



Dillon County Sheriff's Office Field Interviews

I. PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for conducting field interviews.

II. POLICY

The value of field interviews cannot be overstated. In addition to the investigative value of field interviews, the Sheriff's Office's community policing program is enhanced when officers make frequent contact with people in their patrol zones. They become familiar with neighborhoods and with the members of the community who are willing to work with police to address community problems, as well as those community members and persons passing through the community who cause problems and commit crime.

Officers are authorized to conduct field interviews based on reasonable suspicion. When making an investigative stop, officers will present a professional, courteous manner. Field interview contacts will be documented to provide information regarding suspicious incidents, persons, and vehicles.

III. PROCEDURE

A. Reasonable Suspicion

1. Officers frequently observe activity that may provide a reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed, is being planned, or is in process.
2. An officer may not stop a person for the sole purpose of conducting a field interview. However, an officer may detain a person in a public place if (s)he reasonably suspects the person is committing, has committed, or is about to commit a criminal offense. Reasonable suspicion is more than a hunch and is based on circumstances, which can be articulated, but is substantially less than probable cause.
3. Officers may ask a person's name, address, and an explanation of the person's actions and may detain them at or near the scene of the stop only for the length of time necessary to obtain this information.
4. In *Terry v Ohio*, the U.S. Supreme Court authorized a warrantless stop and search for a limited purpose and duration. The purpose of the stop and frisk is to discover weapons, which may be used to inflict harm. Not every field interview situation warrants a Terry search. <1.2.4>
5. Reasonable suspicion, coupled with the officer's training and experience, may justify a belief that the person to be stopped has committed, is committing, or is about to commit a crime. Elements which may establish reasonable suspicion include:
 - a. The person fits the description of a suspect wanted for a crime;
 - b. The vehicle fits the description of a vehicle wanted in connection with a crime;
 - c. The person flees at the sight of an officer or a marked patrol vehicle;
 - d. The person or vehicle is seen leaving the area of a crime;
 - e. The person is behaving or maneuvering a vehicle evasively;
 - f. The time of day or night;

- g. The type of neighborhood, location, or physical surrounding;
- h. The officer's prior knowledge of the person.

B. Initiation of the Field Interview

Field Interviews will be based on the officer's initiative, training, and experience. The constitutional rights of the persons being interviewed will always be respected.

C. Field Interview Form

1. The Field Interview Form will be used to collect, document, and provide information that may deal with suspicious activity.
2. The Field Interview Form will be completed by the officer in Zuercher for accessibility prior to end of the officer's tour of duty.

BY ORDER OF:

Douglas Pernell, Sheriff

<CALEA Standards: 1.2.4>