



# Charleston County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures Manual

---

**Sheriff Carl Ritchie**

## 6-02 Disciplinary Procedures

- ☐ NEW
- ☒ REVISED
- ☒ REVIEWED

ACA Standards Reference: 5-ALDF-7E-01, 7E-04  
CALEA Standards Reference: 22.1.7, 26.1.4, 26.1.5, 26.1.6, 26.1.7, 26.1.8  
NCCHC Standards Reference:  
SCLEA Standards Reference:  
SC Minimum Standards:

*This policy dated 1/28/2025 replaces prior policies cited above and supersedes all previously issued directives.*

I. Purpose:

To establish guidelines for the administration of the agency's disciplinary process.

II. Policy:

The maintenance of effective discipline is essential in order for the agency to effectively control its performance and satisfactorily achieve its objectives. Therefore, it is the policy of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office to hold individual employees accountable for their behavior in a manner that is fair, equitable and timely in nature. (Ref: 5-ALDF-7E-01)

III. Definitions:

A. For purposes of this procedure, the word "deputy" applies to all agency employees with a certification classification of Class I, Class II, Class III, or Reserve Deputy as defined by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy.

The following terms are used interchangeably; however, they carry guidance to specific employees based on usage of the term:

1. Deputy, deputy sheriff, detention deputy, sworn employee, uniformed sworn employee, sworn administrative employee, etc., and
2. civilian, non-sworn employee.

B. *Employee:* When used without further clarification, the term employee is inclusive of all agency members (sworn and non-sworn).

IV. Procedure:

A. Responsibility:

1. Complying with agency directives is the responsibility of all agency employees.
2. It is the supervisor's duty to ensure that subordinate personnel conform to the agency's guidelines. This is best accomplished by supervisors setting a positive example for subordinates.
3. Supervisor's responsibilities include:
  - a. rewarding positive behavior, exemplary conduct, and performance; (Ref: CALEA 26.1.2)

- b. investigating allegations of employee misconduct when within the scope of their authority and responsibility;
- c. counseling employees to improve job performance or correct minor infractions and procedures;
- d. identifying training needs as a function of the disciplinary process;
- e. directly implementing punitive disciplinary actions, within the scope of their authority and responsibility; and
- f. implementing severe disciplinary action approved by the chain of command. (Ref: CALEA 26.1.5)

**B. Disciplinary Action/Progressive Discipline:**

- 1. Under South Carolina law, Charleston County Sheriff's Office employees are employed at will. Nothing in this policy is intended to limit the Sheriff's authority to terminate or to alter the at will status of employment.
- 2. It is not possible to list every specific act or omission, or combination of specific acts or omissions, which can result in disciplinary action. The agency's *Policy and Procedure Manual* serves as a guideline.
- 3. Some conduct is simply unacceptable and may result in immediate termination even on a first infraction. However, in order to assure compliance with all directives, this agency will follow the concept of progressive discipline, when circumstances permit, by administering gradually increasing disciplinary actions for each successive instance of employee misconduct. Progressive discipline means that employees will generally be given ample opportunity to correct deficiencies, depending on the severity of violation. The emphasis is on rehabilitation in the case of minor infractions. When an offense has been committed which requires more severe action the concept of progressive discipline is vacated. Whether and when to vacate progressive discipline is within the sole discretion of the Sheriff or designee.
- 4. Certain offenses are of such a serious nature that immediate termination upon first offense is appropriate. Additionally, the employee may be subject to termination for the accumulation of

violations when the employee fails to participate in and/or respond to corrective action.

5. Although not all inclusive, the following should be taken into account when considering administration of discipline:
  - a. the seriousness of the incident;
  - b. the circumstances surrounding the incident;
  - c. the employee's past disciplinary record;
  - d. the employee's past work performance;
  - e. the impact of the incident on the agency and/or community;  
and
  - f. the prognosis for future similar disciplinary problems.  
(Ref: CALEA 26.1.4 item c)

**C. Training:**

1. Remedial training may be used for specific performance and/ or procedural deficiencies identified in personnel. The need for remedial training may be recognized by management during evaluation of job performance, as a result of a complaint, during an inspection, or failure to meet minimum standards in a training session evaluation.
2. Training used as part of the agency's disciplinary system will be documented and permanently maintained in the employee's personnel file.
3. Training may be used as part of the agency's disciplinary process by itself or along with other disciplinary procedures as determined by the supervisor and the Training Supervisor. (Ref: CALEA 26.1.4 item a)

**D. Counseling:**

1. Counseling assists employees with the process of problem solving. It may be corrective or preventative in nature. It may focus on the need for a person to change their present behavior or work methods. It may also focus on the need for a person to behave differently in preparation for responsibilities and challenges that lie ahead.

