

DOUGLAS COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE		Policy and Procedure
Personnel Investigations		P&P-I-102
Disciplinary Actions		
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References: PP-I-100, PP-D-110, PP-A-102	Reevaluation Date: Annually	Standards: CALEA LE 26.1.4 , LE 26.1.5 , LE 26.1.6 , LE 26.1.7 , COM 1.4.8 , 3.6.5 , 3.6.6 , 3.6.7 , 3.6.8 , ACA 7E-01 , 7E-04

I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office to correct inappropriate behavior or unsatisfactory performance of its members through reasonable and appropriate disciplinary sanctions when necessary to maintain the effectiveness of the Sheriff's Office and to maintain the public trust. The Sheriff's Office may invoke disciplinary sanctions for violations of law, rule, policy, and procedure, or for actions or failure to act which are in conflict with the Sheriff's Office's vision, mission, goals, values, and management principles.

Discipline will be administered in a manner that gives members an opportunity to improve or correct performance or conduct prior to termination unless the conduct is so egregious that termination is deemed necessary. <LE [26.1.4c](#)><7E-01><7E-04><COM[3.6.5c](#)>

II. GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION OR DISMISSAL

- A. Because it is impossible to establish rules of conduct that apply to every situation a member may encounter, disciplinary sanctions may be imposed for acts or omissions that contribute to the lack of good order and discipline within the organization. A member may be disciplined, demoted, or terminated for any violation of Sheriff's Office manuals, orders, and memoranda or other authorized written instruction, rules, regulation, or policies; for violations of federal, state, or local law, resolution, or ordinance; or any act or omission, which contributes to a lack of order and discipline or effectiveness of the Sheriff's Office. Employment with the County and the Sheriff's Office is at will (Please refer to [P&P-I-100](#) *Definition of Terms* for information on at-will termination).
- B. All members are subject to the provisions of this policy except:
 1. Probationary employees,
 2. Term employees, and
 3. Temporary employees.
- C. These employees may be disciplined, terminated, or have their conditional offer of employment withdrawn, without cause or prior notice upon the review and approval of an executive officer (Please refer to [P&P-A-102](#) *Executive Authority* for information on Executive Officers). These employees will be so notified at the time of their hire.

III. DISCIPLINARY ACTION RANGES <LE [26.1.4c](#)><COM [3.6.5c](#)>

- A. The Sheriff's Office may sanction members for their acts of misconduct to enforce discipline within the agency. The specific sanction may depend upon a variety of

factors amounting to the totality of the circumstances surrounding acts or omissions. Factors in disciplinary decisions include whether the act is malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance; the severity of the violation; the degree of risk or harm to the agency or the public, etc.; however, discipline may not be used to discriminate against a person or class of people. When administering discipline, supervisors are to consider all available information, including but not limited to; the nature and circumstances of the situation, aggravating factors, mitigating factors, past violations, and work history.

B. The Douglas County Disciplinary System can range from any of the following actions or combination thereof (training, counseling, and punitive):

1. Training as a function of discipline: <LE [26.1.4a](#)><COM [3.6.5a](#)>
 - a. Remedial Training.
 - b. Any other action reasonably intended to narrowly and specifically address an identified performance-related issue.
2. Counseling as a function of discipline: <LE [26.1.4b](#)><COM [3.6.5b](#)>
 - a. Supervisory discussion and counseling. Supervisors are responsible for providing appropriate counseling when there is a recognizable problem with a member's performance or behavior. Effective counseling provided in a timely manner may avert the need for more stringent disciplinary actions to correct inappropriate conduct.
 - b. Supervisory coaching or counseling notes documented in Guardian Tracking.
3. Punitive actions imposed in the interest of discipline: <LE [26.1.4c](#)> <COM [3.6.5c](#)>
 - a. One-Year Letter of Reprimand. Please note that a one-year letter of reprimand for unsatisfactory performance will prohibit the individual from participating in any internal testing process.
 - b. Two-Year Letter of Reprimand.
 - c. Suspension (accompanied by a Letter of Reprimand).
 - d. Involuntary transfer from a particular assignment including a one-year probationary period (see [P&P D-110 Probationary Period](#) for further). This will be accompanied by a Letter of Reprimand.
 - e. Restitution (e.g., for damage to county property, etc.).
 - f. Demotion including requirement to serve a one-year probationary period (see [P&P D-110 Probationary Period](#) for further). This will be accompanied by a Letter of Reprimand.
 - g. Termination.

