**UTPD VAN Applicant Ride-Out Guide 2024**

**Expectations when you contact APD**

1. Please be prepared to book your appointment when you reach out to the department. If you have any questions before you contact the UTPD, please direct those to Sonja Simmons Sonja.simmons@austin.utexas.edu)
2. To schedule ride-outs, please contact Ryann Grindstaff at [Ryann.Grindstaff@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:Ryann.Grindstaff@austin.utexas.edu) & explain you are a VAN Volunteer Advocate Candidate and that you would like to schedule your ride-out. The UTPD is short staffed and extremely busy so please try to make the booking process as easy for them as possible. Be flexible and accommodating!
3. Please have a preferred shift in mind and have a couple of back up shifts in mind as well in the event your desired shift is unavailable. UTPD ride-outs are 2-3 hours. Bring ride out agreement form (below) to each ride-out.
4. Upon booking a shift, the UTPD Supervisor or VAN staff will connect you via with the Officer who will oversee your ride out. This email will include the date, time, location, and counselor’s direct number. VAN will be copied on this email to be made aware of counselor’s name/information for follow up with a Ride Out Evaluation.
5. Do not ask the police department for a ride to or from the ride-out. These ride-outs are a courtesy from the police departments to VAN Volunteer Advocates. We need to make booking as easy as possible for them to facilitate by being prepared. If you need a ride or have questions, please contact VAN staff.
6. On the day of your scheduled shift, all communication is to be done with your assigned Officer (for example, notifying them when you arrive at the substation).

**Shifts and Locations**

You will be riding with an UTPD Officer. Ride-out shifts depart from UTPD Headquarters.

UTPD Headquarters

Robert Dedmon Dr.

Austin, TX 78712

512-471-4441

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**Dress Code**

UTPD recommends “casual conservative professional”. Our goal is to look professional and as objective as possible, and to wear clothing/accessories that don’t pose a hazard.

* **Shoes**: No open-toed shoes or high heels. Sneakers are acceptable as long as they are conservative.
* **Jewelry**: No excessive jewelry. Earring studs are okay.
* **Shirts:** Conservative shirts of all types are approved but must be long enough to cover midsection and be tucked in. No red or very bright colors of clothing.
* **Slacks:** Cargo/tactical type pants and dress pants are allowed. Black pants are best if available. Observers can wear denim pants if they are clean and crisp. No denim pants that appear to be overly worn or with holes. No shorts, dresses, skirts, capris, sweatpants, or yoga pants.
* **Jackets**: It is recommended that you dress in layers due to changing weather and also the possibility that it will be cold in the car with air conditioning.
* **Hats**: To protect yourself from the sun, a plain black or gray hat is approved.
* **General**: No potentially offensive tattoos; if you have them, please cover them up. If you aren’t sure, just ask. No strong cologne or perfume. Alcohol and/or drug use before or during a ride out is strictly prohibited. Even if you have a permit to carry a firearm you are not to have it with you during your ride out. (no weapons of any type)

If any of these requirements violate an ethical or religious principle, please notify VAN at [Sonja.simmons@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:Sonja.simmons@austin.utexas.edu) before you ride out.

Our goal is to look professional and approachable. If UTPD staff determine your dress to be inappropriate, you will be asked to leave.

**Tips**

1. If you are in conversation with an officer and you notice the radio going off or you observe them trying to hear their radio, immediately PAUSE your discussion so they can hear the radio without distraction.
2. Follow officer instructions at all times. Do not interact with community members unless instructed to.
3. How often do you have an opportunity to pick the brain of a first responder or police officer? Utilize this opportunity to better understand their work and their collaboration with VAN! Ask questions!

**Conversation starters**

“What is your favorite part of your job?”

“Can you tell me about your experiences with VAN?”

“What is the most challenging part of your job?”

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