

# Political Accountability Sheet for Veterans

## Title

Holding All People Accountable, modern crimes and policing protocol for veterans

## Purpose

This sheet provides a concise, practical guide for policymakers, law enforcement, veteran advocates, and community stakeholders. It focuses on modern crimes that often intersect with veteran populations, and on policing protocols that promote safety, accountability, and trauma informed responses.

## Scope

This document covers common modern crimes, relevant legal and regulatory frameworks, recommended policing protocols for interacting with veterans, accountability measures for investigations, and resources for reporting and support. It is not legal advice. Local law and departmental policy will vary, and those should be consulted for operational decisions.

## Key Definitions

- Veteran, any person who served in an armed force, active duty or reserve, honorably or otherwise, where relevant to local law and services.
- Trauma informed policing, an approach that recognizes the impact of trauma on behavior, and prioritizes safety, trust, and collaboration.
- Co responder model, a response strategy where mental health professionals accompany or assist law enforcement on calls involving behavioral health.

## Modern Crimes of Concern, brief descriptions

1. Cyber intrusions and doxxing, online harassment, illegal access to systems, and digital privacy violations affecting veterans or perpetrated by them
2. Identity theft and benefits fraud, theft of VA or social security benefits, forgery of service records
3. Human trafficking and labor exploitation, veterans as targets or as persons coerced into illicit networks
4. Domestic violence and family harm, including firearms related incidents, often complicated by trauma and PTSD
5. Extremist recruitment and private militias, online radicalization that may target or involve veterans
6. Financial scams, predatory lending, veteran targeted investment or charity fraud
7. Illegal weapons trafficking and unregistered firearms, including straw purchases and prohibited transfers
8. Hate crimes and targeted harassment, either suffered by veterans of certain backgrounds, or committed by them

## Legal Framework and Statutory Considerations

- Federal statutes that commonly apply, including fraud, cybercrime, trafficking, and firearms laws. Consult specific code sections and local statutes.
- Protections for persons with mental health conditions, including due process rights during evaluation and involuntary commitment where applicable.
- Privacy and records law, balancing transparency in accountability with protected health information and privacy of service records.

## Policing Protocols for Interacting with Veterans

### Pre contact and intelligence

- Use available, verified information to plan responses. Identify veteran status when possible, without making assumptions.
- Check for active orders, prior incidents, restraining orders, and known mental health flagging in compatible databases. Respect privacy rules.

### Approach and communication

- Announce presence clearly, identify officers, and explain purpose of the contact in plain language.
- Use calm, measured tones, and avoid sudden movements that may trigger trauma responses.
- Ask permission when possible for simple actions like entering a property, and explain legal basis when permission is not sought.

### Trauma informed techniques

- Recognize signs of PTSD, TBI, or other service related conditions. Slow the interaction, use open body language, and allow space.
- Avoid forcible restraint unless there is imminent risk. Consider lower physical presence and give clear, short instructions.

### De escalation and use of force

- Prioritize verbal de escalation and time, distance, and cover techniques when appropriate.
- Use of force decisions must follow law and departmental policy, with higher scrutiny when an individual is a known veteran with mental health indicators.
- Document decision making in real time where possible, and require supervisor review after any use of force involving a veteran.

### Search, arrest, and evidence handling

- Obtain searches and arrests under standard legal procedures. Be mindful of medical or service records, and avoid unnecessary exposure.
- Preserve digital evidence carefully, using forensic protocols for devices and online accounts.

- Chain of custody must be maintained, with transparent logging and independent oversight where appropriate.

## Medical and mental health interventions

- If behavioral or medical crisis is suspected, activate co responder or mobile crisis teams where available.
- Transport to medical facilities rather than jail when clinically indicated and legally permissible, while documenting probable cause for any detention.

## Coordination with Veteran Services

- Notify VA or veteran specific community organizations when lawful and appropriate, to facilitate care and benefits support.
- Use existing veteran treatment courts, diversion programs, and community supervision when the offense and public safety allow.
- Establish memoranda of understanding with VA mental health providers for timely access to care and record sharing, within privacy rules.

## Accountability Mechanisms and Oversight

- Internal affairs and investigations should follow transparent procedures, with timelines, status updates, and independent review of serious incidents.
- Civilian review boards, ombuds offices, and inspector general entities should be empowered to review complaints involving veterans, and to require remedial action.
- Body camera and audio recording policies should be clear, with retention schedules, audit trails, and public reporting of misconduct investigations consistent with privacy law.
- Early intervention systems for officers, to identify problematic use of force or conduct patterns, and to require retraining or discipline.

## Transparency and Reporting

- Public reports should aggregate data on incidents involving veterans, including arrests, use of force incidents, deaths in custody, and referrals to mental health services.
- Provide clear guidance for filing complaints, with multiple access pathways, including anonymous reporting where permitted.

## Rights of Veterans in Interactions with Police

- Right to remain silent and to an attorney during custodial interrogation.
- Right to medical care and reasonable accommodations for disabilities.
- Right to file complaints and to receive information about the outcome of investigations where permitted by law.

## Recommendations for Policy Makers and Agencies

1. Implement trauma informed training for all officers, with annual refreshers, and specialized modules on TBI, PTSD, and military culture.

2. Fund co responder and mobile crisis units that work with law enforcement, with measured pilot programs and outcome evaluations.
3. Create interagency data sharing protocols that respect privacy, while allowing real time flags for high risk situations.
4. Expand diversion, treatment court, and reentry programs tailored to veterans, with performance metrics and independent audits.
5. Mandate public transparency for incidents involving veterans, including timely release of key facts and non identifying aggregate statistics.
6. Strengthen protections against predatory financial schemes aimed at veterans, combined with public education campaigns.

## Quick Action Checklist for Officers

- Identify veteran status if known.
- Slow down, and call for co responder if behavioral health crisis suspected.
- Use plain language, one instruction at a time.
- Avoid sudden movements.
- Document contacts, and notify supervisor for any use of force.
- Preserve digital evidence, and log chain of custody.

## Quick Guide for Veterans, rights, and resources

- You have the right to ask for identification, and to ask whether you are free to leave.
- If you are in crisis, volunteer to accept medical evaluation, or request a co responder if available.
- If arrested, request an attorney immediately.
- Report misconduct to the agency, civilian review board, or inspector general, and seek support from veteran legal aid organizations or veterans service organizations.

## Appendix, templates and forms

- Incident information checklist, short form to capture time, location, parties, witness contacts, body cam IDs, and evidence tags.
- Supervisor use of force review template, with prompts for de escalation attempts, mental health indicators, command decisions, and external notification triggers.
- Sample memorandum of understanding language for VA and law enforcement collaboration, focusing on timely care access, privacy, and data sharing.

## Closing note

This sheet is designed to be pragmatic, humane, and enforceable. It centers accountability, both for public safety and for the wellbeing of veterans. Local adaptation is essential. For implementation, consult legal counsel, VA partners, and community stakeholders to refine protocols and ensure compliance with applicable law.

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