Repeated violations are indicative of an employee's disregard for his/her duties and may be cause for termination. <LE [26.1.4](#)>

Any form of disciplinary or corrective action imposed will be administered within thirty (30) calendar days of the final appeal. An executive officer may extend this time frame upon request. If the discipline administered is greater than three (3) working days, the member's badge, identification, access card, and keys may be obtained from the member and secured by the member's division chief or their designee.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE PENDING INVESTIGATION OUTCOME <COM 1.4.8>

- A. Any supervisor may place a subordinate employee on administrative leave for up to one day with notification up the chain of command to the Sheriff.
- B. An executive officer, may place any employee on administrative leave for up to thirty (30) calendar days pending the outcome of an investigation of any allegation of employee misconduct. The Sheriff may extend such periods of administrative leave at his discretion.

V. DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY OF SUPERVISORS <LE 26.1.5> <COM 3.6.6>

Discipline should be administered at the lowest level authorized to mete out the intended discipline. The division chief or functional equivalent shall consider the attendant circumstances and determine who in the member's chain of command has the responsibility of imposing discipline. If the member's commander, sergeant or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor is involved in the case as a complainant or witness, the division chief shall assign the responsibility of imposing discipline to an appropriate unaffected commander, sergeant, or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor. In such cases, the division chief may assign someone outside the member's chain of command to perform this function. If the member's division chief or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor is involved in the case as a complainant or witness, or other conflicts of interest exist, the Undersheriff will determine who has the responsibility of imposing discipline. In such case, the Undersheriff may assign someone outside the member's chain of command to perform this function.

- A. A SERGEANT or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor may impose training, counseling, and punitive discipline up to and including written letters of reprimand and may recommend more severe discipline up to and including termination. If the recommendation includes more severe discipline up to and including termination, the sergeant or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor does not need to hold a pre-disciplinary hearing.
- B. A COMMANDER or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor may impose training, counseling, and punitive discipline up to and including written letters of reprimand and suspensions without pay for up to three (3) working days. They may also recommend more severe discipline up to and including termination. If the recommendation includes more severe discipline up to and including termination, the commander or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor does not need to hold a pre-disciplinary hearing.
- C. A DIVISION CHIEF may impose training, counseling, and punitive discipline up to and including written letters of reprimand and suspensions without pay for up to ten (10) working days, involuntary transfer from a particular assignment, and may recommend more severe discipline up to and including termination. If the recommendation includes more severe discipline up to and including termination, the division chief or equivalent noncommissioned supervisor does not need to hold a pre-disciplinary hearing.
- D. The UNDERSHERIFF may impose discipline up to and including termination.

VI. IMPOSING DISCIPLINE

Prior to imposing punitive discipline suspension or more severe discipline, the supervisor must prepare a written statement of Administrative Insight identifying the contemplated discipline and documenting the grounds on which the disciplinary action is based.

Pre-Disciplinary Hearings: The supervisor initiating any discipline involving a Two-Year Letter of Reprimand, suspension, involuntary transfer from a position, restitution, demotion, or termination shall provide the affected member with written notice of the pre-disciplinary hearing at least 24 hours before the hearing time. The written notice must include the nature of the charge(s) sustained against the member and a description of the intended sanctions. The pre-disciplinary 24-hour notice may be voluntarily waived by the employee. This must be documented at the beginning of the actual pre-disciplinary hearing.

