

## Leadership Philosophy and Mutual Expectations

The purpose of this document is twofold. First, I want to share my leadership philosophy with you. Second, I want to outline what I believe are the mutual obligations we have to each other, our chosen profession, the Sheriff's Office and the citizens of Monroe County.

In order to achieve organizational and operational excellence we must be true to each other and ourselves. Leaders in our organization have a responsibility to mentor their subordinates even when it may be painful to do so. Far too often we tell people what we think they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. Likewise, subordinates share a responsibility to be honest and open with their leaders. I pledge to maintain honest and open communication with each of you and my expectation is that you will be honest and open with me.

The law enforcement profession exists to provide services to the citizens who are our "external customers" and we must ensure that they receive the quality of service that they deserve and pay for. As much as we hate to hear it, we do work for our citizens; they are the ones that provide the funding for our existence. It is equally important to remember that the other divisions of the Sheriff's Office are our "internal customers". We should extend to members of other divisions the same level of responsive and quality service that we expect. The term public service is synonymous with customer service, which serves as one of the core principles for how we ought to do business.

We must remember that we do not operate in a defect-free environment. It is easy to cast blame but it is far more difficult to offer effective coaching when mistakes are made. In our roles as mentors, we should recognize when a non-malicious mistake has occurred and give the mistake back to the person who made it so that they can correct and learn from it.

Although policy violations will receive close scrutiny; our policy manual serves as an operational guide. If you should inadvertently violate a provision of our policy manual while performing your duties in accordance with good judgment and our core principles, the technical violation would become less important.

We must always remember that our profession transcends us personally. We owe it to our predecessors and successors to perform our job with honor and to leave our profession a little better than how we found it. We do our profession the ultimate disservice when we see a defect in the organization and fail to correct it or let someone of higher authority know about it. Equally important is that we must constantly seek improvement. We should always challenge our assumptions and look for better, more efficient and more effective ways of doing business. We should engage in critical thinking to improve the organization, our profession and our own careers.

The following are general subject areas that I feel are worthy of discussion:

A. Respect and Courtesy- I will strive to extend respect and courtesy to each of you at all times. I will strive to reprimand in private yet praise in public. As difficult as it may seem at times, as in the case of suspects and arrestees who may not extend the same to you, we all have an obligation to extend courtesy and respect during all work related encounters. Being respectful and courteous during all citizen encounters will reduce the amount of citizen complaints you receive. Respect and courtesy should be the rule of the day and not the exception. There is no room in our profession for those that treat our citizens rudely or in a disrespectful manner.

B. Attitude- I cannot articulate the importance of maintaining a positive attitude. I am keenly aware how difficult this can be in an environment that requires us to work shifts, attend court, constantly assist people in need and deal with the “administration”. Although I wish I had not, there were times in my career when I allowed the conditions of work, failure to get promoted or an overbearing supervisor dictate the tone of my attitude. Maintaining a positive attitude gets easier when we realize that the only thing we can truly control is ourselves. Law enforcement personnel always have difficulty with this because often times our jobs require us to take control. Don’t carry around thoughts and perceptions that have a negative affect on your attitude. If you don’t share these issues with someone, a negative attitude will only feed upon itself. Remember that at the end of the day we have only our families and ourselves. As much as we enjoy our job, it is only a temporary state so allowing it to set the tone for our attitude is clearly a mistake. Every career has “mountaintops” and “valleys”. How we conduct ourselves in the “valley” and how hard we a struggle to get back to the “Mountaintop” truly defines who we are and how successful we will be professionally.

C. Professionalism- Professionalism should be our guidepost as we move our agency forward. Our actions, efforts and decisions should be based on rationality and professionalism. All of my efforts and decisions will be based on what I think will help facilitate the accomplishment of our mission and not based on personalities. Moral and professional courage demand that we selflessly do the right things for the right reasons, even when no one is watching. Collectively, we can have tremendous influence in advancing law enforcement as a profession. As you make the daily decisions that govern your interactions with the public you may ask yourself, “What would the Sheriff do?” I can tell you that if it is right for the citizen and right for the profession, then you conduct yourself to my satisfaction.

D. Moral Courage- When once asked, “What is the most important attribute that a law enforcement officer or support person should possess?” I replied, “Moral courage”. This is a difficult term to describe but in essence it means taking a position even if it is unpopular when it is the right thing to do, it means defending those who have no one to defend them. It is far easier to “run with the herd” but that is not an option in our profession. When we fail to demonstrate “moral courage” our profession suffers and we see destructive problems like abuse of authority, corruption and violation of civil rights.

