



Palatka Police Department

Jason L. Shaw, Sr.

Chief of Police

"Together we can make a difference"

Bias-Based Policing Community Awareness and Education

What is the difference between Bias-Based Policing & Criminal Profiling?

Bias-based policing is the use of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, background, age, or culture as the sole basis for police activity. It is commonly known as racial profiling. **This type of policing is not a legitimate law enforcement technique.** In fact, it is against the Palatka Police Department's policy for Palatka Police Officers to practice bias-based policing. The Palatka Police Department is committed to the fair and equal treatment of every member of the community and its visiting public.

Criminal Profiling is a legitimate law enforcement technique that uses knowledge, training, and experience to narrow a field of suspects during a criminal investigation. Factual information, patterns of activity, and motives are some of the aspects considered when using criminal profiling to identify a suspect. From these facts and factors, police officers may be able to identify a type of person or group of people by gender, age, race and/or by personality, social, and/or other characteristics that are most likely involved in criminal activity. This can result in fewer suspects to consider and a quicker resolution to an investigation or case. The absence of facts, suspicious activity, or specific criminal information is what separate bias-based policing from legitimate criminal profiling.

It is the policy and practice of the Palatka Police Department to patrol in a proactive manner, to investigate suspicious persons and/or circumstances, and to enforce motor vehicle laws. Our mission is to serve and protect the community. Our Officers are required to use skills developed through observation, training and experience in order to identify suspicious circumstances, unusual occurrences and violations of law, and to act according to the situation.

Officers of the Palatka Police Department receive initial training on bias-based policing during their field training as well as receive annual training hosted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The Department also conducts an annual review of its bias-based profiling policy, to ensure state statute and state accreditation guidelines are followed.



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What Can Officers Legally Do?

Officers can detain and engage any member of the public for investigative purposes when:

- There is reasonable suspicion or probable cause that a person may have been involved in or have knowledge of a crime
- Suspicious activity is observed
- There is criminal information (such as a suspect or vehicle description) that must be acted upon.

A police officer can, and frequently does, engage any member of the public to:

- Inquire about possible criminal activities in the area
- Speak with a witness who is not suspected of a crime
- Educate people on ways to avoid or deter crime
- Render assistance in situations not involving suspected criminal activity (for example, a medical emergency).

As part of building good relationships with the public, officers routinely engage in conversations with residents. In these kinds of situations, you are always free to decline or end any conversation with an officer and walk away.

If you think your encounter with a Palatka Police Officer was bias-based, remain calm and ask the officer the reason for the encounter. If you are not satisfied with the reason, respectfully ask the officer for his/her name, badge number, and ask to speak with his/her supervisor. Please feel free to make a complaint if you feel you are a victim of bias-based profiling with our command staff via email or call us at 386-329-0115.