

Ethics and law enforcement essay

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**“ Our law is by definition a codification of morality”
(Barack Obama, 2006)**

The chief duty of a police officer is to enforce the law. Law enforcement is a profession with a code of ethics. Ethics is a set of standards of behavior expected by the group to which the individual belongs. In adhering to these standards, a police officer learns ethical behavior and develops ethical decision-making skills. A strong ethical base is essential to meet the challenges of law enforcement, because every day a police officer must make choices and act—under pressure, on the spot, with little or no information—and balance the competing and conflicting values and interests of his profession and those of society.

Society holds police officers to a higher standard of conduct because they are empowered to suspend our constitutional rights to uphold the law. And yet, police officers must also lie to kidnappers, induce crime when undercover, fool the media, deceive criminals, invade privacy, manipulate the truth, use excessive force, and deadly force—in the “ name of the law.”

Ethics is developed and maintained through association with ethical members and elements of society, but association with the unethical and immoral is inherent in the law enforcement profession; and unless an officer has a strong moral core, the lines between “ right” and “ wrong” may begin to blur, and the end result may be police corruption, or police brutality. Police corruption and brutality are rare, but occur often enough to have eroded the public trust. There must exist truth and integrity between the police and the community it serves for law enforcement to operate effectively. Police officers enforce the law, but citizens remain the first line of

defense; they make the phone-calls, they witness and identify, they provide evidence; and in court, they are the ultimate enforcers of the law.

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