelines to ensure the uniformity of action. Whenever possible, policies shall also identify the parameters within which members may exercise personal discretion.

PROCEDURES

I. DEPARTMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- A. Annually, the Lexington Police Department will formulate, update, and distribute to all personnel the written goals and objectives for the Department and each organizational component.
1. **Goals** will be broad generalized statements of what the agency or component intends to accomplish.

Example: "to decrease the number of personal injury motor vehicle accidents."
 2. **Objectives** are specific and measurable steps, which should lead to the attainment of goals.

Example: "reduce by 10% the number of accidents at designated high accident locations."
- B. Prior to the end of each calendar year, the Chief of Police shall prepare and issue a report outlining the Department's goals and objectives. The report shall include a review of the Department's progress toward achieving the previous year's goals and objectives and will establish new or revised ones for the coming year.
- C. The Chief shall require from each division Captain and the Detective Bureau commander a statement of goals and objectives for each organizational component within their command. These statements should include statistical and narrative progress reports as well as suggestions for goals and objectives in the New Year.
- D. Each Division and Bureau commander is strongly encouraged to obtain input and/or permit subordinates to assist in the formulation of unit or departmental goals and objectives.

II. LIMITS of AUTHORITY AND DISCRETION

- A. **All sworn officers of the Lexington Police Department shall have the legally mandated authority to enforce all laws and ordinances of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Town of Lexington within the limits established by the state constitution and the United States Constitution.**
- B. Discretion by a police officer involves making responsible choices and making decisions within legal boundaries and parameters defined by the Chief of Police and/or Lexington Town Manager. Discretion must be used when enforcing the law because it is beyond the resources of the Town of Lexington and this Department to adhere to a policy of "full enforcement" of all laws. Other factors that contribute to the use of discretion include:
- Ambiguous or obsolete laws,
 - Police and community relations,
 - The legitimate interest of justice and fairness, and
 - The complexity and variety of law enforcement situations.
- C. It is impossible for the Department **Manual** to outline the precise parameters of discretion for every type of police activity. Often, the complexity and unpredictability of situations make the use of set standard responses impractical and undesirable. In these instances, officers will be expected to make intelligent and "responsible decisions."
- D. An officer's "latitude of choice" when exercising discretion shall be guided, narrowed or eliminated by:
1. Pertinent laws and court decisions.
 2. Department policy, procedures, rules and regulations.
 3. Orders and instructions given by a superior officer.
 4. A sense of justice and fairness that would be expected by the ordinary, reasonable and prudent member of the community.
- E. **Domestic Abuse.** Officers who respond to any domestic abuse situation **must** make an arrest when there has been a violation of a protective order. Officers should refer to Department policy 41-E "Domestic Violence" for other guidelines.

III. ALTERNATIVES TO ARREST

- A. The decision to place a person under arrest is one of the most important decision making responsibilities for any police officer. In many situations, an arrest should and **must** be made; particularly when the offense involves a serious felony, or persons dangerous to themselves or members of the public.
- B. The **right** of arrest does not dictate that an arrest **must** be made. In some cases, the harm caused to the individual or police-community relations can outweigh the benefits of arresting a person. The alternatives to arrest, such as citations, summonses, informal resolutions, warnings and referrals to other agencies. Circumstances where alternatives to arrest **may** be appropriate include the following: [1.2.6]
1. Offenses, which did not involve force or threaten the community.
 2. When there is a greater priority to respond to a more serious crime or to an urgent public emergency.
 3. In minor juvenile offenses where a warning or talk with the parents can avoid a court appearance.
 4. Minor felonies and misdemeanors with statutory right of arrest.
 5. Offenses committed by individuals with severe mental health disabilities or by individuals who may immediately benefit from hospitalization.
- C. After arrest, alternatives to incarceration should also be considered. Many individuals can be released on personal recognizance and juveniles can be released to a parent, responsible adult or, if a status offender, to an appropriate juvenile agency.
- D. Officers shall never use their discretion to arrest as a penalty or punishment. Furthermore, officers will not allow the race, ethnic origins, age, physical appearance or lifestyle of a person to affect or have bearing on their decision to arrest an individual.