- A. Pre-disciplinary hearings will be recorded.
- B. Employees have no right to have witnesses or counsel present at a pre-disciplinary hearing but may present verbal or written statements from witnesses. Supervisors conducting pre-disciplinary hearings may exercise discretion in conducting the hearing and may permit witnesses if they believe it is necessary in the interest of obtaining a reasonable understanding of the facts.
- C. Discipline is finalized only after the employee has had an opportunity to reply to the charges, and present mitigating information. The employee's response to the charges must be weighed by the supervisor in the decision-making process.
- D. After the pre-disciplinary hearing and review of the employee's response to the charges, the responsible supervisor must prepare, and provide the employee with a written notice stating the final disciplinary decision. A copy must accompany the original investigative documents to the Internal Affairs Unit (IAU).
- E. A written reprimand must state the grounds on which it is based.
- F. If an employee is demoted or terminated, the date the demotion or termination is to take effect shall be stated in the disciplinary action letter provided to the affected employee by the executive officer. (The date shall be no earlier than one (1) business day past the five business days that the member has to file an appeal.) <LE 26.1.7b> The letter shall also contain a statement citing the reason(s) for demotion or termination. <LE 26.1.7a><COM 3.6.8ab> In the event the employee is terminated, the letter shall also notify them that Douglas County Human Resources will contact them directly regarding their fringe and retirement benefits. <LE 26.1.7c><COM 3.6.8c> A supervisor can be relieved of their supervisory authority and/or rank prior to the appeal process, if determined by an executive officer or above, to be in the best interest of the Office.
- G. The executive officer must also address in writing what the employee's seniority status shall be upon demotion. This determination will be made based on the totality of the circumstances. The range of options is based on the rank the employee will assume upon demotion and are as follows:
 1. Demotion to the rank of sergeant or above:
 - a. Seniority will revert to the member's initial promotion to that rank.
 2. Demotion to deputy:
 - b. If the demotion is to the rank of deputy, the member's seniority shall be determined by their OSN.

H. IA Member Report Review Process:

1. If, during the pre-disciplinary notice hearing, the member is informed that the recommendation for disciplinary sanctions includes suspension, demotion, or termination, they can request to review the Internal Affairs Investigation.
2. The member will be provided with an IA Member Report Review form so they can elect to either:
 - a. Request to review the Internal Affairs/PCR Investigation or
 - b. Voluntarily waive their opportunity to review the investigation.
3. The member's decision will be recorded on the form.
4. If the member waives the review, the pre-disciplinary hearing will be set in accordance with current policy.
5. If the member chooses to request a review of the IA investigation this will be done through the Internal Affairs Unit (IAU) within 7 calendar days. The IA Member Report Review form will be forwarded to IAU and the IAU Commander will be contacted upon conclusion of the notice of pre-disciplinary hearing. The report review process can be completed as soon as the employee is notified of the possible sanctions being imposed if IAU is available to conduct the review.
6. The pre-disciplinary hearing will be suspended until after the IA member report review process is completed. The member may review the IA investigative report and any other materials deemed appropriate by the IAU Commander. Only the member may take part in the review of the IA member report review, and it will occur within IAU. The member may not photograph or otherwise copy any portion of the report; however, they may take notes.
7. These notes will not be shared, nor will information from the investigation be provided to any other member of the Office. The member will not provide information from the investigation or the notes to the public or media. The member will not tamper with or harass any individual that was involved in the investigation. The member will not conduct any independent investigation based on their review.
8. Upon completion of the member review of the IA Investigation report, the pre-disciplinary hearing will be set following the current policy, no sooner than 24 hours after the completion of the review.

