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Sheriff

# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PERSONNEL POLICY

## Promotional Process

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### 1. Purpose

To provide members of the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) with guidelines regarding the procedures for promotion within the Agency.

### 2. Policy

The HCSO provides an equal opportunity for all its members to compete and be considered for promotion. The components of its promotional process are non-discriminatory, are job-related and based upon business necessity. However, the process does not guarantee or create entitlement to promotion for any individual candidate.

### 3. Procedures

A. The Director of Human Resources (HR) or designee, is responsible for all operational aspects of the promotional process including, but not limited to, preparation of announcements, administration of the written examination and oral interview boards, calculation of probationary periods, and the final compilation of the promotion eligibility lists.

#### B. Process Phases

1. The process for promotion to the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant, and Lieutenant will consist of a qualification phase and a competition phase. The ranks of Major and Captain are appointed by the Sheriff.
2. Each candidate will be responsible for meeting all established procedures including but not limited to deadlines and punctual appearance at the written examination, and the oral interview board.
3. Falsification or misrepresentation of any information or documentation furnished by the candidate will automatically disqualify the candidate from the process and may result in disciplinary action.
4. Any member on probation is not eligible to compete for promotion.
5. Any member reduced in rank is not eligible to compete in the promotional process for two years from the effective date of demotion.

#### C. Probationary Status

1. Promotion to Deputy First Class will be automatic upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period and satisfactory performance evaluations.
2. Promotion to Senior Deputy will be automatic upon satisfactory completion of 10 years of service in the classification (law enforcement or corrections) with the HCSO.
3. The probationary period is 24 months from date of hire or transfer for recruits.
4. The probationary period is 18 months from date of hire for laterals.
5. All promotions are probationary for one year from the effective date of the promotion unless otherwise specified by the Sheriff.
6. Any promoted member on probationary status who receives an "Unsatisfactory" rating on a performance appraisal may be returned to his previous rank.

#### D. Application Process

1. Interested candidates for promotion will apply per the procedures set by the HR Director by the closing date for application as stated in the Personnel Order.
2. Interested candidates will submit a completed entry in the Guardian Tracking System for the Application for Promotion with the required resume in the standard format attached.
3. The HR Director will ensure all candidates meet the minimum qualifications before allowing the candidates to participate in the process.
  - a. Any candidate not meeting the minimum qualification requirement will be notified by Agency email by the HR Director within 15 days of completion of the application phase with the reason(s) the candidate did not meet the minimum qualifications.
  - b. Any candidate may appeal eligibility by submitting a Memorandum ([SO-212](#)) to the Services and Support Bureau Chief and request the decision to be reconsidered.
  - c. The appeal must state the reason(s) the candidate believes that he is eligible and must be submitted within 72 hours of the candidate's notification of ineligibility.
  - d. The Services and Support Bureau Chief or his designee will meet with the appealing candidate within 72 hours (excluding Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) of receipt of the appeal.
  - e. The decision of the Services and Support Bureau Chief, after consultation with the Chief Deputy and the Sheriff, is final.

#### E. Qualification Phase

1. To qualify for promotion to the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant and Lieutenant, a member must receive a rating of "Satisfactory" with a minimum rating of meets expectations in all dimensions on the most recent Performance Appraisal Report (PAR).

