



Office of the Sheriff

General Order 8.09

Personnel Early Warning System

Effective: January 17, 2003

Revised: April 2021

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a formal system to effectively organize critical performance and evaluation data in a format conducive to prompt identification and response to early indicators of employee performance and/or conduct related problems.

The forms provided in this policy are not for documenting positive indicators, so supervisors should refer to the policy of how to conduct performance evaluations for overall documentation.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Durham County Sheriff's Office to maintain an effective comprehensive early warning intervention system to monitor employee action to promote the sheriff's office mission and values.

III. APPLICATION

- A. A comprehensive early warning system (EWS) is an essential component of good discipline in a well-managed law enforcement agency. The early identification of potential problem employees and a menu of remedial actions can increase agency accountability and offer employees a better opportunity to meet the agency's values and mission statement.
- B. The EWS is a time-sensitive process designed to effectively organize critical performance and evaluation data in a format conducive to promptly identify early indicators of certain performance and/or conducted related problems and to facilitate any necessary or appropriate intervention activities.
- C. The EWS is only one of the methods by which employees are identified as possibly needing assistance with performance and/or conduct related problems. The EWS is intended to serve as a systematic approach to highlighting tendencies that may otherwise be overlooked.

IV. ADMINISTRATION

- A. Professional Standards will coordinate the DCSO "Personnel Early Warning System". He or she will be responsible for developing and maintaining a system for collecting, tracking, and reporting on the target data for each agency employee as provided in this order. All EWS records will be stored in the sheriff's office BlueTeam records management system.
- B. He or she will periodically compare each category of collected target data to the corresponding historical norms of the agency. Norms will be updated on an ongoing basis for each category of target data. Professional Standards will submit written recommendations to the Chief Deputy regarding any indicated need for adjustment in established thresholds requiring EWS notice and review.



- C. Supervisors should monitor the employees, in their span of control, for signs of behavioral alert indicators. If an employee exhibits one or more of these indicators, the supervisor should have a conference to determine if the employee may benefit from intervention of the Employee Assistance Program or if some type of disciplinary action is warranted. Some of the behavioral alert indicators that an employee may exhibit are:
1. Excessive absenteeism.
 2. A significant reduction in work performance.
 3. Sudden unusual behavior.
 4. Indications of substance abuse.
 5. Supervisory problems where previous attempts through performance review and discipline have had little, if any, effect on resolving the undesired behavior.
- D. The following criteria are considered risk indicators and will be reviewed in an ongoing basis to identify employees with potentially problematic behaviors who need intervention efforts:
1. Use of Force Reports.
 2. Agency Motor Vehicle Collisions.
 3. Disciplinary Actions.
 4. Needs Improvement on a performance evaluation.
 5. Internal Affairs Investigation.
 6. Vehicle Pursuits.
 7. Citizen Complaints.
- Supervisors should monitor these risk indicators and inquire about employee wellbeing, before the EWS has been triggered for a review.
- E. The threshold for EWS review and intervention is a culmination of any 5 risk indicators where the employee has been the subject of or involved in as a principal participant during the most recent 12-month period.

V. ROLE OF SUPERVISORS AND COMMANDERS

- A. The EWS is simply a tool to assist supervisory personnel in monitoring employee performance. The availability of EWS does not alter the critical role of line supervisors to directly monitor the performance and behavior of personnel under their command daily.
- B. Along with daily monitoring of employee work activities, supervisors must take proactive measures to address identified deficiencies in employee performance or behavior at the earliest practical time.



- C. Supervisors assigned to oversee routine reporting and review functions related to employee performance, discipline, pursuits, use of force, citizen complaints, and vehicle operations must remain alert to patterns or indicators that suggest the need for follow up review and/or intervention. The goal is to identify escalating patterns of less serious misconduct that can be abated through intervention.
- D. Supervisors and Division Commanders shall promptly provide all necessary documentation to the Personnel Service Employee for the purpose of compiling and tracking EWS data.

VI. EWS NOTICES AND PRELIMINARY REVIEW

- A. Supervisors shall complete the “Supervisory Tracking Form” through the chain of command to the Chief Deputy, whenever an employee meets the threshold criteria established in Section II of this order. EWS notices are intended to assist supervisors in evaluating and guiding their subordinates and will not, standing alone, form the basis for disciplinary action.
- B. EWS notices require that the employee’s immediate supervisor and Division Captain meet to conduct a preliminary review of the EWS data, as well as other recent employee performance related information and make the appropriate recommendations.
- C. The Division Captain will submit a timely report through the chain of command to the Chief Deputy outlining the course of action recommended.
- D. The “Supervisory Tracking Form” and any supporting documentation will be entered and stored with the Early Warning System record in BlueTeam.

VII. EWS REVIEW AND INTERVENTION

- A. Division Captains and immediate supervisors will be responsible for EWS reviews. EWS reviews include a meeting(s) with the affected employee and relevant supervisory staff. Employees will be informed that they have been identified for an EWS review and of the purpose of the meeting(s).
- B. EWS review meetings will result in options or courses of action being determined and established by the Division Captain with input from identified employee and their supervisory chain of command. Options or courses of actions include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 1. No additional action/ Reassignment;
 - 2. Informal counseling & monitoring by immediate supervisor;
 - 3. Formal counseling and/or corrective action;
 - 4. Formal monitoring, for a minimum of 12 weeks, with monthly progress reports submitted in memorandum form by immediate supervisor through chain of command to the Sheriff;
 - 5. Mandatory training designed to improve the employee’s skill;
 - 6. Voluntary or mandatory referral to the County of Durham Employee Assistance Program.
- C. A record of counseling, or remedial training, will be entered by the reviewing supervisor, with any supporting documentation, in BlueTeam.



VIII. ANNUAL EVALUATION

- A. Professional Standards will conduct an annual evaluation of the Personnel Early Warning System and submit the results to the Sheriff and Chief Deputy for review. The evaluation will include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - 1. Statistical data about EWS activity during the previous year;
 - 2. Assessment of overall effectiveness of the EWS; and
 - 3. Any recommendation for changes in EWS policy or procedure.
- B. The EWS annual evaluation will be made available to all supervisory personnel for review and comment.



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