

General Order

Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

February 8, 2022

NO.

600-40

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 600-40, dated August 9, 2013

SUBJECT: POLICE STOREFRONTS, COMMUNITY SERVICES, AND DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE TEAMS

POLICY

Patrol divisions shall use non-patrol methods, including police storefronts, community officers, and Differential Response Teams, to conduct community outreach, code enforcement, and nuisance abatement. The Narcotics Division's Forfeiture Abatement Support Team (FAST Unit) shall address specific illegal activities covered by Chapter 125 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code using code enforcement and judicial remedies.

This General Order applies to all employees.

DEFINITIONS

Combination. For purposes of this General Order, three or more persons who collaborate in conducting criminal activities.

Common Nuisance. A place a person knowingly maintains where people habitually go for any of the following purposes in direct violation of the Penal or Health and Safety codes:

- a. Prostitution, promotion of prostitution, or aggravated promotion of prostitution.
- b. Gambling, gambling promotion, or communicating gambling information.
- c. Discharging a firearm in a public place or reckless discharge of a firearm.
- d. Engaging in organized criminal activity as a member of a *combination*.
- e. Delivering, possessing, manufacturing, or using a controlled substance.
- f. Trafficking of persons.
- g. Any other conduct or condition as described specifically in the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code §125.001 or other law.

Differential Response Team (DRT). A team of officers that uses problem-solving strategies and implements community policing concepts directly in the neighborhoods by working in partnership with residents and business managers. DRT officers utilize non-traditional policing methodologies to improve the quality of life in the community. DRT officers work proactively to solve problems and reduce the fear of crime at the neighborhood level. This strategy identifies problems and seeks out the root causes of community crime issues. This process then combines government and private resources in efforts to solve the problems.

Police Storefront. A police facility located in the community and manned by civilian police service officers (PSOs) and classified officers who generate incident reports, process requests for action, make referrals to other agencies or City departments, and provide informational services to citizens.

Public Nuisance. As defined in the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code §125.062 and §125.063, a public nuisance is a *combination* or criminal street gang that continuously or regularly associates in gang activities; or the habitual use of a place by a *combination* or criminal street gang for engaging in gang activity.

1 POLICE STOREFRONTS

All police storefronts shall prioritize serving and interacting with the citizens in the community in which they are located. Division commanders are responsible for establishing and maintaining a Citizen Advisory Board within each *police storefront's* jurisdiction. All employees assigned to *police storefronts* shall follow the procedures contained within the department's General Orders and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Any request for a new *police storefront* location shall be initiated by the division commander and may be approved by only the Chief of Police.

2 COMMUNITY SERVICE OFFICERS

Community service officers are responsible for making community presentations and conducting various crime prevention programs, Positive Interaction Programs (PIP), school programs, and other safety related programs. Each patrol division commander shall designate officers to perform those community service duties. Officers may be assigned to work out of storefronts or other divisional locations.

3 DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE TEAMS

The primary responsibility of DRT officers is to proactively identify and address crime issues in their assigned areas to increase the quality of life in the communities, thereby reducing the need for police services. All DRT officers shall attend the departmental certification training and annual update training to maintain their departmental certification. Civilian personnel may attend DRT training at the request of their division commander.

DRT officers are responsible for inspecting convenience stores to ensure compliance with City ordinance. DRT officers are also responsible for conducting regulatory and permitting inspections, in addition to health and fire code investigations. Case files shall be maintained on all investigations and shall include DRT warning forms and regulatory inspection check sheets. Digital photographic evidence shall be stored in the Digital Crime Scene system.

The Chief of Police, or the Chief's designee, shall appoint a citywide DRT coordinator who shall ensure uniformity of DRT operations among the patrol divisions. The coordinator shall supervise and schedule the DRT certification courses and annual update classes in coordination with the Police Academy. The DRT coordinator shall liaison with the municipal prosecutor's office and

other City departments in matters relating to DRT activities. The citywide DRT coordinator shall report annually to the Chief of Police with recommendations for changes in operations or training.

4 NUISANCE ABATEMENT

When an officer identifies or is notified of a potential nuisance and the officer believes the information meets the definition of a *common nuisance* or *public nuisance*, the officer shall inform the concerned division's DRT supervisor of the problem. The officer shall also notify the FAST Unit via email at FAST@HoustonPolice.org of the potential nuisance and communicate as much information as possible (e.g., types of offenses taking place, how the officer became aware of the nuisance, any citizen contact information, and the name and contact number of the division's DRT supervisor).

Divisional DRT officers shall address nuisances, including *common nuisances* or *public nuisances* in their area of responsibility, and shall coordinate the investigation of such nuisances with the concerned division (e.g., nuisances with a narcotics nexus with the Narcotics Division; nuisances with a human trafficking nexus with the Vice Division) and the Crime Suppression Team (CST) over the location of the nuisance.

The FAST Unit shall assist the DRT officers and the concerned divisions by coordinating with appropriate legal departments. When the FAST Unit receives information that a property is a possible nuisance, a FAST Unit supervisor shall determine whether to open a case file for possible legal action or refer it back to the originating or concerned division for further investigation. Upon completion of an investigation, the FAST Unit shall determine whether to forward a case file to the City of Houston Legal Department, Harris County District Attorney's Office, or the Office of the Harris County Attorney for review and further abatement action. The notified legal department is responsible for obtaining a consent agreement or litigating in order to abate problems associated with the nuisance.

If the originating officer receives an update related to final disposition of the case, the officer shall notify the FAST Unit through the chain of command of the outcome. When notified of the outcome by the originating officer or notified legal department, the FAST Unit shall notify the division commanders over the location of the nuisance and the concerned division through the chain of command of the outcome.



Troy Finner
Chief of Police