


**Department of Public Safety**  
**Police Division**  
**Policies and Procedures**

<u><b>Title</b></u>  <b>Police Canine Program</b>	<u><b>SOP Number</b></u>  <b>9.1.900</b>
<b>Approval Signature</b>  	
<b>Eliot K Isaac</b>	
<b>Reviewed/Revised by</b>	<b>Pages</b> 9
<b>Last Revision Date</b>  <b>March 11, 2026</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>  <b>November 12, 2015</b>

# ***Police Canine Program***

## **I. Purpose:**

To establish guidelines for training, care, maintenance, equipment, and deployment of UCPD Canine Teams.

## **II. Policy:**

It is the policy of the University of Cincinnati Police Division (UCPD) to maintain and utilize canines to support the Division's mission of providing a safe and secure environment for students, faculty, and staff. The specialized capabilities of Canine Teams will be used to perform legally and procedurally acceptable activities, in accordance with their training and subject to the procedures set forth in this section.

## **III. Definitions:**

**Canine Handler:** A sworn police officer who has successfully completed, and maintains, the basic training required to handle and deploy a police service dog.

**Canine Team:** A Canine Handler and his assigned police service dog.

**Deployment:** The use of a canine to perform a specialized police function.

**Police Service Dog/Canine:** A canine that has successfully completed, and maintains, the basic training required to perform specialized police functions for which a canine, by virtue of its' superior sense of smell and hearing, is uniquely qualified.

## **IV. Procedure:**

### **A. General Guidelines and deployment of Canine Teams**

1. Only police service canines approved by the Police Chief are authorized for deployment.
  - a. Canine Teams will support the needs of the Division and will assist Patrol Operations by taking calls for service when not conducting training or on special assignment.
  - b. Canine Teams are considered non-essential personnel for scheduling purposes. In the event of holiday and other campus closures, they will maintain the same schedule as office staff and remain home for these occasions unless otherwise advised by the Canine Unit Coordinator.
2. Canine Teams may be called upon to perform any of the following duties:
  - a. Detect explosives, other hidden instruments, or evidence of a crime
  - b. Establish probable cause for a search warrant
  - c. Perform proactive sweeps before special events.
  - d. Perform proactive sweeps during the course of a shift.
  - e. Engage in community relations programs/demonstrations

## ***Police Canine Program***

- f. Any assignment, not listed above, which has been approved in advance by the Police Chief or his or her designee.
3. Before deployment, in the absence of exigent circumstances, such as an immediate threat to persons or property associated with the University of Cincinnati, or to the safety of an officer, the Canine Handler will contact the immediate supervisor for approval.
4. An on-scene supervisor will assess the request to ensure it complies with Division policy.
  - a. In the event of exigent circumstances, the Canine Handler will notify a supervisor of the deployment and request that he/she respond to the scene.
6. The Canine Handler will determine how best to utilize the canine and may request a backup officer during deployment.
7. Police Service Canines will be kept on a leash at all times in areas where contact with the public is possible, unless an off-leash deployment has been authorized in accordance with guidelines outlined elsewhere in this section.
8. Canine Teams shall not transport any non-departmental personnel, unless no other transportation is available and immediate transport is necessary for safety, health, or security reasons. In such a case, the police service canine must be physically separated from the passenger.
9. On-campus use:
  - a. A police officer requesting an on-duty Canine Team at the scene of an incident shall contact the on-duty patrol supervisor to approve the request.
  - b. The Canine Handler will assess the request and situation to determine if deployment is an appropriate response.
10. Off-campus use:
  - a. Canines may assist other agencies if prior approval is given by the Support Services Bureau Commander.
  - b. Once approval from the Support Services Bureau Commander is obtained, the Canine Handler will contact the Communications Center to generate a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) entry to document the request and deployment.
  - c. The Communication Center will notify the on-duty patrol supervisor of the Canine Team deployment.
  - d. Should another agency request the assistance of a UCPD Canine Team, the Canine Handler will ensure the agency's request does not conflict with this or any University of Cincinnati standing policy.
  - e. Canine Teams may be sent to assist another agency, if doing so does not compromise the needs of the Division. Off-campus support of other agencies will be confined to security sweeps, bomb and gun searches.
  - f. At the conclusion of a deployment, the Canine Handler will complete a

## ***Police Canine Program***

deployment form with CAD entry number attached.