VII. APPEAL PROCEDURES <LE 26.1.6><COM 3.6.7>

Appeals of written reprimands, discipline, and punitive sanctions are conducted in accordance with the following procedures:

- A. Training or counseling used as a function of discipline. Although there is no appeal for these sanctions, the employee has the right to respond in a written memorandum within five (5) business days of receiving the discipline. The written response will be reviewed by the member's immediate chain of command and then uploaded to employee's Guardian Tracking or appropriate tracking system.
- B. Punitive Actions imposed in the interest of discipline. Employees may appeal any discipline involving letters of reprimand and more severe discipline by filing an appeal with the supervisor in the chain of command who is one rank above the supervisor who issued the disciplinary sanction. The appeal must be in writing and must be received by the Internal Affairs Commander within five (5) business days of

the date of the discipline. This can be either delivered in person or emailed to dcsouau@dcsheff.net. The Internal Affairs Commander will document the receipt of an appeal by attaching the appeal document(s) to the file in IAPro and forward the appeal and all documents to the appropriate appellate authority. If the appellate authority is a watch commander or division chief the appeal will generally be heard within five (5) business days. If the appellate authority is the Undersheriff or Sheriff, the appeal will generally be heard within ten (10) business days. Additional time may be taken by the appellate authority to respond with a final decision on the appeal.

C. General Appeal Guidelines

1. Appeals must state the reasons why the discipline should be reversed or modified.
2. Sanctions will not be imposed until the employee waives appeal or after the appeal deadline, whichever comes first.
3. Hearing deadlines may be extended due to scheduling conflicts when the appellant or member set to hear the appeal are unavailable. Extensions must be approved by the appellant's division chief or the Internal Affairs Commander. The appellant will be notified of the extended time frame. Failure of an appellant to appear or participate in scheduled hearings constitutes a waiver of an appeal hearing and the member set to hear the appeal may proceed without the appellant. The following are the only issues that are up for consideration on an appeal, all of which shall be reviewed and should be addressed in the appellant's written submitted appeal:
 - a. Whether the appeal has brought forward new information or evidence that was not available for consideration prior to the imposition of the discipline.
 - b. If the original findings were inconsistent with the evidence, or the evidence presented by the appellant reasonably support a reversal or modification of the sanctions.
 - c. If the sanctions imposed are reasonable and appropriate in view of the misconduct.
4. The member hearing the appeal may affirm the findings and sanction, or modify them, based upon these criteria. The appellate shall not, however, increase a sanction based solely of the fact that the member filed an appeal under this process.
5. An employee may continue an appeal two levels above the issuing supervisor's chain of command. If a second appeal is filed, the decision of the supervisor reviewing the second appeal is final. The Sheriff's decision on any appeal, including a demotion or termination, is always deemed to be final.
6. The member hearing the appeal will then notify the member of his/her decision regarding the appeal, including any modifications to the imposed discipline. This notification will be made in the form of a written memorandum. A copy of the memorandum will be provided to the affected employee's immediate supervisor. A copy will also be forwarded to the Internal Affairs Unit (IAU), along with all other documents, for inclusion in the IA/PCR file.
7. Upon completion of the appeal process, the IA/PCR file will be forwarded to the next supervisor in the member's chain of command for review. The reviewing command staff member will document their review of the file, along with any

comments, in the comments box in Blue Team. After review by the chain of command, all documents will be archived by the Internal Affairs Unit (IAU).

8. Unlike the disciplinary process itself, appeals from discipline imposed are not a compulsory part of an employee's job functions. As such, time spent preparing an appeal is not compensable time.
9. Employees have no right to have witnesses or counsel present during the appeal process.

VIII. RECONSIDERATION

After a reasonable time period has been exhausted and the employee has demonstrated exceptional work performance, they may make a request for reconsideration of a sanction imposed. For example, when an employee receives a Letter of Reprimand, they may complete a memo to their division chief through the person that issued the letter and their chain of command to request reconsideration of the time that their current sanction is imposed. They must include any basis they would want considered.

By Order of the Sheriff