E. Leadership- It will be my goal to lead by example. Leading by example will also be the goal of all supervisors in the agency. Although we all have different organizational

responsibilities, leaders in the department should not expect subordinates to perform tasks that they themselves would not perform. I will provide active leadership but will allow subordinate leaders and their staff to perform their jobs without the interference of micromanagement. Leaders should feel compelled to offer constructive criticism but should also be willing to receive it. I want myself and all of our supervisors to be the type of leaders that can proudly advance our agency. Everyone in the agency, regardless of assignment, is a leader. Our community looks to us for leadership and I am confident that we will continue to provide it.

F. Communications- I want to be an effective communicator and the best way for me to do that is to focus on my listening skills rather than my speaking skills. I want all of you to feel that our organization encourages and fosters free, open and honest communications. We need to place equal importance on top-to-bottom communications, bottom-to-top communications as well as lateral communications within the organization. I will try to regularly communicate to you my vision for the organization, my expectations and my concerns. Everyone should feel obligated to communicate issues of concern and any methods you feel may improve the organization. Do not let concerns fester, communicate them and it will make all of us more effective. Sometimes honest communications can be painful, but we owe it to each other. The root of all organizational problems can usually be traced to poor or non-existent communications.

G. Rumors and Gossip- It is difficult to eliminate rumors and gossip in the work place. We must remember that oftentimes rumors and gossip can be hurtful, especially when our fellow organization members are the victims of it. Engaging in rumor and gossip is the wrong thing to do, it detracts from our professionalism and it can have a significant negative impact on our morale. Most of us, at one time or another, has engaged in the spreading of a rumor or gossip but it is certainly nothing to be proud of. I am convinced that most of this behavior does not occur because we are afraid people or trying to intentionally hurt one another. The simple fact is that as law enforcement officers, we are predisposed to investigate things based not on personal observation but rather on what someone else said.

H. Empathy and Compassion- Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's position and see things from their perspective. Compassion is concern for another persons suffering. I will always strive to be empathetic and compassionate in my dealing with each of you. Each of you should try to emulate these qualities when interacting with the public and members of your work group. The truth is that if we ever loose the ability to be empathetic and compassionate coming to work becomes almost impossible.

I. "There is nothing I can do"- The absolute last thing our citizens want to hear when they call us for assistance is that "there is nothing I can do". They become frustrated because calling law enforcement may have been their last resort. I pledge to you that I will never say "there is nothing I can do" when you come to me with an issue and my expectation is that you will never say it to one of our citizens. If you respond to a call for service and honestly feel that there is nothing that you can do to help, please tell them that you will have their Sheriff contact them, leave me a message and I will follow up.

We should make every effort to do something for our citizens when they call us even if it is as simple as listening to their problems, offering them advice or linking them up with a social service agency.

J. Know your strengths but understand your weaknesses- It is of course easy to articulate our strengths and the things we do well. It is far more difficult to understand our own weaknesses and take steps to address them. It wouldn't be a bad idea to take a personal inventory once in awhile where you honestly assess your weaknesses and devise a plan for how you may improve.

K. Success empowers us but Failure defines us- As I have alluded to earlier it is easy to predict how we will react during times we are successful e.g. receiving a promotion, graduating from a school, receiving an outstanding evaluation, etc. The key is not how we react to success but rather how we react to failure. Those who stand up quickly after being "knocked down" are those who will, at some point, experience success. Conversely, those in leadership positions will, at some point, be required to administer negative disciplinary action. When discipline is required, leaders should make every effort to encourage and help the recipient of the discipline to learn and get back on their feet.

L. Standards of Conduct- All of us must act in a professional manner at all times. Remember, we represent the law enforcement profession twenty-four hours a day. Everyone in the organization will have an equal opportunity to succeed. Sexual harassment or discrimination in any form will not be tolerated at any level. There are few items that require an organizational "zero-tolerance" response, sexual harassment or discrimination in any form are examples of such items.

M. Off Duty Conduct- We have chosen a profession that requires us to conduct our personal lives in an exemplary manner. Sometimes this seems unfair because after all, we are all human and we all have the potential to make the wrong choices in our personal lives. Everything we do off duty is a reflection on our chosen profession and whatever we do or do not do off duty will be closely scrutinized by other members of our profession and, of course, by members of the media. I will not become involved in what you do or do not do while off duty unless it reflects unfavorably on our agency and more importantly on our profession. I ask that all of us keep in mind the part of the oath of office we swore to that reads, "I will keep my private life unsullied".

N. Support of Each Other- It is critical that we support each other in all that we do. A law enforcement career is difficult and there will be many occasions when we need to support each other professionally, emotionally, personally and at times even spiritually. My commitment to you is that I will always support you in any way that I can and to defend you when it is required. The only time I will withdraw my support is when I feel that you have acted unethically, maliciously or with evil intent. Likewise, I expect you to support your leadership team. After all, we came from the ranks and many of you will be our future's leaders. I know it can be difficult to support management at times but I hope

you feel it is imperative to do so unless you feel that your management team is acting unethically or maliciously.

