

## **IF THE POLICE COME KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR ....**

If the police knock at your door and **ask** to come into your home, you **do not** have to let them in **unless** they have a warrant that has been signed by a judge, or under emergency circumstances, or the officer is in pursuit of a suspect. Ask to see the warrant. If it is an **ARREST WARRANT**, make sure that you look at the name on the warrant to be sure the police have the right person. If it is a **SEARCH WARRANT**, make sure it is for your specific address and check to see what is listed on the warrant to be searched for in your home or location. The warrant gives the officer(s) the legal right to temporarily seize the listed property on the warrant.

The police may also search **without** a warrant whenever they have arrested a person. They may search his or her person and the immediate area where the arrest was made.

The police may also search after **consent** is given. If you object to their request to search, be sure to make it clear that you **do not** agree to any kind of search. They may also search when there is an emergency (for example, someone screaming for help inside your home) or when they are chasing you or someone else into your home (hot pursuit).

If the police do not have a warrant, you **may**, but **do not** have to let them in, **UNLESS** they demand to come in. Perhaps you can settle this matter at the door, if they do insist on coming in over your objections then:

- \* Ask to see identification or a police badge.
- \* Let them in only after they demand to come in.
- \* If you object, then make sure you tell them you **DO NOT** consent to **any** search.
- \* Remember the badge numbers and the names of the officers. Write it all down. The officers usually have business cards, feel free to ask the officer(s) for one.

## **REMEMBER**

1. If the police have stopped you, they **THINK** they have a reason to do so.
2. It is best to be cool and calm and identify yourself.
3. If an unmarked car signals you to pull over at night and you are not sure the person is a Police Officer, put your 4-way flashers and dome light on and **slowly** drive to the nearest well lit public area. Unmarked police cars used for traffic stops are equipped with RED & BLUE lights.
4. **DON'T THREATEN OR TOUCH THE OFFICER(S), Keep your hands and your feet to yourself, doing otherwise will probably get you arrested.**
5. **DON'T MAKE THE SITUATION WORSE THAN IT ALREADY IS.**
6. Under Pennsylvania law, you **may not** use force to resist a legal or illegal arrest. Remember you have the right to contest the validity of your arrest later on in court.
7. If you are given a ticket, you have a right to a hearing in front of the District Justice, if you do not agree with the District Justice's decision you have a right to appeal.
7. If you are arrested you have the right to a preliminary hearing, in which the police must show why you were arrested.

8. If you feel you were legitimately treated unfairly by a **MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICER(S)** you have the right to file a complaint with the Chief of Police or Superintendent of Police. If you are dissatisfied with the Chief's or Superintendent's response, you can file a complaint with the Elected Officials who oversee the Police Department such as the Mayor, Police Commissioner or Township Manager. If you are dissatisfied with that response, you have the right to file a complaint with the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office, Investigative Affairs Committee and if you choose you can pursue a civil action.