

# A GUIDE TO POLICE SERVICES IN TORONTO



## **A GUIDE TO POLICE SERVICES IN TORONTO**

This booklet is intended to provide information about the police services available in Toronto, how to access police services, and what to expect if you are stopped by the police. It will also explain some of the rights and responsibilities of both community members and the police.

It is the policy of the Toronto Police Service that its members shall not discriminate against any person because of their race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, record of offences, age, marital status, family status, handicap or political or religious affiliation.

In Toronto, police officers regularly walk in their assigned divisions and officers will stop and speak to the people they meet. This type of contact is intended to help the officers and the members of the community become more familiar with each other.



## CONTACTING THE POLICE

The Toronto Police emergency phone number is **9-1-1**.

The phone number for non-emergencies is 416 808-2222.

***911 is for EMERGENCIES ONLY.***

An emergency includes a fire, a crime in progress, or a medical or life-threatening incident that requires an ambulance.

416 808-2222 is used for non-emergencies such as thefts, lost passports, frauds, and car accidents where there are no injuries.

**9-1-1 IS EMERGENCY IN ANY LANGUAGE**

When you call 9-1-1, the operator answers by saying, **“Emergency. Do you require Police, Fire or Ambulance?”**.

If the 9-1-1 operator does not understand the language you are speaking, they will question you to find out what language you speak. If you are unable to communicate for any reason, the operator will immediately send police officers to the address the phone number is assigned to.

If the operator can determine the language that you are speaking, you are connected to the **Language Line Service**. An interpreter who speaks your language will help you to tell the 9-1-1 operator what your emergency is and you will be sent the help that you need.

## WHAT DO I DO WHEN POLICE COME TO MY HOME?

Your home is a very sacred place. In fact, Canadian courts recognize the sanctity of a person's home.

The police can enter your home when

they are invited

there is an emergency situation, such as when you call 9-1-1

a legal document permitting the entry is provided, such as a Search Warrant

If police come to your door, answer the door and acknowledge the police – their priority is to ensure the safety of people.

In many cases, the police officer may not understand or know the different traditions of your culture. It is very important to communicate your needs to the officer. For example, tell the officer if you have designated prayer areas. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand something. Also, don't be afraid to explain specific things that the officer may not understand. The officer is there to serve you and the community.



## **WHAT IF I DON'T SPEAK OR UNDERSTAND ENGLISH?**

For many members of the community, English is a second language.

If you do not speak English, you should try to have a family member or friend assist you in legal matters. If this is not possible, the Toronto Police Service has a list of bilingual police employees who can help you.

Never agree to or sign anything in a legal matter unless you fully understand what you are agreeing to.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN AN OFFICER APPROACHES ME ON THE STREET?**

You can usually identify police officers by their uniform. Sometimes, you may meet officers who are not wearing a uniform. If you have doubts about the identity of a police officer, you can ask for their official identification including the officer's name and the officer's badge number.

Police officers can stop you under three general circumstances:

1. If they suspect that you have committed an offence
2. If they actually see you committing an offence
3. If you are driving

The officer may ask your name, address, what you are doing or where you are going. In some cases, the officer may ask to see your identification. In most circumstances you are not required to produce identification. However, it is advisable to be polite and answer the officer's questions.

If you refuse to answer the officer's questions or the officer thinks you are being evasive, the officer may become more suspicious and investigate more thoroughly. The goal for everyone should be to achieve a resolution or solve the crime.

Police officers have the sworn duty to prevent and investigate crimes and to keep the peace. These duties include interviewing potential witnesses of crimes and interviewing persons who, based on the circumstances appear to be suspicious. If offenders could be identified simply by the way they look or dress, it would be easy to be a police officer, but the fact is police officers have to investigate.

This means that a police officer may ask to speak with you for reasons that might not make sense to you right away. Do not take offence to a police officer asking questions. They are doing their jobs, preventing crime and helping to keep you and the community safe.



## **DO I HAVE TO ANSWER THE OFFICER'S QUESTIONS OR IDENTIFY MYSELF?**

In general, you are under no obligation to identify yourself to a police officer. However, there are exceptions, which include the following:

If you are driving a car

If you have committed a Provincial Offence such as a liquor, trespassing, or driving offence

In these circumstances, it is best to co-operate and answer the officer's questions to avoid being arrested.

If the police suspect that you have committed an offence or are acting suspiciously, they will want to know who you are. There are several reasons for telling the police who you are:

1. If the police are looking for someone else, you may avoid being arrested by showing that you are not that person;
2. If the police think that you have committed an offence, and you do not tell them who you are, they may arrest you and hold you at a police station until they find out who you are;
3. If the police think you have committed a minor offence, and you identify yourself to their satisfaction, they may give you a ticket or a notice advising you when to appear in court rather than arresting you.

## **DOES THE OFFICER HAVE TO TELL ME THE REASON FOR THE STOP?**

**YES!** Police officers are trained to tell people the reason why they were stopped or detained.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN AN OFFICER STOPS ME WHILE I'M DRIVING?**

Police have the authority to stop a car at any time to determine if the driver has consumed alcohol or drugs, the car is mechanically fit, the driver has a valid licence, and the car has valid insurance. The most likely reason the police will stop a car is to investigate a traffic offence.

### **Traffic offences fall into two main categories:**

**Moving Violations:** Speeding, failing to stop at a red light or stop sign, improper lane changes, or following too close to another vehicle.

**Non-moving Violations:** Failing to wear seat belts, broken brake lights, or failing to produce a drivers licence, vehicle registration, or proof of insurance on a vehicle.

### **Other reasons for being stopped when driving include:**

Impaired driving (i.e. drunk driving)

Dangerous driving

Careless driving

Criminal investigations. You or your vehicle and/or its occupants may match the description of a person the officer is looking for.