O. Honesty- We should be honest with each other at all times. More importantly we should be honest with ourselves. Honesty is another example of an area requiring an organizational zero-tolerance approach. The simple fact is the lying in relation to our official duties is unacceptable and will result in the harshest organizational response possible. An old Sergeant wisely told me years ago that it is far better to say, "I made a mistake boss" than to "make a mistake" and lie about it.

P. Pride- We should strive to create and maintain an organization of which we can be proud to be a member. Consider that we do not operate in a vacuum and other agencies provide valuable service to our citizens. There is a significant difference between organization pride and arrogance.

Q. Always Take the Time for People- We should always feel compelled to take the time to talk with our citizens and not give them the impression that they are just another number. I have served with some of the best law enforcement officers who would take as much time talking with a transient as they would a County Commissioner. If you take the time, you may forget the encounter but the citizen never will.

R. Appearance and Physical Fitness- The personal appearance of everyone in the organization should set the standard for the profession. I encourage each of you to maintain some form of a physical fitness program. All research indicates that there is a positive relationship between good physical fitness and good performance and self-esteem. Unfortunately, we are judged by our cover by the public. If our cover does not appear neat and professional, the impression we have will be negative.

S. Safety- Unsafe acts cannot be tolerated and each of you at every level has an obligation to correct them as you become aware of them. If you see an unsafe act and you take action to stop it, you will have an unequivocal support.

T. Recognition- I will always try to recognize and reward excellence. I expect our supervisors and command staff to do the same.

U. Promotions- I will make promotion decisions based on what I think is best for our organization and our citizens. We place far too much emphasis on promotions in our professions, but this is the system we live in. Professionally, there are few things as depressing and disheartening as being passed over for promotion. My experience has been that candidates who do not get promoted draw more attention than those who do. An individual's response to adversity shows true character and attitude. We do not look to the ones selected for promotion; we already know how they will react. Recently, law enforcement executives were surveyed to determine what attribute they assess the most when making promotion decisions. Surprisingly, the executives replied that they did not really look to technical or tactical expertise, or even education or seniority. They replied that the most important attribute when evaluating an employee for promotion was

“ATTITUDE”. It has to be said that promotion and rank do not necessarily indicate professional success. I have known both law enforcement officers with rank who I did not consider professionally successful and others who I considered extremely successful but never made the rank of Sergeant.

V. Decision making- I will seek input when making decisions that affect the organization. As Sheriff, one of my responsibilities is to render all final organizational decisions of a significant nature. Whether or not you agree with them, my decision will be ethical and based on what I feel is best for the organization and the community. My expectation is for you to respond professionally and to support these decisions.

W. Chain of Command- Unlike the military, as a law enforcement agency the strict principle of chain of command is not feasible at all times. As your Sheriff, I will encourage an “open door” policy. Informal matters we need to recognize that professionalism demands keeping your immediate supervisor informed and utilizing the chain of command. There have been organizations that have collapsed under the weight of “chain of command” so, as in the case of policy manuals; if, in an urgent situation, you can justify deviating from it, by all means do so.

X. Discipline- We should use both positive and negative discipline in the work environment. Supervisors should not shirk their responsibility to address issues requiring the application of negative discipline. As Sheriff, I am the final decision making authority regarding the imposition of disciplinary measures that require suspension, demotion or termination from the organization.

Y. Education- We must educate ourselves and stay current with changing trends if we want to be considered professional. Education can occur in many forms including, but not limited to, formal education, in-service training, and attendance at various seminars, self-study and lectures. Education should not be limited to the field of criminal justice, but should include disciplines such as business administration, finance and accounting, information science, social science, public administration, and other sciences such as biology and chemistry. I encourage all of you to engage in academia and research. In today’s environment, formal college education is a requirement for advancement in the ranks of our profession.

The following thoughts do not fall into a specific category but are important and should be mentioned:

1. Loyalty is a two way street
2. Respectful disagreement is not disrespect.
3. The establishment of a “psychological contract” is an important function of supervision at all levels. As Sheriff, I will tell my supervisors where they stand, and, I expect them to do the same with their assigned personnel.

4. If what you do is good for the citizens of our county, then it is good for the Sheriff's Office and me.
5. Give everyone the chance to succeed.
6. Remember, "service first, self second". Never short change our citizens, even when you receive a call for service 10 minutes before the end of your shift.

I encourage you to review this document periodically. There will be occasions when I modify this document in which case I will forward any changes to you.

Thank you for your time.

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Robert P. Peryam  
Sheriff