2. To be eligible to participate in the promotional process, a member will meet the following time in grade criteria:
  - a. DFC to Corporal: 1095 days in grade in the classification being sought (Law enforcement or Corrections) as of November 1st. Time as a probationary deputy does not count towards time in grade.
  - b. Corporal to Sergeant: 730 days in grade in the classification being sought (Law Enforcement or Corrections) and six years of service in the HCSO as of November 1st.
  - c. Sergeant to Lieutenant: 730 days in grade in the classification being sought (Law Enforcement or Corrections) and ten years of service in the HCSO as of November 1st.
  - d. Eligible participants in the promotional process can only compete for the next higher rank.
3. If a complaint is active on the candidate, the candidate will be allowed to compete for promotion (unless the member is suspended without pay).
  - a. If the case results in disciplinary action, the candidate may face demotion from the newly appointed rank or expulsion from the entire process.
4. Competition Phase
  - a. Competition for Corporal, Sergeant, and Lieutenant:
    - i. Written examination –100 points maximum (must get a minimum of 70 points to continue in the process).
    - ii. Oral interview board –100 points maximum. If all **four** board members select “Do Not Recommend” as a result of this interview, the candidate will not be permitted to continue in the process to the **eligibility list**.
5. Written Examination
  - a. A candidate taking any written examination is required to attain a minimum score as established for the rank being sought in order to continue in the competition phase of the promotion process.
  - b. The written examination for promotion will be held on the second Saturday of October.
  - c. Candidates competing for the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant, and Lieutenant will take a **50-question multiple choice open book examination and a 50-question closed book examination** with questions directly related to the rank being sought. Candidates will have **40** minutes to complete **each** examination.
  - d. Ninety days prior to the date of the written examination, the HR Director will post an updated list of study material pertinent to each classification and rank, that will be used as the source of test questions.
  - e. Only policies in effect prior to September 1<sup>st</sup> will be utilized for question purposes on the written examination and oral interview board.

## 6. Resume Submission

- a. Candidates for promotion will be required to submit a resume with the completed entry Application for Promotion in the Guardian Tracking System.
- b. The resume must be in the standard format provided (single sided printing only) and font "Times New Roman" with a font size of 12.
- c. The resume must be accomplishment-based and will be factual; any deliberate discrepancies found within the resume will eliminate the candidate from the promotion process and may result in disciplinary action.
- d. The resume and most recent PAR will be presented to the Oral Interview Board and will be used to assist them in scoring the candidate.

## 7. Oral Interview Board Procedures

- a. At the conclusion of the written examination segment, and for the good of the Agency, the Sheriff may authorize a modification of the oral interview boards; this modification would only be made in situations where there is a single candidate competing for the rank, or when external board members are not available to fill the positions.
- b. The HR Director will make arrangements for the oral board interviews and will make available an Oral Interview Board Information Sheet notifying candidates of the date and time of the interview a minimum of seven calendar days in advance of the scheduled oral interview.
- c. Candidates for all ranks will be scheduled for the oral interview board in two parts.
  - i. Part I – scenario preparation: the candidate will be presented with two scenario-based questions. All candidates will be given 20 minutes to formulate hand-written responses to the questions.
  - ii. Part II – oral interview board: the candidate will be allotted no more than five minutes to introduce themselves to the Oral Interview Board. This introduction will be given prior to any scenario questions and cannot be deferred to the end of the interview. Time not used for the introduction cannot be used for, or added to, the scenario portion of the process. After the introduction, the candidate will present their answers to the two scenario-based questions. Following the scenario questions, each candidate will answer three additional general interview questions. Specific benchmarks will be identified for each scenario question and these benchmarks will assist the board members with scoring. If time permits, prior to the end of the interview, the candidate will be given an opportunity to address any missed benchmarks on any of the questions. The candidate will have no more than 30 minutes to complete the scenario portion of the interview. The Oral Interview Board members will each make a decision to select "Recommend" or "Do Not Recommend". If the Board member is going to "Recommend" the candidate, he will score on all categories. If the Board member is going to check "Do Not Recommend" for the candidate, he will not score the categories and the candidate will receive a score of zero from that Board member. Candidates are required to

attain a "Recommended" decision on the rating form. If all **four** board members "Do Not Recommend" a candidate, the candidate is disqualified from further competition.

- d. During the oral interview board, the board may ask additional questions of the candidate. These questions will not be subjective in nature. Any additional questions from the board must have a specific goal to clarify information presented during the interview.
- e. Candidates will wear their Class B **work uniform-winter** to the oral interview board **or professional business attire**. Candidates **in uniform** will only be permitted to wear their name tag, badge, and rank insignia. No medals, awards, or commendations will be worn.
- f. The completed Oral Interview Rating Packets will be given to the HR Director for scoring.
- g. All candidates competing for promotion will review and sign an "Order to Not Discuss" upon completion of the interview process and will be provided with a copy of the order. Every year, the law enforcement and correctional unions will each designate a union board member to be the assigned representative for the promotional process. If a candidate has a concern regarding the validity of an oral interview board question, he will immediately discuss it with only his board member. The board member will evaluate the concern and decide if it should be presented to the HR Director and Chief, Services and Support Bureau for review. Any violations of this order by a candidate will result in disciplinary action.
- h. Board members must come to a consensus about each candidate. The grand total on the Interview Grading Sheet may differ by no more than five total points among the board members for the oral interview board and the commander interview.