2. The immediate supervisor may counsel an employee when the employee has an existing problem or is experiencing difficulty understanding or adjusting to matters which are job related or affect performance. The supervisor will identify the policy, procedure, and standards of conduct which the employee has violated or the duties the employee has failed to discharge and will suggest corrective action.
3. Supervisors may encourage employees to use available professional counseling services when a personal problem is suspected of interfering with job performance (see [Policy 4-19 Employee Assistance Program](#)).
4. Participation in a counseling program may be required as part of, or in lieu of more serious disciplinary action, should the supervisor determine that the employee would benefit from such counseling. Failure of the employee to participate in recommended counseling could result in disciplinary measures being taken.  
(Ref: CALEA 22.1.7 item e)
5. Minor incidents noted by a supervisor may be handled verbally by that supervisor without documentation. All other counseling as a component of the agency's disciplinary process will be permanently documented in the employee's personnel file.
6. When approved by the Sheriff or designee, participation in a counseling or rehabilitation program may be made a condition for continued employment.
7. Counseling as a component of the agency's disciplinary process may be utilized by itself or along with other disciplinary procedures.  
(Ref: CALEA 26.1.4 item b)

E. Chronological Records:

1. A chronological record may be made by a supervisor to document an employee's action, positive or negative, after the supervisor has counseled an employee.
2. The supervisor will record the incident that occurred, documenting the policy, procedure, and standards of conduct which the employee violated or the duties the employee failed to complete and the expectation of the supervisor from this point forward. See [Policy 4-04 Employee Chronological Record](#) for further guidance.

3. Chronological records are utilized to provide documentation for the employee's current appraisal period.

**F. Written Reprimand:**

1. A written reprimand is a formal reprimand to the employee from a supervisor describing the way in which the employee's conduct or performance has failed to meet prescribed standards.
2. The written reprimand should be used in cases where a past verbal warning was ineffective or where an offense was committed which requires more severe action than a verbal warning or counseling.
3. The written reprimand will identify the violations charged against the employee or the failures in work performance and will specify corrective action. It will warn the employee that repeated offenses will lead to sterner measures, including possible discharge. The written reprimand will be documented in the employee's personnel file. Written reprimands more than twelve months old normally will not be considered for the purposes of applying progressive discipline.

**G. Suspension:**

1. A suspension is a serious disciplinary action in which the employee must forfeit pay for misconduct considered to be serious or part of a continuing pattern of behavior involving repeated misconduct.
2. When necessary, supervisors may issue the following suspensions:
  - a. Sergeants: up to three days;
  - b. Lieutenants: up to five days;
  - c. Captains: up to ten days;
  - d. Majors: up to twenty days;
  - e. Chief Deputies/Detention Director: up to thirty days;
  - f. Sheriff: one day through termination.
3. Any personnel placed on suspension must turn in agency identification, badge, agency issued weapon(s), keys, radio, procurement card ("P-Card"), key cards and vehicle (if issued).

4. Suspensions will be permanently documented in the employee's personnel file.
5. Employees under suspension have no authority to represent the Sheriff's Office and may not wear uniforms for any purpose including working an off-duty assignment. (Ref: CALEA 26.1.5)
6. Employees who are on the eligible promotional list will be removed once sustained disciplinary action is received.

**H. Administrative Leave:**

1. An employee may be reassigned to other duties or placed on administrative leave for a prescribed period of time, which normally will not exceed thirty calendar days. This allows for immediate response to a suspected but not fully substantiated offense and a period which an investigation can be thoroughly pursued.
2. Personnel placed on administrative leave will turn in agency identification, badge, agency issued weapon(s), keys, radio, procurement card ("P-Card"), key cards and vehicle (if issued), at the discretion of the Sheriff or designee.
3. All administrative leave will be permanently documented in the employee's personnel file.
4. Administrative leave is with pay unless directed by the Sheriff or designee.

**I. Disciplinary Probation:**

In addition to the above actions, an employee may be placed on disciplinary probation for up to one year. The employee will be informed as to the corrective actions which are expected within this time period. Appropriate paperwork will be sent to the agency's Human Resources Office for implementation of probationary status and placement in the employee's personnel file. Any further infraction during this period may result in termination.

**J. Demotion:**

1. Employees are paid to perform the duties and responsibilities required of their positions and to make a continuing contribution to the agency. Employees who do not meet the requirements of their

position, unsatisfactory work performance, or otherwise cannot perform their duties, may be demoted to a position with a lower level of responsibility and pay grade than their current position. Employees may also be demoted due to disciplinary reasons. Employees may also request a voluntary demotion subject to approval.

2. An employee who is demoted will receive a reduction in pay.
3. A pay reduction due to demotion will become effective on the date the employee is required to perform the duties and responsibilities of the new position and should be planned to coincide with the start of a pay period.
4. If an employee was promoted to a higher-level position or rank and is downgraded or reduced in rank, the employee's salary will be at the top of the salary pay range for the lower-level position.
5. At the maximum pay range for the position the employee will not be eligible to receive future increases. Charleston County policy states that an employee cannot exceed the established maximum salary for a pay grade. Future pay increases will be given when the pay tables are adjusted upward so that the maximum is above the current salary.
6. Employees demoted to a lower-level position shall serve a probation period of up to six months (unless a longer period has been pre-established), at which time a performance evaluation shall be completed.
7. Any employee to be demoted shall receive the reasons for such demotion, in writing, from their respective Chief Deputy, or designee, with approval from the Sheriff.

