Biased policing
A guide for community education and awareness

This brochure is designed to educate the community on the issue of biased policing, including what it is and what to do if you believe you have been a victim of biased policing.

OUR VISION
Our vision is a safer Highlands County where citizens and law enforcement are joined together; the rights of all persons are respected; and community values are reflected.

OUR MISSION
The Highlands County Sheriff’s Office is committed to protecting life, property, and individual rights while maintaining peace and order.

OUR PROMISE
Our promise is to deliver ethical and effective services to all of Highlands County in a professional and responsive manner that demonstrates our commitment to honoring the public trust.
As Sheriff, I am committed to respecting the rights of all persons involved in the criminal justice system. We are here to protect the community. Sheriff’s Office deputies are required to use skills developed through observation, training and experience in order to identify suspicious circumstances, unusual occurrences and violations of law (ordinances, criminal and traffic), and to act according to the situation.

We contact people who, according to our training, experience, and knowledge, are in a place or are acting in a way to make us believe that a crime was committed, is about to be committed or is in the process of being committed. This proactive approach aids in the detection and apprehension of criminals, maintains the safety of our streets and highways, and protects our citizens and community from crime.

We want to do the right thing. Discriminatory enforcement practices can alienate our citizens, foster distrust of deputies in the community, invite media scrutiny, legislative action and judicial intervention, and potentially lead to allegations of constitutional and civil rights violations.

As we perform our duties, it is imperative that we afford all citizens the Constitutional and fundamental right to equal protection under the law.

Thank you

Sheriff Paul Blackman
What is biased policing?
The inappropriate consideration of specified characteristics while enforcing the law or providing police services. Specified characteristics includes, but it not limited to, race, ethnic background, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, age, disability, political status, or any other legally protected characteristics.

The Highlands County Sheriff’s Office is committed to unbiased profiling. Investigative detentions, traffic stops, arrests, searches, and property seizures by deputies will be based on a standard of reasonable suspicion or probable cause in accordance with the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Deputies must be able to articulate specific facts and circumstances that support reasonable suspicion or probable cause for investigative detentions, traffic stops, arrests, non-consensual searches, and property seizures.

How to report biased policing
Citizens who feel they have been stopped or searched due to bias-based profiling are encouraged to file a complaint with the Sheriff’s Office.

Complaints may be filed in person, by mail, electronic mail, or by telephone. To file a complaint in writing or by email, please include all the facts, names, dates, and places known. Please include as much detail as possible.

All complaints will be investigated.

Contact Information
Highlands County Sheriff’s Office
400 S. Eucalyptus Street
Sebring, FL 33870
(863) 402-7200
Website: www.highlandssheriff.org