#### 8. Oral Interview Board Structure

- a. The HCSO strives to ensure that all candidates competing for promotion are provided with a fair opportunity when competing before the Oral Interview Board. Therefore, the Agency will strive to ensure that all interview boards are diverse in their composition.
- b. **The Oral Interview Board will consist of two members from outside agencies of equal rank that the candidate is seeking, an Agency member of equal rank that the candidate is seeking and a Captain within the classification.**
- c. Only members of a full-service law enforcement agency can participate on a law enforcement board and only members working in a correctional capacity can sit on a correctional board.
- d. The Sheriff, or his designee, may authorize a modification to this structure if external board members are not available.
- e. A Human Resources Representative of the HCSO must be present at all the Oral Interview Boards to ensure the integrity of the process.
- f. All board members will meet prior to the beginning of the board process for training. This will consist of responsibilities and expectations of board members and familiarization with the oral board rating process and rank structure.

9. Promotional Eligibility List

- a. Within 48 hours of the conclusion of the commander interview for each rank, the HR Director will meet with an appointed Union representative to unseal the oral board scores and complete the final point tally for each candidate for promotion.
- b. The HR Director will create a promotional eligibility list of candidates in descending order from the total score derived from the competitive process by issuing a Personnel Order (SO-220) within 10 calendar days of the completion of the competitive process.
- c. A promotional eligibility list becomes effective upon posting and supersedes the previous list. A promotional eligibility list may be extended at the discretion of the Sheriff.
- d. A tie for the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant, and Lieutenant will be decided by:
  - i. Oral Interview Board Score; then
  - ii. Written Examination Score; then
  - iii. Seniority in Rank.
- e. The Sheriff will select members for promotion in order from the promotional eligibility list for each vacancy. The Sheriff reserves the right to skip a member on the list due to an open internal affairs case, a sustained internal affairs case, poor performance, or for the good of the Agency.
- f. Specific assignments will be at the discretion of the Sheriff.
- g. A candidate who refuses a promotion is no longer eligible for promotion from the current promotional eligibility list.
- h. A candidate may review his overall score and ranking after the promotional process is complete for all ranks in both classifications by requesting a meeting with the HR Director. A member may review his promotion file until June 30th.

10. Written Examination Process Review and Appeal

- a. All written examination questions will be reviewed by the HR Director for validity.
- b. A statistical analysis will be conducted on each test question. A question that was missed by two thirds of the test takers will automatically be reviewed by the Services and Support Bureau Chief and the HR Director.
- c. The Services and Support Bureau Chief or his designee will serve as the Appeals Officer to be present during the written examination.
- d. Candidates will be permitted to appeal a test question immediately at the testing site once the examination for all candidates is complete.
- e. No challenges will be permitted once the candidate has left the testing room.

- f. A candidate may withdraw an appeal at any time during the process.
- g. Appeals will be presented to the Appeals Officer by use of the Written Examination Appeals Form ([SO-181](#)). The candidate will be required to complete a form for each question that he wants to appeal. Each appeal should specify exactly why the validity of the question is in doubt.
- h. The Appeals Officer will review each of the Written Examination Appeals Forms ([SO-181](#)) with the candidate. The question will be researched in the cited reference material. The Appeals Officer will determine if the appeal is valid. If the appeal is validated, the Appeals Officer will meet with the Chief Deputy within five business days of the test date for final disposition of credit to be given.
- i. After review, the Chief Deputy will decide the outcome of the appeal. If the appeal is validated, the appropriate candidates will receive credit for the test question. The appealing candidate will receive notification of the final outcome of the appeal from the HR Director.
- j. The Services and Support Bureau Chief and the Chief Deputy or his designee will determine the validity of examination questions that are in doubt due to statistical analysis. If the suspect question is determined to be invalid, the applicable candidates will receive credit for the question.

