



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

NO.480

Field Interviews

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A fundamental technique of patrol is the systematic use of field interviews. Officers should talk to as many people as possible during routine patrol activities, and in particular they should make contact with as many potential offenders as they can. The experienced patrol officer can often deal with a citizen in such a way that the citizen, if he/she had no intention of misbehaving, may not even know that the officer's initial interest in him/her was generated by suspicion. On the other hand, a citizen who is a potential offender will usually recognize such a situation as inhibiting. Of course, the latter situation may also evolve from casual questioning into interrogation, or even arrest.

Massachusetts General Laws, C41-S98, provides in part that a police officer may, "examine all persons abroad whom they have reason to suspect of unlawful design, and may demand of them their business abroad and whither they are going." The instant section permits brief "threshold inquiries" where a suspicious climate gives officers reason to suspect the person questioned is of unlawful design (Comm. v Mathews, 244 NE 2nd 908). Further, C41-S98 provides for a "stop and frisk" by stating, "While an officer who has stopped and questioned a suspect may not constitutionally search him/her for evidence of a crime, he/she may without violating constitutional rights, act reasonably to assure that the inquiry can proceed in a manner consistent with the officer's safety, as by searching the suspect for weapons." (Comm. V. Lehan 1964 347 Mass. 197, 196 NE 2nd 840).

In order to enhance the overall effectiveness of "field interviews" it becomes necessary to develop feedback that can ultimately benefit all officers, both from a safety and an investigative standpoint. The decision to file a "Field Interview Report" lies with the individual officer who has made contact with a subject. Officers will want to consider some, or all of the following criteria when deciding if the report is appropriate:

- a) the suspicious or furtive conduct of the suspect;
- b) the location of the suspect and the time of inquiry;
- c) if suspect is near the scene of a reported crime (past or present);
- d) description of suspect (or vehicle) is consistent with wanted offender;
- e) past record or reputation of suspect;
- f) illogical or evasive responses to questioning;
- g) poor, or no explanation for actions at time.

In addition, common sense, experience, and instinct will assist determining the need for a "Field Interview Report."

RECORDING THE FIELD CONTACT:

When a determination has been made to record a field interrogation, officers shall utilize the "Field Interrogation Report Form," a supply of which shall be carried by each. It is essential that all available information about the suspect and/or the suspect's vehicle be included on the form.

Officers shall turn in all "Field interrogation Reports" on a daily basis at the completion of a shift. They are to be checked by the shift commander.

It is the responsibility of the Supply Division to ensure that forms are available at all times for officers' use.

DISTRIBUTION:

Record should be kept in computer files by Bureau of Records.

PURGING:

The reports shall be retained for a period of three (3) years, and then destroyed.

Per:

Edward P. Gardella

Chief of Police

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