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Sheriff

# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

## Organizational Direction

<b>Distribution:</b>	<b>All Personnel</b>		<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>ADM 0202</b>
<b>Responsible Unit:</b>	<b>Administrative Services Division</b>		<b>Rescinds:</b>	<i>ADM 0202 (dated 02/8/22)</i>
<b>Original Issued Date:</b>	<b>02/27/23</b>	<b>Revision #:</b>	<b>Latest Revision Date:</b>	<b>01/28/26</b>
<b>Required 3-Year Review was Completed:</b>	<b>01/28/26</b>	<b>Next Review Due:</b>	<b>02/28/29</b>	

### 1. Purpose

To define and describe the organizational direction of the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO).

### 2. Policy

The HCSO will provide all employees with a detailed description of the HCSO command structure to ensure they understand their responsibility and authority within the Agency.

### 3. Definitions

**ACCOUNTABLE:** required to provide a justification for actions or decisions.

**AUTHORITY:** the right to control, command or determine the outcome.

**LAWFUL ORDER:** any order, either verbal or written, which an employee should reasonably believe to be in keeping with the performance of his duties or the responsibilities of his assignment.

**RESPONSIBLE:** answerable for something within one's power or control.

### 4. Procedures

#### A. Authority, Accountability & Responsibility

1. Authority to execute the required activity of a Division, Precinct, Section, Unit, Team or Detail will be delegated by the Sheriff, through the chain of command, to individual employees.
2. At every level, employees will be given the authority to make decisions that are necessary for the effective completion of their responsibilities.
3. Every employee will be held accountable for his performance and the performance of any employee he supervises.
4. Accountability will include the use of, or failure to use, delegated authority in accomplishing the responsibilities of their position.
5. All employees will be organizationally accountable to only one supervisor at any time.

6. Each supervisor:
  - a. Has a specific functional area (unit) over which he has supervisory or command responsibility at all times;
  - b. Is responsible for the performance of his unit and the performance and conduct of his subordinates;
  - c. May delegate the authority to complete a duty or task to any employee within his chain of command, unless that duty has been specified as non-delegable (e.g., when a deputy submits a request to engage in secondary employment, his commander must personally contact the proposed employer to determine if the request may be granted, etc.);
  - d. Retains responsibility for any duty or task that he delegates; and
  - e. Is responsible for completing the [SO-408](#), Succession Document, to ensure important supervisory information is not lost in succession of the role. Division Commanders will ensure the Succession Documents are completed prior to the change of command and maintained in the shared drive.
7. Each unit will be under the direct command of only one supervisor at any time.

B. Chain of Command

1. The chain of command will be the line of authority which extends from the Sheriff through a single person at each level of supervision to the level of execution.
2. Unless stated otherwise, all HCSO communications will follow the chain of command.
3. The following is the precedence of rank for all law enforcement deputies in descending order:
  - a. Sheriff
  - b. Colonel (Chief Deputy)
  - c. Major (Bureau Chief)
  - d. Captain
  - e. Lieutenant (Lt)
  - f. Sergeant (Sgt)
  - g. Corporal (Cpl)
  - h. Senior Deputy (S/Dep)
  - i. Deputy First Class (DFC)
  - j. Deputy (Dep)
  - k. Probationary Deputy (P/Dep)
4. The following is the precedence of rank for all correctional deputies in descending order:
  - a. Sheriff
  - b. Colonel (Chief Deputy)
  - c. Warden
  - d. Major (Bureau Chief)
  - e. Captain

- f. Lieutenant (Lt)
- g. Sergeant (Sgt)
- h. Corporal (Cpl)
- i. Senior Deputy (S/Dep)
- j. Deputy First Class (DFC)
- k. Deputy (Dep)
- l. Probationary Deputy (P/Dep)

- 4. For the purpose of issuing orders, all ranks below corporal are considered equal unless a deputy in one of those ranks has been designated as an acting corporal.
- 5. Civilian supervisors and managers will be integrated into the chain of command based on their functional scope and assignment as established by the Sheriff.
- 6. A deputy who reports to a civilian supervisor or director will be provided with specific information that will define the chain of command within his unit.

