



Jeffrey R. Gahler,
Sheriff

HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PERSONNEL POLICY

Awards Review Committee/Awards Submission

Distribution:	All Personnel	Policy Number:	PER 0903
Responsible Unit:	Office of Media and Public Relations	Rescinds:	<i>MAN 1500A</i>
Original Issued Date:	11/25/15	Revision #:	3
Latest Revision Date:	08/26/26	Next Review Due:	09/30/29
Required 3-Year Review was Completed:	02/12/24		

1. Purpose

To establish a streamlined process for submitting, reviewing, approving, recording, and presenting awards issued by the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO).

2. Policy

HCSO will officially recognize and record outstanding performance by an Agency member, group of Agency members, allied agency member, volunteer, or community member. The nomination process will be accessible, timely, fact-based, and administered in a manner that promotes appropriate recognition while preserving a fair and consistent review.

3. Definitions

AWARDS COORDINATOR (AC): the Director of the Office of Media and Public Relations, or designee, who provides administrative support to the Awards Review Committee; receives, tracks, and reviews nominations for completeness; coordinates final approvals and presentations; and maintains award records.

AWARD NOMINATION: one completed SO-070, Awards Nomination Form, and any relevant supporting documentation submitted for an incident, event, project, accomplishment, or course of performance.

AWARDS REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC): a permanent body consisting of four voting Bureau Chiefs, the Chief Deputy/Colonel as a non-voting member except when casting a deciding vote in the event of a tie, and the non-voting Awards Coordinator. The ARC reviews nominations and recommends the appropriate disposition and level of recognition.

AWARDS REVIEW PANEL (ARP): the Chief Deputy/Colonel and Sheriff. The ARP resolves matters referred by the ARC and provides final direction when necessary.

CERTIFICATE NARRATIVE: a proposed factually accurate narrative of 150 words or fewer that is suitable for placement on an award certificate.

COMMAND REVIEWER: the nominee's Division Commander or a command-level designee authorized to review and endorse the nomination.

4. Procedures

A. Awards Review Committee

1. The ARC will consist of the following members:
 - a. Services and Support Bureau Chief – Chairperson;
 - b. Police Operations Bureau Chief - Vice-Chairperson;
 - c. Correctional Services Bureau Chief;
 - d. Investigative Services Bureau Chief;
 - e. Chief Deputy/Colonel - non-voting member, except when required to cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie; and
 - f. Director, Office of Media and Public Relations, or designee - Awards Coordinator and non-voting member.
2. The ARC will meet as necessary at the discretion of the Chairperson.
3. The ARC will evaluate each nomination using the criteria for the applicable award contained in PER 0904, Performance Awards.
 - a. The ARC may approve, disapprove, table, upgrade, downgrade, or select a different award than the award recommended by the nominator.
 - b. The ARC will consider the nominee's assignment, training, expected duties, specialty, degree of difficulty, level of risk, initiative, performance, and the outcome of the nominee's actions.
4. The Chief Deputy/Colonel will not participate as a voting member unless the four voting Bureau Chiefs are equally divided. In the event of a tie, the Chief Deputy/Colonel will cast the deciding vote.
5. ARC deliberations are confidential. The Chairperson will report the ARC's recommendations to the Sheriff through the Chief Deputy/Colonel. When a recommendation is not unanimous, the report will include any dissenting opinion.
6. A matter the ARC cannot resolve may be referred to the ARP for direction or final disposition.
7. Following final disposition, the Awards Coordinator will notify the nominator, nominee, appropriate command, and Human Resources.

B. Award Nominations

1. Any HCSO employee may submit an award nomination. Commanders and supervisors are encouraged to initiate nominations when they become aware of performance that may warrant formal recognition.
2. One Guardian award nomination entry will be submitted for each incident, event, project, accomplishment, or related course of performance. A single nomination may include multiple nominees.
3. The Guardian award nomination entry will include:
 - a. The date, location, report or case number when applicable, and a brief identification of the incident or accomplishment;
 - b. The name, identification number, assignment, and duty status of each nominee, when applicable;
 - c. A detailed, objective, and factually accurate description of the incident or accomplishment;
 - d. A specific description of each nominee's individual actions or contributions. When all nominees performed substantially the same role, a shared description may be used;
 - e. A recommendation for a specific award, or an indication that the ARC should determine the appropriate recognition;
 - f. A proposed certificate narrative of 150 words or fewer. One common narrative may be submitted for a group award when appropriate. Separate narratives may be attached when individual roles materially differ; and
 - g. The endorsement and comments of the Command Reviewer.
4. Supporting documentation will be attached only when it is relevant, reasonably available, and necessary to substantiate the nomination. Examples may include incident reports, CAD or radio records, photographs, video, witness statements, community letters, medical documentation, news articles, or other records.
5. The absence of a document that is not relevant, not reasonably available, or capable of being obtained through Agency records will not, by itself, result in rejection of a nomination. The Awards Coordinator may request clarification or additional documentation when necessary.
6. Nominations should be submitted as soon as practical after the noteworthy event and, when possible, during the quarter in which the event occurred.
7. Nominations for the preceding calendar year must be received by the ARC no later than January 15 for presentation to the Sheriff by February 1. A nomination submitted more than

