

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

Rockville City Police Department: A Part of, and Partner With, Our Community

“As law enforcement officers, we always hold ourselves to a higher standard, and when those standards are not upheld, we cannot sit idly by. Protecting the sanctity of life is the foundation of good policing. It is our job to protect, serve and help our community, as our officers demonstrate each and every day.”

Chief Victor Brito
Rockville City Police Department

1. How does the Rockville City Police Department (RCPD) train officers to ensure fair and impartial policing?

When an officer begins their career with our RCPD, they are sent to an entry-level training program at the Montgomery County Police Department Training Academy. Throughout 29 weeks of training, the police officer recruits participate and are evaluated in de-escalation training tactics, including pre-attack kinesiology, problem solving, conflict resolution, crisis intervention, slowing down unsafe situations and creating distance, effective communication, and use of force.

The training also includes a review of the legal principles relevant to the use of force. Recruits learn what level of response is appropriate in various situations and engage in instruction and discussions about whether force should be used, even when it is a legal option. Recruits are evaluated through written testing and reality-based scenario training. This training is bolstered by several courses: Dealing with People/Conflict Management, Patrol Tactics/Procedures, Mental Health First Aid, and Understanding Alzheimer's Disease, Dementia and Autism.

Recruits are presented with reality-based scenarios focused on such topics as implicit bias and fair and impartial policing and are required to apply what they learn in the academy. Further training is provided on how to interact with people suffering from a mental illness and/or developmental disabilities.

Additionally, police recruits receive training on ethics in law enforcement and anti-discrimination. This includes visits to Washington, D.C. to tour the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and National Museum of African American History and Culture, where recruits hear lectures and engage in discussions around history, its relevance to today and the impact on various communities and law enforcement.

Upon graduation from the police training academy, new officers enter the 14-week RCPD Field Training Program where they are assigned to work with a Field Training Officer who evaluates them daily in numerous categories.

Many of the RCPD's performance objectives involve treating all members of the community with dignity and respect. If a new officer successfully navigates the Field Training Program, that individual becomes a solo police officer, serving in a probationary status for one year.

As community caretakers, the RCPD continually works to improve and ensure we are providing the highest quality of service in a fair, impartial and unbiased manner. The department conducts our

training and standards based on requirements set forth by the Maryland Police and Corrections Training Commission (MPCTC). Our agency's trainings are based on the best practices developed by national law enforcement organizations, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), Major Cities Chiefs Association, and the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. We also employ lessons learned and facilitate team-level discussion based upon community input.

In addition to entry-level recruit training and the Field Training Program, the MPCTC requires certified officers to complete a minimum of 18 hours of in-service training annually. All RCPD officers participate in classroom and practical training. In-service training topics include, but are not limited to: use of force, tactical judgment training, firearms training, ethics in law enforcement and de-escalation training. De-escalation training/decision-making is conducted through classroom discussion and practical reality-based training. Entry-level training and ongoing in-service training are extensive and exceeds the minimum requirements set by the MPCTC.

In addition to the MPCTC-mandated training, RCPD conducts in-house training. RCPD contracted with Fair and Impartial Policing, LLC, and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to bring additional training on implicit bias and de-escalation training to our officers. PERF conducted departmentwide training on Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics. This training consisted of classroom-based learning and practical application scenarios that combined the building blocks of critical thinking, crisis intervention, communications and tactics, in an integrated approach to critical decision-making. This teaches officers to de-escalate situations and make safe and effective decisions.

Fair and Impartial Policing, LLC provided a science-based training on implicit bias. This included training officers in how to conduct Fair and Impartial Policing training, as well as command-community training and community-based training.

In 2019, RCPD began offering Fair and Impartial Policing training to the community. The training in bias-free behavior in community policing allows police and community leaders to learn together and provides a forum for open discussion and scenario-based workshops. Through the training, community members and officers find ways to better communicate and work together for a safer and more resilient community.

For more information about RCPD training, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter and select the listings for the Mayor and Council meetings of June 22, 2020 and/or July 6, 2020. There you will find background information about policing policies and RCPD protocols. Select the television icon next to each listing for video of the discussions between the Mayor and Council and Chief Brito.