### 11. Recall:

- a. All requests to recall a Canine Team shall be directed to the on-duty supervisor.
- b. If, in the opinion of the on-duty supervisor, the request conforms to this policy, the supervisor will seek approval of the Support Services Commander.
- c. In the event of exigent circumstances, the on-duty supervisor may grant approval followed by immediate notification to the Support Services Commander.
- d. Canine Teams recalled to service will be compensated in accordance with Division policy and the appropriate provisions of any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

### 12. Documentation:

Every incident on campus involving a canine deployment will:

- a. Receive a report number in the CAD system.
- b. Receive a comment noting the use of a canine in the electronic CAD record
- c. Result in the officer assigned to the initial call completing a narrative report in the Axon report management system (RMS), or addendum to a report, containing, at a minimum:
  - 1) The officer requesting the Canine Team and the reason for the request
  - 2) The on-duty supervisor who responded to the scene and subsequently authorized the deployment
  - 3) The Canine Team(s) that responded and deployed
- d. At the conclusion of a deployment, the Canine Handler will complete a deployment form with CAD number attached and any other information deemed pertinent by the Canine Handler or on-duty supervisor

13. Copies of all canine deployment narratives will be supplied to the Canine Unit Coordinator for review.

14. Injuries resulting from a canine deployment will be thoroughly investigated by the Canine Unit Coordinator or in their absence by the on-duty supervisor, who will notify the Chain of Command as soon as possible.

15. If the injury is the result of a bite or directly caused by unauthorized canine action, the following will occur.

- a. EMS will be summoned to treat the bite or injury
- b. The Canine Team will be taken out of service until the Unit can be evaluated and remedial training can be completed if necessary
- c. The Chain of Command will be notified

## ***Police Canine Program***

- d. An Axon report documenting the incident will be completed
  - e. Documentation will include photographs of the scene, evidence, and all injuries
  - f. If the injury involves a University employee, a **UC INITIAL REPORT ON WORK-RELATED INJURY or ILLNESS** form will be completed
  - g. If the injury involves a non-University employee, the person will be provided with UC Risk Management's contact information
    - 1) The investigating supervisor will request the injured party sign a medical release allowing UC to get treatment records pertaining to the incident.
    - 2) The medical release will be filed with the incident documentation and noted in the Axon report.
  - h. The investigating supervisor will document the incident and report the investigation findings on an Internal Correspondence Memo to the Police Chief, through the Chain of Command.
16. Each canine owned by the department will have a permanent file under the control of the Canine Unit Coordinator.
- a. The file will include records of deployments, handler and canine training and certifications, and health care.
  - b. It is the responsibility of Canine's Handler to update the file.
  - c. Canine files will be reviewed quarterly by the Canine Unit Supervisor.
17. Annually, the Canine Unit Supervisor or designee will conduct a review of each file to ensure certifications are up to date for the Canine Handler and police service canine and are in accordance with their specific function(s); explosive detection.

### **B. Selection and Training**

- 1. Canine Handler positions will be open to officers in the classification of ULEO-3. If there is not a sufficient pool of ULEO-3 candidates, the Police Chief may revise the requirement to permit those in the ULEO-2 classification, with three years or more of law enforcement service, to apply.
- 2. If a position becomes available, applicants must submit their request on a Form-5, to include position interest, skills, and abilities for the position, to the Police Chief or his or her designee.
- 3. Each applicant will be interviewed by a panel selected by the Police Chief, including but not limited to: a Canine Handler, Canine Unit Coordinator, and Support Services Commander.
- 4. The home of each applicant will be inspected to ensure there is sufficient accommodation to keep and care for the canine
  - a. Including but not limited to;
    - 1) A single-family dwelling
    - 2) Fenced yard with adequate space for exercise

## ***Police Canine Program***

- 3) Room for a kennel (supplied by the University of Cincinnati)
- 4) A commitment from those with whom the prospective handler resides to allow the canine to reside in the home
5. The successful applicant will, at a minimum:
  - a. Have an overall satisfactory work history with no active discipline.
  - b. Be required to successfully complete a physical assessment.
  - c. Be in good health and able to work under strenuous physical conditions.
  - d. Perform effectively in high-stress situations.
  - e. Possess a strong desire to work with, care for, and train a canine.
  - f. Allow the dog to live in his/her house.
6. An actively serving Canine Handler may participate in promotional processes; however, the handler must resign the position upon promotion.
7. A Canine Handler may resign the position for personal reasons at any time. Should the handler choose to resign his/her position, they shall be assigned to normal patrol operations, with shift selection in accordance with the existing CBA.
8. With the approval of the Police Chief and barring a substandard recommendation from the Canine Unit Coordinator or substandard performance, a handler may be considered for a new canine in the event his/her current canine retires or is pulled from service due to injury or illness.
  - a. In the event a canine is retired, the Canine Handler may submit a Form-5 to the Police Chief, requesting ownership of the canine.
9. Canine selection
  - a. Canine Unit Coordinator, with input from existing handler(s) and trainer, will make a recommendation to the Police Chief on the selection of the canine.
10. Initial training and evaluation:
  - a. The department will obtain its canines from a recognized police canine training facility capable of providing training for both the canine and the handler.
  - b. Experienced handlers who are acquiring a new canine shall successfully complete an identified training program, as approved by the Police Chief.
  - c. All new canines and handlers must successfully complete an appropriate initial training program, as prescribed by the facility supplying the dog.
  - d. No Canine Team can be deployed until completion of initial training and successful completion of certification through OPOTA.
  - e. In addition to initial training, all new Canine Handlers will attend an explosives familiarization course, approved by the Police Chief.
  - f. The new Canine Team will be on a one-year probationary period and will be evaluated at the 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12-month intervals. A final evaluation will be conducted at the conclusion of the probationary period. If additional

## ***Police Canine Program***

evaluation is identified by the Canine Unit Coordinator, he/she may request the Police Chief extend the probationary period.