#### 11. Promotional Process Appeal & Nullification

- a. An appeal of any portion of the promotional process will be made to the Services and Support Bureau Chief by submitting a Memorandum ([SO-212](#)).
- b. The appeal stating the reason must be received by the Services and Support Bureau Chief within 72 hours (excluding Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) of the posting of the promotional eligibility list.
- c. The Services and Support Bureau Chief or his designee will meet with the appealing member and forward a recommendation to the Chief Deputy within 72 hours (excluding Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) of receipt of the appeal. The Chief Deputy will consult with the Sheriff.
- d. The Sheriff will render a final decision within 72 hours (excluding Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) of receipt of the recommendation.
- e. Any modification in a member's standing on the promotional eligibility list resulting from an appeal will be made known to all affected members by Memorandum ([SO-212](#)) prior to the posting of a revised promotional eligibility list.
- f. The Sheriff may nullify any promotional process in total or in part and reinstate the promotional process for any reason.

#### 12. Military Leave



- a. The HCSO will not conduct a modified or special promotional process to accommodate deputies who are unable to fulfill all requirements of the promotional process due to being on approved military leave.
- b. A deputy, who is activated and placed on approved military leave, and whose position on a promotional list would have resulted in a promotion had he not been activated or placed on approved military leave, will be promoted within 14 days of their return to the Agency.
- c. The deputy's promotion and pay grade will be retroactive to the date he should have been promoted had he not been on military leave.

#### 13. Training Upon Promotion

- a. Unless a valid waiver is received from the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC), all deputies who are promoted to the rank of corporal must attend First Line Supervisor training within one year of promotion.
- b. Unless a valid waiver is received from the MPTSC, all deputies who are promoted to the rank of lieutenant must attend First Line Administrator training within one year of promotion.
- c. Any deputy who believes he is eligible for a waiver due to previous education, training or experience should contact the Training Academy for information on how to apply for a waiver.

### 4. Summary of Changes

#### A. 05/23/23 the following changes were made to this policy:

1. Scenario questions and suitable benchmarks for each rank for the oral interview board will be written by the Division Commanders and submitted to the HR Director by September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year and reviewed by the Bureau Chiefs.
2. Every year, the law enforcement and correctional unions will each designate a union board member to be the assigned representative for the promotional process. If a candidate has a concern regarding the validity of an oral interview board question, he will immediately discuss it with only his board member. The board member will evaluate the concern and decide if it should be presented to the HR Director and Chief, Services and Support Bureau for review.

#### B. 01/19/24 the following changes were made to this policy:

1. Added various language throughout policy as per suggestion of PAR Working Group Subject Matter Experts.


#### C. 06/06/25 edits and revisions were made to the following Sections of this policy:

1. Section 3.E.4.a.ii – clarified the oral interview board consists of four members, and if all four board members select "Do Not Recommend" as a result of this interview, the candidate will not be permitted to continue in the process to the eligibility list.
2. Section 3.E.5.c – clarified that candidates competing for the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant, and Lieutenant will take a 50-question multiple choice open book examination and a 50-question



closed book examination; and that candidates will have 40 minutes to complete each examination.

3. Section 3.E.6.d – clarified the resume and most recent PAR will be presented to the Oral Interview Board.
4. Section 3.E.7.c – clarified that candidates for all ranks will be scheduled for the oral interview board in two parts.
5. Section 3.E.7.c.ii -- during the oral interview board, clarified that 1) after the introduction, the candidate will present their answers to the two scenario-based questions 2) following the scenario questions, each candidate will answer three additional general interview questions, and 3) if the Board member is going to "Recommend" a candidate, he will score on all categories.
6. Section 3.E.7.e – clarified that Candidates will wear their Class B work uniform-winter to the oral interview board or professional business attire. Candidates in uniform will only be permitted to wear their name tag, badge, and rank insignia.
7. Section 3.E.8.b – inserted new text to indicate the Oral Interview Board will consist of two members from outside agencies of equal rank that the candidate is seeking, an Agency member of equal rank that the candidate is seeking and a Captain within the classification.
8. Section 3.E.9.d – For the Promotional Eligibility List, clarified that a tie for the ranks of Corporal, Sergeant, and Lieutenant will be decided by the Oral Interview Board, then the Written Examination Score, and then by Seniority in Rank.

Approved  
  
JEFFREY R. GAHLER  
SHERIFF  
DATE 6.14.25