one year after the event may be accepted by the ARC Chairperson when good cause or extenuating circumstances exist.

8. Narratives will use objective, professional language and should avoid unnecessary superlatives or conclusions not supported by the facts.
9. When a nominee's actions could qualify for more than one award, the nominee will normally receive the highest applicable award for the same conduct.

C. Review and Routing

1. The Guardian award nomination entry and supporting documentation will route through chain of command to the Command Reviewer.
2. The Command Reviewer will assess whether the nomination is factually supported, identify any policy or performance concerns relevant to the nomination, and approve or disapprove the entry to the ARC.
3. A non-concurrence does not automatically terminate the nomination. The Command Reviewer will explain the basis for non-concurrence and forward the nomination to the Awards Coordinator for administrative review.
4. The Awards Coordinator will log the nomination, review it for administrative completeness, consolidate duplicate submissions, and request clarification or additional information when needed.
5. A correctable omission will normally result in the nomination being returned for clarification rather than denied. A nomination will not be disapproved solely because information can reasonably be corrected or obtained.
6. When administratively complete, the Awards Coordinator will place the nomination on the next available ARC agenda.
7. Following ARC review and final approval, the Awards Coordinator will prepare the final certificate and citation. The proposed 150-word certificate narrative may be edited for grammar, clarity, consistency, and format without changing its factual substance.
8. The Awards Coordinator will coordinate notification, presentation, distribution of award materials, and submission of the final documentation to Human Resources.

D. Disqualification, Delay, or Denial

1. A nomination may be disapproved when the facts establish that:
 - a. The nominee materially violated Agency policy, law, or a lawful order without reasonable justification;
 - b. The nominee acted recklessly, negligently, or without due care and thereby unnecessarily created or escalated a danger to the nominee or another person;

- c. The conduct was routine or specifically required by the nominee's assignment and did not substantially exceed normal performance expectations;
 - d. The official reports or other available evidence do not substantiate the nomination or do not identify the nominee's contribution; or
 - e. Recognition would be inconsistent with the purpose or eligibility criteria of the requested or applicable award.
- 2. An unsuccessful outcome will not, by itself, disqualify a nomination when the nominee's conduct otherwise satisfies the applicable award criteria.
 - 3. The ARC may table a nomination while a related criminal, administrative, use-of-force, collision, or other official review remains pending. The nomination may be reconsidered when the review is complete.

E. Deputy and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year Awards

- 1. Commanders will evaluate nominations for Deputy of the Year and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year and forward their selections through the appropriate Bureau Chief no later than January 15 of each year.
- 2. Each Bureau will submit at least one nomination for each applicable category unless otherwise authorized by the ARC Chairperson.
- 3. The ARC Chairperson may issue annual nomination limits by Bureau or Division based upon the Agency's current organizational structure. These administrative limits do not require amendment of this policy.
- 4. Nominations will be submitted through a Guardian award nomination entry and evaluated using the criteria in PER 0904, Performance Awards.

F. Allied Agency and Non-Agency Nominations

- 1. An HCSO employee may nominate a member of an allied public safety agency, volunteer, citizen, or community organization for an award authorized by PER 0904.
- 2. The nomination will be submitted and reviewed using the same streamlined process and the award criteria applicable to the nominee.
- 3. A recipient from another agency or the community will receive the certificate, citation bar, or other item authorized for the award, when applicable.

G. Preparation, Presentation, and Recordkeeping

- 1. The ARC Chairperson and Awards Coordinator are responsible for preparing certificates, citations, ribbons, medals, and other approved recognition.