11. No Canine Team will be deployed to perform police duties until the Canine Handler and police service canine have completed all necessary training and demonstrated acceptable proficiency, as assessed by the Canine Unit Coordinator and Training Section Supervisor. This will include initial OPOTA Canine Team certification and annual recertification thereafter.
  - a. At no point will a Canine Handler or police service canine participate in any training activities outside of the assigned scope of duties of the Canine Handler or police service canine.
12. In-service training:
  - a. Canine Teams will be assigned to regular in-service training, in accordance with currently accepted guidelines for frequency and content.
  - b. In-service training areas are normally included, but are not limited to:
    - 1) Protection of a crime scene from scent contamination
    - 2) Capabilities and limitations of a canine
    - 3) Preservation of scent articles
    - 4) Updated training practices and protocols, and scent identification
    - 5) Scent recognition
  - c. Canine Team in-service training may be made available to, or be conducted with, other police agencies upon request.
13. Canine Team Training aids
  - a. Only Canine Handlers and Canine Unit Supervisor are authorized to remove training aids from the armory/explosive training aid container.
  - b. Canine Handlers removing training aids must first sign out training aids with the time, date, specific aid, and officer's name/badge number.
  - c. Upon return, the Canine Handler will sign in with the date, and the training aid was returned
  - d. The Administrative Sergeant will conduct semiannual inspections of the Canine Team's explosive training aids to ensure proper security, control, and accountability. This inspection will be noted on the log sheet and on a Form 5 submitted to the Chief of Police.
  - e. A Certified Bomb Technician will inspect all explosive material to ensure it is being safely stored and handled. The inspection will be noted on the log sheet.
  - f. Disposal of Canine Team training aids will be handled in accordance with recommended practice from the training aid provider.

### **C. Care and maintenance of canine**

1. General considerations:

## ***Police Canine Program***

- a. The Canine Handler will provide the following:
  - 1) Appropriate housing and exercise area at his/her residence, as approved by the Canine Unit Coordinator
  - 2) Regular maintenance and cleaning of the area where the canine is housed
  - 3) Provision of food, water, and general diet maintenance, in accordance with the directions of a departmentally approved veterinarian
  - 4) Daily exercise and grooming, as determined by weather and other working conditions
  - 5) General medical attention and maintenance of health, training, and deployment records
- b. The department will provide the following:
  - 1) Specialized equipment is needed for the care, transportation, deployment, and training of the canine
  - 2) Food and other dietary needs
  - 3) Access to a departmentally approved veterinarian
  - 4) Medication and other health-related needs
- c. Temporary Boarding:
  - 1) If the Canine's Handler is unable to perform his/her duties due to illness, injury, or leave, the dog may be temporarily boarded with another Canine Handler
  - 2) If no Canine Handler is available or able to accommodate the canine, the canine will be boarded at a departmentally approved kennel
- d. Restrictions and prohibitions:
  - 1) Police canines will not be used for breeding, field trials, or exhibitions without the approval of the Police Chief
  - 2) Police canines will not be used for off-duty employment
  - 3) Teasing, agitating, or roughhousing with a canine is strictly prohibited, unless performed as part of a training exercise and in accordance with policy
  - 4) The public will not be permitted to pet a police service canine, except under the direct supervision and permission of the handler
- e. Compensation:
  - 1) Canine Handlers will generally be scheduled to work a Monday – Friday, eight-hour schedule. 7 of those hours are on assignment, with one hour reserved for animal care.
  - 2) Canine Handlers will receive five hours of compensatory time per pay period to care for their animals while off duty unless otherwise stated in a collective bargaining agreement.

### **D. Equipment required for canine**

## ***Police Canine Program***

1. The canine team will always have, while on-duty or at training, the following equipment, at a minimum:
  - a. Basic collar
  - b. Training Collar
  - c. Muzzle
  - d. Reward
  - e. Multiple length leads

### **E. Canine Team vehicle and associated equipment**

1. Canine Team vehicles are specifically designed and equipped to transport the Canine Team and the assigned equipment.
2. Canine Team vehicles may only be used for work-related purposes unless prior approval is given by the Canine Unit Coordinator.
3. Canine Team vehicles will only be operated by personnel assigned and trained to operate and maintain the Canine Team vehicles and equipment.
4. The Canine Handler will visually inspect their assigned vehicle daily before use.
5. Canine Team vehicles will be assigned the following equipment:
  - a. Temperature alarm system, with a remote-operation fan
  - b. Tinted windows
  - c. Kennel
  - d. Vault