# Bias-Based Policing

## 401.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidance to Bellingham Police Department members that affirms the Bellingham Police Department 's commitment to policing that is fair and objective. Nothing in this policy prohibits the use of specified characteristics in law enforcement activities designed to strengthen the Bellingham Police Department's relationship with its diverse communities (e.g., cultural and ethnicity awareness training, youth programs, community group outreach, partnerships) (RCW 43.101.410).

### 401.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Bias-based policing** - An inappropriate reliance on actual or perceived characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, disability, or affiliation with any non-criminal group (protected characteristics) as the basis for providing differing law enforcement service or enforcement.

## 401.2 POLICY

The Bellingham Police Department is committed to providing law enforcement services to the community with due regard for the racial, cultural or other differences of those served. It is the policy of this department to provide law enforcement services and to enforce the law equally, fairly and without discrimination toward any individual or group.

Race, ethnicity or nationality, religion, sex, sexual orientation, economic status, age, cultural group, disability or affiliation with any other similar identifiable group shall not be used as the basis for providing differing levels of law enforcement service or the enforcement of the law.

## 401.3 RACIAL- OR BIAS-BASED PROFILING PROHIBITED

Racial- or bias-based profiling is strictly prohibited. However, nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit an officer from considering factors such as race or ethnicity in combination with other legitimate factors to establish reasonable suspicion or probable cause (e.g., suspect description is limited to a specific race or group).

### 401.3.1 OTHER PROHIBITIONS

The Bellingham Police Department also condemns the illegal use of an individual or group's attire, appearance, or mode of transportation, including the fact that an individual rides a motorcycle or wears motorcycle-related paraphernalia, as a factor in deciding to stop and question, take enforcement action, arrest, or search a person or vehicle with or without a legal basis under the United States Constitution or Washington State Constitution (RCW 43.101.419).

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Additionally, members shall not collect information from a person based on religious belief, practice, or affiliation unless permitted under state law. Members shall not (RCW 42.60.020; RCW 42.60.030):

(a) Provide or disclose to federal government authorities personally identifiable information about a person's religious belief, practice, or affiliation unless the member is being questioned as a witness to a crime.

(b) Assist federal government authorities in compiling personal information about a person's religious belief, practice, or affiliation.

(c) Investigate or enforce any requirement that a person register with the federal government or a federal agency based on religion.

## 401.4 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITY

Every member of this department shall perform his/her duties in a fair and objective manner and is responsible for promptly reporting any known instances of racial- or bias-based profiling to a supervisor.

### 401.4.1 REASON FOR DETENTION

Officers detaining a person shall be prepared to articulate sufficient reasonable suspicion to justify the detention, independent of the individual's membership in a protected class.

To the extent that written documentation would otherwise be completed (e.g., arrest report, Field Interview card), the involved officer should include those facts giving rise to the officer's reasonable suspicion or probable cause for the detention, as applicable.

Nothing in this policy shall require any officer to document a contact that would not otherwise require reporting.

### 401.4.2 REPORTING TRAFFIC STOPS

Each time an officer makes a traffic stop, the officer shall report any demographic information required by the Department (RCW 43.101.410).

## 401.5 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors should monitor those individuals under their command for compliance with this policy and shall handle any alleged or observed violations in accordance with the Personnel Complaints Policy.

(a) Supervisors should discuss any issues with the involved officer and their supervisor in a timely manner.

- Supervisors should document these discussions in the prescribed manner.

(b) Supervisors shall initiate investigations of any actual or alleged violations of this policy.

(c) Supervisors should take prompt and reasonable steps to address any retaliatory action taken against any member of this department who discloses information concerning bias-based policing.

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### 401.6 STATE REPORTING

The Deputy Chief of Operations shall review available data related to traffic stops, including demographic data, existing procedures, practices and training, as well as complaints. The data should be analyzed for any patterns or other possible indicators of racial- or bias-based profiling and included in an annual report for the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (RCW 43.101.410(3)). The Deputy Chief of Operations shall provide this annual report to the Chief of Police for final review and approval.

### 401.7 TRAINING

Each member of this department will be required to complete annual training on this policy to include the prohibition of biased based policing, also known as racial profiling, in order to keep current with changing community trends (RCW 43.101.410).

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