2. The Sheriff, in consultation with the ARC Chairperson, will determine when formal awards ceremonies are held.
3. Commanders may present local awards or recognition when authorized.
4. Awards presented during the year may be recognized in the Agency Awards Ceremony Program but will not be presented a second time.
5. The Awards Coordinator will provide Human Resources with the final award documentation and a copy of the certificate for placement in the recipient's personnel file, when applicable.

H. Ribbons, Medals, and Insignia Pins

1. Ribbons, medals, and insignia pins will be issued or presented as authorized by the Sheriff and the applicable award criteria.
2. Only ribbons, medals, and insignia pins issued or specifically approved by the Agency may be worn on an Agency uniform.
3. A proposal for a new ribbon, medal, or insignia pin will be submitted to the ARC and will include proposed eligibility criteria, design, and intended manner of wear or presentation.

4. Summary of Changes

A. On 08/26/26 the following revisions were made:

1. Under Section 1. Purpose, added text to more fully describe the policy purpose.
2. Under Section 2. Policy, added text to more fully set forth the intent of the policy.
3. Under Section 3. Definitions, removed definition for AWARDS BOARD COORDINATOR, and added definitions for AWARDS COORDINATOR, AWARD NOMINATION, CERTIFICATE NARRATIVE, and COMMAND REVIEWER.
4. Added text under Section 4.A.1.e to list the Chief Deputy/Colonel as a non-voting member, except when required to cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie.
5. Revised text under Section 4.A.3 to clarify the ARCs evaluation of nominations.
6. Added the following text at Section 4.A.4: "The Chief Deputy/Colonel will not participate as a voting member unless the four voting Bureau Chiefs are equally divided. In the event of a tie, the Chief Deputy/Colonel will cast the deciding vote."
7. Changed the title of Section 4.B Recommendations to the ARC to Section 4.B Award Nominations and made revisions as needed to include replacing the reference to the SO-070A and SO-070B with the Guardian award nomination entry.
8. Added Section 4.C Review and Routing.

9. Under Section 4.E Deputy and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year Awards, made revisions as needed to include clarification the ARC Chairperson may issue annual nomination limits by Bureau or Division based upon the Agency's current organizational structure; and that nominations will be submitted through a Guardian award nomination entry and evaluated using the criteria per HCSO policy PER 0904, Performance Awards.
10. Revised the title: Section 4.G Preparation of Awards to Section 4.G Preparation, Presentation, and Recordkeeping.

Approved

JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF
DATE 8/26/20

COMPLETING AWARD SUBMISSIONS - GUARDIAN

From the homepage click [+ CREATE DOCUMENT]

Select [Award Nomination] in the Categories section. Then select the members you are nominating in the Involved Users section.

If the nominee is not an HCSO member, please select [Allied LE / Community Member, AWARD] as the involved user and provide their information in the narrative and again in the User Fields below.

If the award is a Unit Citation for more than 10 involved users, please select the highest-ranking member of that unit or shift who is involved in the operations for which the award is being submitted. Include all of the award recipients in the narrative of the award submission.

In the narrative section, provide a detailed, factual account of what occurred, why the performance merits recognition, the outcome, and any circumstances relevant to the award criteria. Use objective, fact-based language. Do not repeat every detail from the attached reports.

Complete the Document Fields below the narrative. The Nomination Type and Award Requested are required fields to submit. If you hover over the specific awards, you will see the definition of each. The other checkboxes are reminders. If you are attaching these supporting documents, check the box.

Complete the User Fields. Use N/A if the nominee does not have an ID number. You can have multiple Involved Users for one submission. They can also be submitted for different awards. Use the Award Request (Individual) section to identify which award each Involved User is being nominated for.

Very briefly provide the specific actions or contributions of the nominee in the section provided; a shared description may be used only when all nominees performed substantially the same role. If there is body-worn or in-car camera footage, provide a link in the provided box.

Provide a polished, factually accurate narrative suitable for the award certificate. A single narrative may be used for a group award when appropriate. The Awards Coordinator may edit for grammar, clarity, and format without changing the substance. The Proposed Certificate Narrative is a required field and must be fewer than 150 words.

DO NOT ADJUST ANY OF THE SETTINGS IN THE APPROVALS SECTION. Also, do not select the Require Management to Reveal button.

If you have any attachments, select the Upload Attachments toggle switch and click or drop files into the entry.

Both PER 0903 and 0904 are provided at the bottom of the page if needed for review during submission.

Once submitted, the Lieutenant and the Captain of the submitting member are required to review, comment, and approve the nomination.