K. Termination:

1. Pursuant to [§23-13-10 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, as amended](#), and the [Charleston County Personnel Policies and Procedures](#), the Sheriff, or designee, have the authority to terminate any employee at any given time. All Charleston County Sheriff's Office employees are employed under the practice known as "at will" and can be terminated without notice or reason. The termination action will be documented in the employee's personnel file.

(Ref: 5-ALDF-7E-04)



2. Obviously, it is not possible to list all of the acts or omissions which may result in termination from employment. However, some of the more obvious examples are listed below:
  - a. consistent performance failure(s) or a single performance failure that results in serious consequences to the agency's public credibility or ability to function in an effective and efficient manner;
  - b. refusal to submit to an ordered alcohol or drug examination; tampering or attempting to tamper with the test results, testing positive, or otherwise violating the agency's or Charleston County's substance abuse policies;
  - c. refusal to submit to a polygraph after being ordered to do so;
  - d. failure to cooperate in an administrative inquiry; and/ or
  - e. lying, cheating, stealing, unethical conduct, etc., subsequent arrest/conviction for a criminal act.

(Ref: CALEA 26.1.4 item c)

**L. Termination Order:**

1. Employees on new hire probation can be terminated at any time during the probationary period and are excluded from the provisions of this section.
2. If employee misconduct results in termination from the agency, the employee will receive a written notice which will contain the following information:
  - a. the reason for termination; and
  - b. the effective date of the termination.

(Ref: CALEA 26.1.7 items a & b)
3. All employees, including those terminated, will undergo an exit interview prior to ending employment with the Sheriff's Office. During the exit interview the employee will be provided with a statement of fringe and retirement benefits. If the employee fails to attend the exit interview, the Human Resources Office will mail the appropriate documents to the employee's listed address.

(Ref: CALEA 26.1.7 item c)

M. Supervisory Authority:

1. Final disciplinary authority and responsibility for agency employees rests with the Sheriff. All supervisors are held responsible for any discipline administered at any level below them within their span of authority.
2. All supervisors are encouraged to contact the Office of Professional Standards prior to assigning discipline to ensure the discipline is fair and consistent with agency standards.
3. Supervisors with the Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center (SACDC) must complete the *Disciplinary After-Action Transmittal Form* (SACDC-341) for any written disciplinary action. This form will be submitted through the employee's chain of command for acknowledgement.
4. If the misconduct is very minor, such as a minor infraction of procedures, or a case of poor judgment which has not significantly impeded effective facility operations, the supervisor is authorized to take immediate corrective action in the form of counseling which may be verbal or written.
5. A written reprimand may be given by any supervisor within their span of authority. If the span of authority is exercised outside the normal duty assignment, (e.g., during a collateral duty assignment or a temporary assignment such as for an unusual occurrence), it will be the responsibility of that supervisor to inform the offending employee's normal duty assignment supervisor and ensure the reprimand is documented in the employee's personnel file.
6. Whenever improper conduct of an employee is observed by any supervisor, it will be the responsibility of that supervisor to take immediate corrective action and/or to inform the offending employee's supervisor of possible disciplinary action.

Note: When a disciplinary action is being given to an employee of a different division, unit, team, etc., and the employee would like to submit an appeal to the disciplinary action received, they must send their appeal to the supervisor who initiated the disciplinary action. Once that supervisor receives the appeal, they have five of their working days to respond to the appeal. See [Policy 6-03 Grievance Procedures](#) for further guidance for continued appeal if desired.

7. Any supervisor may relieve any employee from duty in the following circumstances:
  - a. employee conduct, which is observed by or reported to the supervisor, which is criminal, extremely serious in nature, and/or creates potential harm to the public, the employee, or the Sheriff's Office; or
  - b. the employee is unfit for duty due to physical or psychological reasons (e.g., intoxication drugs or alcohol, use of deadly force, a motor vehicle accident or other physical injury, death in the family, other personal problems, etc.)
8. A supervisor taking such action must notify their chain of command and the Office of Professional Standards as soon as possible and articulate the reason for such action. The supervisor must also submit written documentation in statement or other appropriate form as to the incident or circumstances which led to the action. Such documentation will be forwarded through their chain of command to the Office of Professional Standards by the end of the shift.
9. The supervisor will take possession of the employee's weapon(s), agency identification card, badge, keys, radio, procurement card ("P-Card"), key cards, and vehicle (if issued). Unless otherwise notified by the Office of Professional Standards, the Sheriff, or designee, such administrative leave will be with pay. (Ref: CALEA 26.1.5)

N. Maintenance of Disciplinary Records:

Reports and supporting documents which relate to a disciplinary action will be permanently retained in the Office of Professional Standards. The record of disciplinary action will also be placed into the employee's personnel file.

(Ref: CALEA 26.1.8)

O. Appeal Procedures:

1. All adverse disciplinary actions, with the exception of verbal counseling, is an acceptable topic for grievance and may be appealed in accordance with the agency's grievance procedures. (See [Policy 6-03 Grievance Procedures](#))
2. Temporary and probationary employees may appeal disciplinary action under the provisions of this procedure. (Ref: CALEA 26.1.6)