
Tattoo and body art policy

1025.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish rules that govern the display of tattoos and/or body art worn by personnel on duty and/or in uniform. This policy does not include authorized ear piercing covered under this manual.

1025.2 TATTOOS

The Sheriff has the authority to order uniformed and non-uniformed personnel to cover any body art that is deemed offensive as defined in this policy. In determining if body art is offensive, the Sheriff may consider not only the content of the body art, but also the number and extent of body art being displayed as well as the location of the body art. Personnel shall cover body art deemed offensive with clothing/uniform, skin toned makeup, or an approved patch or wrap. Patches and wraps are:

- (a) To be skin toned
- (b) Not to distract from one's ability to conduct his/her duties
- (c) Be non-offensive, and
- (d) To display no graphics or pictures.

A public display of a tattoo, which is racist, sexist, or otherwise indicative of unlawful discrimination, is unacceptable no matter how short the duration of exposure to the public. Employees needing to change clothing at a call-out (i.e. dive team, etc.) shall do so out of view of the public. If what is worn at the call-out exposes prohibited body art that is normally covered by the uniform, the prohibited item shall be covered (i.e. when wearing a wet suit rolled down exposes prohibited body art on the back, a shirt/jacket should be worn).

Officers or staff working in an undercover or narcotics capacity may receive an exemption from this policy with the approval of the Sheriff.

1025.3 BODY PIERCING

Except for a single stud pierced earring worn in the lobe of each ear, no body piercing shall be visible while any employee is on duty or representing the Department in any official capacity without prior authorization from the Sheriff.

1025.3.1 DEFINITIONS

A. Body Art - tattoos(s), scarification, brandings, and/or piercing as defined in this policy.

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B. Tattoo - the act or practice of marking the skin with indelible designs, forms, figures, art, etc., by making punctures in the skin and inserting pigment. For the purpose of this order, temporary designs applied to the skins exterior are also included.

C. Scarification - the act of intentional cutting of the skin for the purpose of creating a design, form, figure, or art.

D. Branding - the act of intentional burning of the skin for the purpose of creating a design, form, figure, or art.

E. Piercing - (not to include authorized ear piercing under 1044.25) the act of creating a hole in any part of the body for the purpose of inserting an object, jewelry, or ornamentation.

F. Uniformed Personnel - includes those members dressed in department approved uniform attire, whether on or off duty, to include sworn and non-sworn.

G. Non-Uniformed Personnel - includes those members sworn and non-sworn while on duty dressed in approved civilian attire.

H. Offensive - as referenced in this policy, is defined as the public display of one or more pieces of body art that: (1) is inconsistent with maintaining a professional appearance before members of the public and/or department personnel, (2) negatively affects or has the potential to negatively affect relationships either within the department or with members of the public, (3) is considered racist, sexist, or otherwise indicative of unlawful discrimination, or (4) is otherwise detrimental to the employee's performance or to the image, performance, or operations of the department.

1025.4 EXEMPTIONS

Members who seek cultural (e.g., culturally protected hairstyles) or other exemptions to this policy that are protected by law should generally be accommodated (Government Code § 12926). A member with an exemption may be ineligible for an assignment if the individual accommodation presents a security or safety risk. The Sheriff should be advised any time a request for such an accommodation is denied or when a member with a cultural or other exemption is denied an assignment based on a safety or security risk.