GREENVILLE COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

GO-132

GENERAL ORDERS

WELLNESS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FITNESS FOR DUTY

PURPOSE:

By addressing the professional development, performance, and wellness of its personnel, the Greenville County Sheriff's Office will encourage its members to increase their personal wellness and professional competency, in accordance with the law and applicable agency policies and procedures. This General Order establishes the policies, guidelines, and remedies to be applied as a means of improving employee productiveness, effectiveness, morale, and retention.

POLICY:

In order to meet the stated purpose of this General Order, the Sheriff's Office will provide mandated and specialized training, appropriate professional development opportunities, as well as general guidance to its employees.

As such training and professional development becomes necessary, the duty status and work assignments may be modified according to the needs of the Sheriff's Office and the employee, as appropriate. Such action will not be taken arbitrarily and every reasonable effort will be made to ensure an objective, proper, and appropriate action is taken in accordance with this General Order.

Application of this policy is not intended as a substitute for other Sheriff's Office policies or procedures related to performance; nor is it intended as a substitute for discipline. Situations involving violations of Sheriff's Office policies or practices may result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken.

DEFINITIONS:

To facilitate appropriate duty assignments in accordance with this General Order, as well as other General Orders with similar policy goals, the following definitions apply:

Administrative Duty – A work or duty assignment that does not require any contact with the general public in a law enforcement capacity. Such assignments include, but are not limited to, data entry or other clerical functions. Sworn personnel assigned to Administrative Duty may be relieved of any issued weapons at the discretion of the Sheriff.

Administrative Leave – An employee may be relieved from duty for an indeterminate period of time until cleared to return to work through investigation or other assessment according to applicable General Orders. This may involve administrative leave with or without pay at the Sheriff's discretion. During administrative leave, an employee is prohibited from functioning in a law enforcement capacity. Personnel placed on Administrative Leave will be notified of their status and may be relieved of their weapons and law enforcement credentials in accordance to applicable General Order, or at the discretion of the Sheriff or his designee.

Light Duty – A plain clothes duty assignment made by the Division Commander that does not require contact with the general public in a law enforcement capacity or assignment to a task and that is physically or mentally less demanding than normal job duties on a temporary or permanent basis. Assignments will include duties in a limited law enforcement capacity, but under no circumstances does it include emergency or first responder support or physical contact with offenders unless a response to aggression under General Order 205 applies. Primarily, these assignments are:

- Crime Prevention
- Crimestoppers Coordinator
- Some positions in CID, Support, and Administration
- Some supervisory positions
- Other desk duties

Persons assigned to light duty may be relieved of their assigned county vehicle at the discretion of their unit division commander based on the nature of the temporary disability. Sworn personnel who are assigned to Light Duty will not be relieved of their issued weapons unless directed by the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or his designee. Sworn personnel are permitted to carry their issued backup weapon in an authorized fashion unless medically prohibited from doing so.

The Sheriff has the authority to adjust these provisions at his discretion.

Return to duty – Personnel who have been placed on a light duty assignment may be returned to full duty under the following circumstances:

1) The issuance of a Personnel Order by the Sheriff or his designee. This may include the reassignment of the employee to a different position.

2) When the employee is medically cleared to return to full duty as evidenced by a statement from the treating medical professional.

TRAUMATIC CRITICAL INCIDENTS:

Personnel may be relieved of their duties after a traumatic critical incident, if necessary. This removal may be a break from duty during the shift or being placed on administrative leave or wellness leave. During the period of administrative leave, provisions for post-critical incident debriefing and/or counseling for those employees involved will be provided as needed, and a return to work-assessment may be required. Also, follow-up by the Wellness Services Unit will be conducted as needed.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

To perform duties as a law enforcement professional, deputies and communications personnel are required to acquire and maintain professional credentials. These credentials range from the most basic certifications as law enforcement officers/communications specialists to academic degrees appropriate to the profession. Depending upon the needs of the Sheriff's Office, qualified deputies/communications personnel will be assigned opportunities for professional development. These assignments may be initiated through three channels:

1) Promotion or assignment to specialized duties:
Whenever an employee is promoted, it is imperative that the employee is trained in human resources, leadership, and supervisory skills. Based on the individual qualifications at the time of promotion or assignment, the Sheriff's Office will provide training appropriate to the level of promotion.

2) Professional development requests by the employee:

A) All employees are encouraged to research and seek certifications and academic credentials as a qualification for career advancement. To this end, tuition assistance is available to employees seeking academic credentials. Information about tuition assistance is available through Administrative Services.

B) Additionally, according to the needs of the Sheriff's Office, there are advanced, graduate-level educational opportunities through Anderson University Command College, for which deputies may apply. Eligible personnel must be at least the rank of Master Deputy and have completed a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited or approved college or university.

C) Additionally, employees may submit requests for non-academic training to develop skills that will better enable them to perform their duties and better qualify them for career advancement. These training requests should be submitted on the appropriate form through division channels.

3) Career Development - The Sheriff's Office continually seeks to identify training and professional development opportunities for its employees. As determined by the needs of the Sheriff's Office, select individuals or classifications of employees will be assigned to specialized training courses, such as are available through the FBI National Academy, the University of Louisville Southern Police Institute, or other providers. Selection criteria will be based on the needs of the Sheriff's Office as the first criteria, and merit as the second.

WELLNESS:

In order for employees to properly function as law enforcement professionals, the Sheriff's Office encourages its personnel to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle behaviors. Healthy lifestyle behaviors are essential to the management of an employee's physical, intellectual, mental, and emotional status required to successfully carry out law enforcement functions. Behavior change is the key to reducing health risks, the prevalence of chronic disease, and employee health-related expenses.