Safety concerns

R.I.D.E. (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) Spot Checks

For many reasons, traffic stops are the most dangerous aspect of police work. More officers are injured or killed conducting routine traffic stops than any other function. Officers must interpret the actions and behaviour of the occupants of the vehicle, as well as constantly monitoring other traffic. For these reasons, officers are trained in making safe vehicle stops and to follow a set procedure. You may be concerned about the way they approach your car, but it is not meant to intimidate you.

If you are directed to stop by a police officer

Slow down and pull as far off to the right side of the road as possible. Stay inside your vehicle unless directed otherwise by the officer.

Do what the officer tells you to do.

Keep your hands where the officer can see them and don't make any sudden movements.

Be prepared to produce the documents the officer asks you for. As the driver of a car, you are required by law, upon demand of a police officer, to surrender a valid driver's licence, the vehicle and plate portions of the vehicle permit and proof of insurance to the officer.

If a document is in the glove compartment, your wallet or purse, tell the officer that you are getting the document from there before you reach for it.

If you receive a ticket, accept it calmly. Accepting the ticket is not an admission of guilt.

As the driver, you are also accountable for the conduct of your passengers, especially if they are acting disorderly, throwing things out the window or hanging out of the window. You must also ensure all passengers are wearing seat belts.

## WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I AM ARRESTED?

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* sets out rights to protect you if you are arrested or detained by the police. These rights include:

The right to be informed promptly of the reason you have been arrested or detained.

The right to retain and instruct counsel (a lawyer) without delay and to be informed of that right.

The right to telephone any lawyer you wish.

The right to free advice from a legal aid lawyer.

The words “without delay” are interpreted to mean once the situation is in control and the safety of everyone is ensured.

If you are under 18 years of age, you have the additional right of being able to speak with a parent or other appropriate adult as soon as possible. The police must inform and explain these rights to you.

## WHAT IF I AM ARRESTED AND I DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH?

If you are arrested and you do not speak English, the Language Line Service is used to inform you of your right to counsel, to find out if you have any medical conditions, and to explain the conditions of your release from custody.

A yellow identification **Language Line Service** card, placed in each Division Booking Cell area, explains how you can identify the language you speak.

## WHEN CAN A POLICE OFFICER SEARCH ME?

Generally, the police powers to search you depend on the situation and the beliefs of the officer.

If you are arrested, the police can search you and the immediate surroundings including your vehicle if you are in one.

If you are being detained temporarily for investigation or for safety reasons, a police officer may “pat you down” to ensure that you are not carrying a weapon. “Pat you down” or “frisk” means that the officer will search your clothing, including your pockets. It does not involve the removal of any clothing except outerwear such as jackets, hats, gloves or mittens.

You can always refuse to be searched unless arrested; however, you may give permission to be searched to help lessen the suspicion. If you feel that a search is improper, don’t confront the police officer, follow the complaints process listed in this pamphlet or contact a lawyer.



## **WHAT IF I HAVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT THE POLICE?**

You can complain about a policy or service provided by the Toronto Police Service or about the conduct of a police officer.

The Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) serves as a civilian oversight of the external complaint process. The role of OPIRD is to make sure that public complaints are dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.

To obtain an OIPRD complaint form or further information on how to file a complaint you can visit any police station, access the Toronto Police Service website, or access the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) website.

Generally, complaints must be filed within 6 months of when the incident took place.

### **To reach the Office of the Independent Police Review Director:**

In the Toronto area:

Telephone: (416) 246-7071

Facsimile: (416) 416-327-8332

Website: [www.oiprd.on.ca](http://www.oiprd.on.ca)

Office of the Independent Police Review Director  
655 Bay Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 2T4

## HOW DO I BECOME A POLICE OFFICER?

The Toronto Police Service is actively seeking people who represent the diverse communities of our city to become police officers.

To be considered for a career in policing, you must meet certain minimum requirements as outlined in the Police Services Act. Specifically you must:

- be a Canadian citizen or permanent residency status in Canada;
- be between 18 - 65 years of age;
- be physically, and mentally able to perform the duties of the position, having regard to your own safety, and the safety of members of the public;
- have successfully completed grade 12 or its equivalent. When education has been completed outside Ontario, official proof of equivalency must be obtained by contacting the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training;
- be of good moral character and habits, meaning that you are an individual other people would look upon as being trustworthy and having integrity;
- possess a valid Ontario driver's license with full G license privileges and no more than six accumulated demerit-points;
- have current certification in standard First Aid/CPR Level C by the time of your ECI interview;
- be able to pass a security clearance as well as background investigation, credit and reference checks.

For further information, go to the Toronto Police Service website at [www.torontopolice.on.ca](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca) or call 416 808-JOIN (5646)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Toronto Police Service has created a number of resources that individuals and groups can access to find out more about police services in Toronto. These resources include:

- Newcomer Outreach Website
- “Guide to Police Services in Toronto” Pamphlet
- “Guide to Police Services in Toronto” DVD
- Lesson Plans
- Discussion Guides
- Translated Pamphlet List
- Interpreter Services Information

All of this information can be accessed through the Toronto Police Service website at [www.torontopolice.on.ca](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca) and clicking on the “Newcomer Outreach” link [www.torontopolice.on.ca/communitymobilization/newcomer](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/communitymobilization/newcomer).

Most of these resources can be downloaded or ordered free of charge.

If you have any questions or comments, you can

visit the website [www.torontopolice.on.ca](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca)  
email [communitymobilization@torontopolice.on.ca](mailto:communitymobilization@torontopolice.on.ca)  
call the Community Mobilization Unit at 416 808-7070.