



USE OF INFORMANTS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

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Twenty first century law enforcement officers must know that one of the more critical, and scrutinized, aspects of their job is the use of informants. When the word “informant” is spoken in police circles, most immediately think of narcotics enforcement but informants are critical to all types of investigations, to include, but not limited to, homicides, burglaries, robberies, and pornography cases. Informants are anyone providing information to law enforcement whether receiving monetary compensation or not. With that in mind, please review these issues to be considered when utilizing informants.

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY:

- ♦ The Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Services (KLCIS) strongly recommends that all departments have a policy relating to the use of informants. The KLCIS informant model policy can be found at https://www.klcis.org/UserFiles/Files/POLICY-Confidential_Informants_10_12_2016.doc.
- ♦ Any informant to be used by the department should be documented, with the exception being information received anonymously.
- ♦ The informant file should be closely guarded with a designated commanding officer keeping strict control of all files in a secured and locked area. The file should contain information regarding the informant, to include (at a minimum) a current photograph, personal identifiers, copy of state authorized identification, fingerprints, and a criminal history. Additionally, any previous information provided by the informant should be documented to show the reliability of the source.
- ♦ The informant should also be required to sign a confidential agreement stating the expectations of the department while the informant is working with them. This form and any payment forms should also be included in the secured informant file.



TYPES OF INFORMANTS:

When utilizing informants, it is important to consider which category an informant fits into. This will help law enforcement personnel determine the informant’s motivation for providing information. There are several types of informants.

- ♦ Criminal defendants- individuals who are providing information for consideration in court. Information gained from defendants should be thoroughly vetted, as their motivation may cause them to fabricate or embellish the facts.
- ♦ Those seeking monetary reward- individuals who seek financial compensation for their information. As with criminal defendants, be aware that the informant’s motivation may cause them to embellish information provided to law enforcement.
- ♦ Concerned citizens- individuals who provide information due to a strong sense of moral obligation (often family members or neighbors of suspects).
- ♦ Anonymous tipsters- individuals who provide information to law enforcement who “don’t want to get involved,” often due to fear of retribution from the target of the information.

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- ♦ Business professionals- often employers of the suspect, hotel/motel staff & rental car agency staff (primarily in narcotics investigations) as well as postal carriers (the eyes and ears of the neighborhood, especially if delivering the mail on foot).

Additionally, informants often provide information to eliminate competition (primarily in narcotics investigations) or out of anger or revenge (scorned spouses or significant others).

Please remember that the information contained in this Blue Paper is not all inclusive, but is merely a guide when considering departmental use of informants. Our KLCIS model policy, and all associated forms, are available at KLC.org.



Questions? KLC is here to help!

Please contact John Clark (jclark@klc.org) or Brian Nunn (bnnun@klc.org) with KLC Loss Control Law Enforcement at 800.876.4552 or visit klc.org for more information.



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