



WESTWOOD

Police Explorer Post 516

Honoring Traditions of Service and Excellence.



Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in Westwood's Police Explorer Post, a community service program for young adults that has proudly served the Police Department and the Town since 1979.


At its core, the program is about learning how to serve the community while challenging our explorers to find their voice and develop their inherent skills to become excellent and confident in who they are. As historian and philosopher Will Durant wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Below, you will find frequently asked questions about the program. We are proud to work with a group of such remarkable young adults and help them discover a respect for community service and the joy of excellence.

Respectfully,



D/Sgt. Christopher Aylward
Administrative Advisor



Sgt. Mark Hedberg
Operations Advisor



Ofc. Michael Parr
Instructional Advisor



CCO Steven Cromack
Organization Advisor

What's a police explorer?

Exploring is the interactive, worksite-based career education program of [Learning for Life](#), an affiliate of the Boy Scouts of America. Exploring posts are sponsored by local businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations and usually focus on a single career field. The Westwood Police Department sponsors Westwood's Explorer Post, which operates under a charter from the [Spirit of Adventure Council](#) for the Boy Scouts of America.

What do explorers do?

Police explorers meet at the police station each month's second and fourth Tuesday year-round from 7 to 9 pm. Topics covered include constitutional law, criminal law and procedure, and hands-on, practical simulations of law enforcement calls for service, duties, tactics, and functions.

Guest speakers and field trips come from partnerships with state and federal agencies. Explorers also assist the Department with traffic and crowd control at public events, safety campaigns, or during emergencies. Once trained, explorers also have the opportunity to participate in a structured ride-along with patrol officers, detectives, and the police prosecutor at Dedham District Court or sit inside the state-of-the-art 911 center. Also, explorers compete at the annual statewide competition against other explorer posts, cadets, and high school criminal justice programs.

So, the program is for those considering a law enforcement career?

Yes and no. In the last ten years, only about 13 percent of our explorers have been working toward or are working as police officers. Most of our explorers pursue various careers outside public safety. However, this program is for you if you want to consider a law enforcement or public safety career at the local, state, or federal level.

Is it like another school course just offered at the police station?

The explorer program is not school or an evening course. It is an experiential learning program (learning by doing and reflecting) that uses scenario-based police training as a means to explore a career in law enforcement while also developing transferable skills beneficial in any profession but not taught in schools. These skills include:

critical reflection	engagement	proactivity	reasoning
critical thinking	flexibility	problem-solving	self-defense
de-escalation	inflection	rapport-building	situational awareness
discretion	instinct	reflex development	
emotional intelligence	introspection		

How old do you need to be to become an explorer?

Applicants must be age 14 (or graduated eighth grade) through age 20. Explorers may remain on the roster until their 21st birthday.

Is the program only for Westwood residents?

Nope. The program is open to residents of Westwood and, if space allows, residents of surrounding communities. Most explorers are Westwood residents; however, in the past, explorers have come from communities across Norfolk, Middlesex, Essex, Plymouth, and Suffolk counties.

How many explorers participate in the program?

Currently, we have 20 actively participating explorers on the roster. Meeting space and policy preclude the roster from exceeding its current number. Roster spots usually become available as seniors graduate, many of whom joined as ninth graders.

Is there an attendance policy?

Yes, explorers are expected to attend 80% of meetings during the calendar year, September through June. During July and August, attendance is not mandatory, and participation hours accrue toward the overall community service hours total.

What happens if I play a sport and my practice or game schedule conflicts with a meeting night?

We have one, two, and three-season athletes in the program. Explorers meet with the advisors to discuss the logistics of their athletic schedules and maintain regular communication about their schedules. Accommodations may include using some absences for games, arriving late, leaving early, or, in some cases, a seasonal leave of absence. Attendance is expected to be pristine outside their athletic season(s).

Does the program award community service hours?

Since explorers are learning how to assist the Department, every hour is logged as community service. Participating for 100 hours during twelve calendar months makes an explorer eligible for the [President's Volunteer Service Award](#), which includes a letter from the President of the United States, a pin to wear on the uniform, and recognition before the Westwood Select Board.

Do you have any testimonials from any participants?

Here is an explorer's college admissions essay about their experience in the program that illustrates what has been explained above:

I arrest people every other Tuesday.

At 11:00 pm on a Tuesday, I spotted a vehicle near the woods blasting music so loud the car was practically bouncing. The time of night and location of the vehicle screamed suspicious activity, and without a second thought, I took a left in my cruiser to approach the tan Toyota Corolla. Suddenly, its reverse bulbs flashed a dangerous smirk in my direction. I slammed on my brakes just as I pulled up behind the car. Why on earth is he in reverse?

"HEY!" I shouted, rolling down my window, "PARK YOUR CAR!"

The driver, who finally spotted my police cruiser behind him, hastily switched into park and shut off the music. I approached the vehicle and asked for a driver's license and registration. While he fished in his wallet for his identification, I scanned the interior of the Toyota: three guys in total, probably teenagers. The boys kept eyeing each other, twiddling their thumbs nervously. I noted the weird atmosphere but did not want to jump to any conclusions.

That is until the driver, with his most serious expression, handed me identification that looked like an arcade prize: a Bananaville driver's license with a photo ID of a laughing chimpanzee. The piece of paper had a license number of 2COOL4U and was even "verified" with a banana stamp. No doubt about it. He was driving under the influence.

Or roleplaying as if he was.

I arrest people every other Tuesday. But it is all a simulation. During my Freshman year, I joined Police Explorers, a program in which students learn criminal law by completing simulations as police officers. For the first time, I was learning by taking on risky real-world situations officers engage in rather than poring over textbooks in a traditional classroom setting. But when you are in situations in which a driver refuses to hand over his license, or an ex-husband breaks his restraining order, there is no written guide that tells you what to do. Even the most experienced officers and students in the program debate about the best way to deal with the realistic scenarios handed to us. Because of my deeper understanding of the American criminal justice system, the laws and ethics that I previously viewed as straightforward

and indisputable became clouded with ambiguity. How do I know that I am doing the right thing? What even is “right”?

I attempted to answer these questions by putting myself in the shoes of people who hold power within the other divisions of the legal system. Whether it is proving my client’s innocence in Mock Trial or representing a developing country in Model United Nations, listening to opposing positions has helped me overcome the limitations of only seeing the world through my point of view. It has showcased that no law or political action can be categorized as simply “right” or “wrong,” that there is no possibility of a perfect outcome because the world is a vast accumulation of diverse viewpoints. But even though laws cannot be perfect, the power is within people to improve aspects of society where the laws fall short. So many intolerant beliefs and harmful policies stem from ignorance or indifference, and great outcomes can occur if people strive to understand each other’s perspectives.

Ironically, it is simulations that have provided me with the most valuable lessons that I apply to my everyday life. The risks I have taken, and even the mistakes that I have made, have helped me build my confidence, find my voice, and pursue my personal growth. Police Explorers has served as a catalyst that has pushed me out of my comfort zone and awakened my authentic interest in the real-world issues that surround me. I do not know what my future holds, but I do know that just like handcuffs, things will click.

This explorer matriculated into Northeastern University’s Politics & Philosophy program and currently works in a profession outside of public safety.

When do you accept new explorers?

While admission is rolling, we generally begin enrollment in June when we know which explorers, if any, will be vacating their spots. Interviews are conducted during July, and new explorer orientation is held in August.

How do I apply if I am interested?

You may request an application on our [website](#). Please do not hesitate to contact CCO Steven Cromack at scromack@westwoodpd.org with any additional questions about the program.