1. Purpose

The Harford County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) shall provide all Agency members with a workplace free from sexual harassment and discrimination and shall maintain zero tolerance in dealing with any forms of sexual harassment, workplace harassment, or discrimination.

2. Policy

The Harford County Sheriff’s Office strives to maintain and foster a work environment in which all employees are treated with decency and respect.

The Harford County Sheriff’s Office prohibits, and will not tolerate, discrimination and/or harassment of its members in the workplace, based upon sex, race, color, age, disability (mental or physical), religion, marital status, sexual orientation, ancestry or national origin, or any other attribute protected by law.

3. Definitions

HARASSMENT: The unwelcome conduct toward an individual because of sex, race, color, age, disability (mental or physical), religion, marital status, sexual orientation, ancestry or national origin, or any other attribute protected by law.

4. Procedures

A. Prohibited actions

1. Members shall not transmit any verbal or written communications (including those in electronic format or through a messaging system) that contain offensive name calling, jokes, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threats.

2. Members shall not transmit comments or jokes that target individuals in any groups outlined within this policy.

3. Members shall not engage in unwelcome sexual advances and/or solicit requests for sexual acts, favors, or actions.
4. Members shall refrain from verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that insinuates either explicitly or implicitly that an Agency member’s submission to or rejection of sexual advances will in any way influence any personnel decision regarding the Agency member’s job, wages, performance evaluation, advancement, assigned duties, shifts, eligibility for training or any other condition of employment or career development.

5. Members shall refrain from leering.

6. Members shall refrain from giving inappropriate gifts.

7. Members shall refrain from touching someone in an unwanted manner.

8. Members shall not transmit, display, or send any images, such as derogatory or offensive pictures, cartoons, drawings or gestures, including those in hard copy or electronic format, whether physically present in the workplace or accessed over the internet or email system.

9. Retaliation against an Agency member for reporting discrimination, harassment, or cooperation in a discrimination/harassment complaint is strictly prohibited and will constitute a violation of this policy.

10. Any intentional false accusations or statements shall result in disciplinary action against the individual providing false information.

5. Complaint Processing

A. Agency members will report harassment and/or discrimination by completing the Complaint Against Personnel (Form IA-028) in accordance with HCSO policy PER 0201.

B. For purposes of this policy, Complaint Against Personnel (Form IA-028) is exempt from the chain of command and may be forwarded directly to the Office of Professional Standards.

C. Any information received alleging that the Sheriff is the accused shall be forwarded by the Office of Professional Standards to the Chief Deputy.

D. If the complaint is against the Sheriff, the Chief Deputy shall:
   1. Notify the Office of the Attorney General;
   2. Request the assistance of an outside law enforcement agency to conduct the investigation;
   3. Serve as the primary point of contact with the investigating agency; and
   4. Ensure the complete cooperation of the Sheriff’s Office during the investigation.

E. Any information received shall be handled with confidentiality.

6. Office of Professional Standards (OPS)
A. The OPS, in consultation with the Investigative Services Bureau Chief, will determine if the complaint will be investigated as an allegation of discrimination or harassment versus some other form of misconduct.

B. The OPS investigators will:
   1. Fully investigate all cases of alleged complaints of harassment and/or discrimination;
   2. Ensure the investigation is given immediate attention;
   3. Respond with sensitivity to the feelings and needs of the victim; and
   4. Keep in personal contact with the victim to alleviate fear and to assure that everything possible is being done to resolve the complaint.

7. Division Commanders

A. Monitor personnel affected by the investigation to prevent continuation of the conduct in question, or retaliation for actions taken to resolve it, including close observation of the victim, the accused, witnesses, and other members of the victim’s unit assignment.

B. Maintain contact with the Office of Professional Standards to determine case progress.

C. Update the Bureau Commander on progress of the case. NOTE: If the victim’s Commander is the accused, the Commander of the accused shall assume the above responsibilities. If the accused is the Sheriff, the Chief Deputy shall assume the above responsibilities.

8. Disposition

A. The Investigative Services Bureau Chief will notify the complainant, via letter, of the outcome of the investigation.

B. Documentation related to the investigation and any subsequent disciplinary action will be maintained in accordance with Agency Policy.

Approved

JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF

DATE___________________