Therapy and Counseling:

The Greenville County Sheriff's Office will provide counseling and therapy services to its employees and their spouses through a licensed mental health clinician assigned to the Wellness Services Division. The Wellness Clinician will provide the necessary guidance to GCSO employees, and their spouses, who are experiencing job stress and personal issues. Such stress may cause emotional and/or physical health concerns and may affect employee job performance. Employees are in no way restricted from getting needed assistance through means outside of the Sheriff's Office, nevertheless, the office remains committed to providing this service for its employees. Addiction treatment services are also available and subject to the terms of each employee's individual health benefit.

Employees assigned to high-risk units will proactively be monitored by the Sheriff's Office for signs of distress through annual wellness assessments conducted by the GCSO Wellness Clinician.

Awareness and Education:
The benefits provided to employees of Greenville County include medical insurance coverage and a health and wellness program through the County of Greenville. This program includes a health clinic staffed by a qualified nurse practitioner. Members of the Sheriff's Office are encouraged to make use of these benefits whenever they need medical care.

The health and wellness program also provide additional benefits for physical fitness, diabetes management, nutrition, and associated counseling required to accomplish these wellness goals.

All new recruits will receive training during Pre-academy to educate them about the effects of chronic stress, hypervigilance, and Post-Traumatic Stress Injury. This training provides tools to counteract the effects of job stress and avenues to seek help if needed. All GCSO employees will receive annual stress recognition training.

Because financial constraints can cause a significant amount of stress both at home and at work, all Sheriff's Office employees will have access to financial management education offered throughout the year. Personal one-on-one financial planning services are available to all GCSO personnel at no cost as part of our wellness support services.

Fitness Facility:
The Sheriff's Office also maintains a well-equipped gym which may be accessed twenty-four hours a day to help accomplish fitness goals.

Culture and Environment:
Supervisors and unit commanders are to positively reinforce behaviors that promote wellness and fitness for duty. All employees are expected to continually assess their personal wellness to ensure that they are capable of performing their duties and engage the public in a positive, safe and confident manner.

Motivation:
While the Sheriff's Office can assist with the other components of a wellness program, the motivation to effectively maintain wellness and fitness ultimately rests with the employee. Employees are to be continually encouraged to take advantage of the programs and benefits available to them.

FITNESS FOR DUTY:

Fitness for duty is a demonstration of employee wellness and preparedness. Employees are expected to be able to perform the functions of their job assignment in a safe, secure, productive, and efficient manner throughout the entire time they are working. This requires that employees access resources and make personal investments of time to ensure that they are physically, mentally, and emotionally fit to competently perform well all of the functions of a law enforcement professional. The Sheriff's Office will evaluate an employee's fitness for duty when an employee is:

A) Having observable difficulty performing work duties at an acceptable level, as determined by the supervisor; or
B) When the employee is posing an imminent and serious safety threat to self or others.

Employee Responsibilities:

- Employees are responsible for managing their health in a manner that allows them to safely perform their job responsibilities.
- Employees must come to work fit for duty and must perform their job responsibilities in a safe, secure, productive, and effective manner during the entire time they are working.
- Employees are responsible for notifying their supervisors when they are not fit for duty.
- Employees are responsible for notifying their supervisor when they observe a coworker acting in a manner that indicates the coworker may be unfit for duty. If the supervisor's behavior is the focus of concern, an employee may report these observations to their division commander.

Employer Responsibilities:

- Supervisors are responsible for observing the attendance, performance, and behavior of the employees they supervise.
- Supervisors are responsible for following this policy's procedures when presented with circumstances or knowledge that indicate that an employee may be unfit for duty.

Procedures:

1. In every application of this General Order, supervisory personnel must make a reasonable inquiry into whether an employee's fitness for duty concern (either that the employee has created a safety risk or demonstrated an inability to perform their essential job functions) is legitimate and supported by objective facts.

2. The supervisor who receives reliable information that an employee may be unfit for duty, or through personal observation believes an employee to be unfit for duty, will validate and document the information or observations as soon as is practicable.

3. The supervisor will present the information or observations to the employee at the earliest possible time in order to validate them; and will allow the employee to explain his or her actions, or to correct any mistakes of fact contained in the description of those actions.

4. The supervisor must forward the information to Command Staff through their chain of command and begin collaboration with the Wellness Coordinator. The Wellness Coordinator will make the determination to notify the Sheriff and Chief Deputy as to:

    a) Whether a fitness for duty or mandatory evaluation is required; and
    b) If the employee is to be placed on Administrative leave, or assigned to Administrative or Light Duty.

3. The Sheriff's Office will be responsible for the cost of any mandatory referral or Fitness for Duty Evaluation.

4. The service provider will advise the Sheriff's Office whether the employee should return to work and, if so, the conditions of return. The final decision on whether a provider's recommendation will be accepted ultimately lies with the Sheriff or his designee.

5. The employee must comply with all aspects of the fitness for duty and mandatory evaluation procedures, including furnishing necessary consent and release forms to the health service provider. Noncompliance may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Information will be requested from the health service provider regarding work restrictions that may be required upon the employee's return to work.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF MEDICAL RECORDS:

Any document created or obtained during a fitness for duty or mandatory evaluation that contains medical information about an employee is considered a medical record and is regarded as confidential. The Administrative Services Division will maintain medical records related to fitness for duty evaluations separate from other personnel records.

Hobart Lewis, Sheriff