

OREGON DPSST
ETHICS BULLETIN

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The Board on Public Safety Standards and Training (BPSST) has the legislative mandate to establish and enforce the physical, mental, and moral fitness standards for all law enforcement officers, telecommunicators and emergency medical dispatchers in the state.

This requirement also defines the procedure for the Department and Board to use when denying or revoking certification of an officer, telecommunicator or emergency medical dispatcher who has fallen below the moral fitness standards.

The Ethics Bulletin is published to provide insight into the types of misconduct that could result in revocation or denial of certification. The following cases of misconduct resulted in **revocation and denial** of certifications by DPSST in **September 2004**.

Case 1

Officer A resigned and shortly thereafter was arrested for Assault, Menacing and Harassment. Officer A pled guilty to felony Assault which involved domestic violence and occurred in the presence of a minor child. Officer A and his girlfriend engaged in an argument that escalated into a physical assault. Officer A then threatened to drown his girlfriend in the hot tub. **Officer A's conduct resulted in the revocation of his nearly 26-year Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Police certifications.**

Case 2

Officer B resigned after being convicted in U.S. District Court of knowingly and willfully selling firearms to a convicted felon. Officer B voluntarily signed a Stipulated Order revoking his certification. Officer B's conduct ended his 2-year career.

Officer B's Basic Corrections certification was Revoked.

Case 3

Officer C was discharged for cause after an internal investigation revealed that he had an ongoing sexual relationship with a staff member, while on duty, in uniform, and at work. Officer C also engaged in making sexual comments to co-workers and touching them inappropriately. The employer found that although some of the affected staff members did not file a complaint, Officer C violated the agency policies of failing to maintain a respectful and professional workplace and failing to relate to all employees in a business-like manner.

Officer C requested a hearing to contest the revocation action and after hearing the matter, the Administrative Law Judge issued a Proposed Order to revoke Officer C's certification.

There were no exceptions filed. Officer C's conduct ended his 4-year career.

Officer C's Basic Corrections certification was Revoked.

Case 5

Officer D resigned while under investigation for having an inappropriate relationship with an inmate. Officer D admitted engaging in the relationship with the inmate for several months which had begun with casual conversation and progressed to ongoing letter writing. Officer D signed a voluntary Stipulated Order revoking his certification. Officer D's conduct ended his 5-year career.

Officer D's Basic Corrections certification was Revoked.

Case 6

Officer E was discharged for cause after an internal investigation revealed that he had conspired with an inmate to have illegal steroids purchased and brought into the institution, that he had an inappropriate relationship with two male inmates, and that he solicited financial advice from an inmate. During the investigation, Officer E was untruthful with investigators. Officer E's conduct ended his 13-year career.

Officer E Basic Corrections certification was Revoked.

Case 7

Officer F was discharged for cause after he drove to his estranged wife's home and became involved in a domestic disturbance with her that turned into a physical altercation consisting of pushing and shoving. When Officer F saw a male in the residence, he drew his firearm and pointed it at the male causing him to fear for his life. Officer F's employer found him to be in violation of several agency policies that included Professional Conduct, Truthfulness, Unsafe Acts and Use of Force. Officer F requested a hearing to contest the revocation action and after hearing the matter, the Administrative Law Judge issued a Proposed Order to revoke Officer F's certifications. Officer F's conduct ended his 11-year career.

Officer F's Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Corrections certifications were Revoked.

Shared Responsibility – The Next Step In Professional Ethics

Whenever an incident of unethical conduct, corruption, or brutality occurs in a department, not only are the employees in that department tainted by the actions of a few, but law enforcement as a profession is also tainted. An essential element of a profession is the requirement of self-policing, and each officer and employee of a law enforcement agency has the shared responsibility of policing the actions of other employees.

Shared responsibility means that every officer involved in [an incident] is responsible for how the action is handled, not just the highest ranking or the most senior or the primary officer. The corollary of that concept is that any officer who sees another acting unethically or contrary to policy or law has an affirmative duty to intervene—regardless of relative rank or seniority.

The concept of shared responsibility builds effectively on already ingrained aspects of police culture. Cops watch out for each other in terms of physical danger all the time. It's a small step to extend that watchfulness to ethical danger as well. Cops are loyal to each other. What higher form of loyalty is there than preventing one's partner from doing something that could ruin his or her career or even result in prison time? Policing depends on teamwork. What better example of good teamwork is there than working together to ensure that an incident is handled the right way?

Reprinted excerpts with permission from author Dr. Patricia Robinson, retired from the Madison, Wisconsin Police Department, and a member of the IACP Police Image and Ethics Committee. Permission also granted by IACP Police Chief Magazine, please visit <http://www.theiacp.org> to read the complete article.

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