2. Do RCPD policies support fair and impartial policing?

The Rockville City Police Department is committed to a high level of police accountability, and to ensuring that we follow best practices nationally. The department is a leader in progressive policing efforts. Our policies, standards and training programs are regularly updated and legally reviewed to help assure that the public's civil rights are protected. The agency's policies and procedures can be found at www.rockvillemd.gov/1962/General-Orders.

3. What is the RCPD policy on chokeholds and strangleholds?

RCPD General Order 4-1 prohibits the use of a chokehold/neck restraint except in the case of a deadly force incident involving the imminent threat of death or potential serious injury. The department prohibits use of “hog ties” or other devices that might cause positional asphyxia. The order requires officers to immediately summon medical assistance if a subject exhibits distress or complains of trouble breathing, becomes unresponsive, exhibits a reduced level of consciousness, or for any other reason that the officer believes the subject requires evaluation or medical treatment.

4. What other RCPD policies support protecting the health and safety of members of the public?

a.) Require de-escalation

General Order 4-1 requires officers to attempt to de-escalate situations whenever possible, with the overall goal of resolving encounters without the use of force. General Order 4-1 requires officers to use force only as a last resort. Situations are dynamic and require an officer to continually assess the subject’s actions to ensure an objectively reasonable response. Officers may initiate and transition to levels or types of force, including attempts to de-escalate, in relation to the amount of resistance offered by the subject.

b.) Duty to intervene.

RCPD General Order 8-3 requires officers to notify a supervisor if there is knowledge of an employee who violates any laws, rules or policies, or who disobeys orders. Recognizing that this requirement needed to be more direct, General Order 4-1, has been updated to include the requirement that any officer who observes another officer using inappropriate, unnecessary or unreasonable force shall intervene to stop the use of force.

5. What RCPD policies address officer involved shooting?

a.) Exhaust all other means before shooting.

This policy only permits the use of deadly force when there is an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to an officer or others.

b.) Require warning before shooting.

General Order 4-1 permits officers to use deadly force only to protect themselves or others from the imminent threat of death or serious physical injury. Officers shall, whenever possible, identify themselves as a police officer and issue a verbal warning before using deadly force, unless such identification and warning would jeopardize safety. Officers are to use physical presence and verbal communication skills to resolve conflicts unless the situation necessitates a higher level of force. Warning shots are strictly prohibited.

c.) Ban shooting at moving vehicles.

General Order 4-1 prohibits officers from intentionally placing themselves in the path of a moving vehicle where the use of deadly force would be a probable outcome. Shots from or at a moving vehicle are prohibited unless the circumstances would authorize the use of deadly force.

6. What comprehensive reporting is required regarding use of force?

General Order 4-1 outlines the required extensive reporting requirements for all responses to resistance and aggression. RCPD officers are required to report all uses of force to include when a subject is injured or complaining of injury. Supervisor notification and reporting are required when a firearm is drawn and pointed at or in the direction of a person. Each use of force incident is reviewed. Additional reporting requirements were recently added to include supplemental command staff review requirements for reports detailing responses to resistance and aggression.

7. Is Surplus Military Equipment used by the RCPD?

RCPD does not seek nor does it accept surplus military equipment. We have no interest in militarizing our police force. RCPD does not have a SWAT team, armored vehicles, tear gas, flash-bang grenades or other military-grade implements.

8. How are officers held accountable?

Holding officers accountable is the most important aspect for any police agency. Accountability is paramount to earning and preserving the community's trust in its police department.

Chief Victor Brito said: "The Rockville City Police Department does not and will not tolerate excessive force. It goes against this department's mission of protecting the rights of all people. While the percentage of complaints involving excessive force within our agency is very small, any allegation is one too many."