C. Command in the Absence of the Sheriff

- 1. If the Sheriff plans to be out of the State or is otherwise unavailable to command the HCSO, and until the Sheriff is able to resume command:
  - a. He may designate the Colonel as the Acting Sheriff; or
  - b. If the Colonel is not available to be designated as the Acting Sheriff, he may name a law enforcement Major as the Acting Sheriff;
- 2. If the Sheriff is unexpectedly absent from the State or incapacitated, and until the Sheriff is able to resume command:
  - a. The Colonel will have all the powers and duties conferred by law on the Sheriff; or
  - b. If the Colonel is not designated as the Sheriff or if the Colonel is unable to fulfill his responsibilities, the order of succession will be the:
    - i. Chief of the Police Operations Bureau; then
    - ii. Chief of the Investigative Services Bureau; then
    - iii. Chief of the Services and Support Bureau.
- 3. If the Colonel and three law enforcement bureau chiefs are unavailable in the unexpected absence of the Sheriff, the command of the HCSO will rest with the most-senior law enforcement captain (based on time in grade). The senior captain will maintain command until such time as he is relieved by a bureau chief, the Colonel, or the Sheriff, or until the Governor appoints a new or Acting Sheriff.

D. Command in the Absence of the Warden – Harford County Detention Center

1. If the Sheriff plans to be out of the State or is otherwise unavailable to command the Harford County Detention Center, and until the Sheriff is able to resume command:
  - a. He may designate the Warden as commanding officer at the Harford County Detention Center; or
  - b. If the Warden is not available to be designated as the commanding officer of the Harford County Detention Center, he may name the Correctional Services Bureau Chief as the Acting Warden.
2. If the Warden and Correctional Services Bureau Chief are unavailable in the unexpected absence of the Sheriff, the command of the Harford County Detention Center will rest with the most-senior correctional officer captain (based on time in grade). The senior captain will maintain command until such time as he is relieved by the Warden, bureau chief, Colonel or Sheriff, or until the Governor appoints a new or Acting Sheriff.

#### E. Command Protocol

1. Command at an incident involving members of different HCSO units will be determined by rank and assignment.
2. A ranking deputy's arrival on scene does not place him in charge unless he assumes control and announces he is taking control consistent with the Incident Command System.
3. Command at certain incidents (e.g., Hostage/Barricade Incidents, etc.) will be determined by the written directive governing that type of incident.
4. The senior patrol deputy at a crime scene will remain in charge unless he is relieved by:
  - a. A patrol deputy who is senior in rank; or
  - b. An investigator from the Criminal Investigations Division who has been requested to respond to the scene.
5. The senior correctional deputy at a detention center related scene will remain in charge unless he is relieved by:
  - a. A correctional deputy who is senior in rank; or
  - b. Patrol deputy or investigator from the Criminal Investigations Division who has been requested to respond to the scene.

#### F. Obedience to Orders

1. An employee will promptly obey all lawful orders of a superior, including those from a superior relayed by an employee of equal or lesser rank, however:
  - a. An employee will not obey an order which he knows, or should know, would require him to commit an illegal act; and

- b. If the employee has doubt as to the legality of the order, the employee will request that the person issuing the order clarify the order or confer with a higher authority.
2. No employee, without adequate justification, will intentionally issue an order that is contrary to an order issued by a superior.
3. Employees who are given an otherwise proper order which conflicts with a previous order, rule, regulation, or directive will inform the supervisor issuing the order causing the conflict. If the higher-ranking employee issuing the order does not alter or retract the conflicting order:
  - a. The last order will be obeyed;
  - b. The responsibility for the conflict will be upon the higher-ranking employee; and
  - c. The employee will not be held responsible for having disobeyed the previously issued order, rule, regulation or directive.
4. Nothing in this written directive should be interpreted to prevent a supervisor from issuing an order to an employee outside the supervisor's unit when necessary.

## 5. Summary of Changes

- A. On 01/28/26 the 3-year Agency review was conducted, and no changes were made.

Approved  
  
JEFFREY R. GAHLER  
SHERIFF  
DATE 2/23/23