Among the RCPD's accountability measures are:

- A [body-worn camera program](#) that has been [in place since 2017](#). All sworn members are issued a body-worn camera and use it while on duty and conducting law enforcement-related activities. Footage is randomly reviewed to ensure there are no policy violations or training issues that need to be addressed, or to commend officers for exceptional interactions, which reinforces good practices.
- Reviews, by the department's executive staff, of all use-of-force incidents, to ensure the incident is in line with expectations, policy and law. This includes reviewing body-worn camera footage. Any use of force found to be outside of policy is sent to the Office of Professional Responsibility for further investigation, and if warranted, disciplinary action.
- Publication of data on use-of-force events in [the department's annual report](#) and in an annual breakdown of use-of-force events submitted to the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commissions. Required by law, these reports detail serious officer incidents and discipline.

- Use of the Personnel Early Warning System, which annually tracks instances of inappropriate conduct or behavior that require departmental intervention, and the actions taken to address the problem.

9. How do the Rockville Police reach out to the Community?

RCPD continually seeks opportunities to foster dialogue with the community and identify ways police and civilians can work together to address community challenges.

The department has invited community members to join in a [Fair and Impartial Policing training program](#) that focuses on implicit bias, and we plan to increase the frequency of this training.

In addition, RCPD is in favor of creating a civilian “Police Advisory Commission” and is committed to participating in community forums on racial justice.

RCPD conducts programs throughout the year that present community members and officers with opportunities to learn and socialize with each other. These programs build community spirit and highlight everyone’s role in helping Rockville remain one of America’s leading small cities. They include:

- A [community police academy](#), as well as academies for teens and [seniors](#).
- [Coffee with a Cop](#).
- An annual [police station open house](#).
- [National Night Out](#).
- A [ride-along program](#).
- A liaison program in which officers are assigned to attend meetings and events organized by civic groups and homeowners associations within the city.

10. How does the Rockville Police Department work with Montgomery County’s Health & Human Services (HHS) and Mobile Crisis teams?

Montgomery County’s Crisis Center and the Mobile Crisis Team are an available resource for the Rockville Police Department. Due to staffing limitations, hours and demand, the Mobile Crisis Team is not always available for an expedited response. The Crisis Center and Mobile Crisis Team staff are generally available by phone to assist with questions and guidance for officers on the scene of calls for service. The Mobile Crisis Team can be called for response to scenes, however, generally they are not available immediately. There can be an extended wait time for availability in response.

The Mobile Crisis Team also responds to direct requests from individuals, other departments, and professionals outside of law enforcement. When they get a direct request from another source for an evaluation, they request police to respond along with them.

Additionally, due to the Crisis Center being within city limits, RCPD officers respond there daily for calls for service in order to serve emergency evaluation petitions completed by mental health professionals. RCPD officers serve the petitions and transport the individual to a medical facility.

For more information on the Crisis Center and Mobile Crisis Team, visit the below link.

<https://www3.montgomerycountymd.gov/311/Solutions.aspx?SolutionId=1-4MTMW7>

11. Does the Rockville Police Department participate in the School Resource Officer Program?

The Rockville City Police Department has one officer assigned to Montgomery County's School Resource Officer (SRO) program. Our SRO is assigned to Richard Montgomery High School (RMHS) and has been assigned to that position since 2012. The SRO strives to establish closer ties with the many diverse groups of young people who comprise the RMHS community. These proactive measures build trust and strengthen relationships by conducting daily informal outreach, and more formal instruction/mentoring to groups and individuals within the RMHS community. The efforts of our SRO are a central part of RCPD's overall work to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in the Rockville community.

The RCPD SRO annually attends SRO in-service training hosted by the Montgomery County Police Department. Additionally, our SRO attends the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) conference for training and updates on best practices and nationwide issues. This calendar year, due to Covid-19, our SRO attended several virtual trainings hosted by the FBI and NASRO. The training SRO's receive is in line with the requirements delineated in the Maryland Safe School Act, as well as national best practices relevant to the SRO position.

This document is adapted from a presentation that RCPD Chief Victor Brito [delivered to Rockville's Mayor and Council](#) on June 22, 2020. For more information, including video of the presentation, find the June 22, 2020 agenda at www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter.

For more information about the Rockville City Police Department, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/police.