



PAWNEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SHERIFF DARRIN VARNELL

Policy # <u>Chain of Command</u>	Related Policies:
<i>This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this agency for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.</i>	
Applicable Oklahoma Statutes:	
CALEA Standard:	

PURPOSE:

To outline the principles underlying command functions including unity of command and to designate the order of succession to command.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Pawnee County Sheriff's Office to manage the Sheriff's Office using principles of command recognized by the law enforcement profession and to clearly define the lines of authority that extend throughout the organization (chain of command). The Sheriff's Office adheres to the management principle referred to as "unity of command" which dictates that an employee is accountable to only one supervisor at any given time and that each organizational component is under the direct control of only one supervisor.

DEFINITIONS:

ASSIGNMENT: The position within the Sheriff's Office to which an individual employee is assigned. An employee's assignment includes the specific component to which he is assigned and all of the other superior components within the chain of command.

CHAIN OF COMMAND: The "Chain of Command" refers to the hierarchy of supervision between the Sheriff and every individual within the Sheriff's Office. It is a series of positions, each of which is directly commanded by the one immediately above it. Each individual's chain of command is determined by his assignment within the Sheriff's Office. The chain of command includes both those individuals who are superior to and subordinate to any particular employee.

SUPERVISOR: An employee who holds the rank of Chief Deputy, Sergeant, Corporal, Supervisor, Assistant Supervisor, Administrator, or manager.

CHAIN OF COMMAND:

The Chain of Command of the Sheriff's Office is as follows:

1. Sheriff
2. Undersheriff
3. Chief Deputy

4. Patrol Sergeant
5. Jail Administrator

ADHERANCE TO CHAIN OF COMMAND:

All Sheriff's Office business will be conducted via the chain of command; that is, information will be transmitted upward or downward as necessary only to the employee(s) immediately above or below an individual in the chain of command, with the following exceptions:

1. An employee wishes to discuss with another employee, regardless of his rank or position, a personal matter that has nothing whatsoever to do with the administration, the operations, or the activities of the Sheriff's Office;
2. An employee possesses information which is detrimental in some respect to a superior, and which in all likelihood would not be transmitted for information or action. In such circumstances, the employee is authorized only to directly contact the supervisor of the employee about whom the detrimental information exists.
3. An employee is required in an emergency or due to exigent circumstances to initiate immediate action;
4. An employee is specifically directed or authorized to do so by the General Orders of the Sheriff's Office; or
5. An employee is conducting an operation or activity that by its nature requires cooperation with other members of the Sheriff's Office.

AUTHORITY WITHIN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND:

Supervisors possess the authority to issue orders to all subordinate personnel within their chain of command. When orders are issued to personnel other than immediate subordinates, all intermediates in the chain of command will be informed as soon as practicable.

AUTHORITY OUTSIDE THE CHAIN OF COMMAND:

Personnel will attempt to limit their orders to subordinate individuals outside their chain of command. Recognized exceptions that authorize orders to be issued to individuals outside of the chain of command include:

1. Situations in which personnel are vested with staff authority over a specific function for which they are responsible beyond the chain of command to which they are assigned. Such persons are authorized to issue orders narrowly related to the proper execution of the function for which they are responsible. Such orders may be issued to employees outside of the chain of command and may even be issued to employees of superior rank.

Whenever such functional orders are issued, the entire chain of command of both the employee issuing and receiving the order should be notified of the order as soon as possible. For example, personnel assigned to the Training Unit who are responsible for the proper completion of Department-wide training are authorized to issue orders to persons of any rank throughout the Sheriff's Office when the orders specifically concern the training function for which they are responsible.
2. Situations involving circumstances which require immediate action and time does not permit the superior officer to utilize the chain of command. When such orders are issued, the issuing member will notify his own and the receiving member's chain of command as soon as possible if the new order interferes with or alters previous orders to or functions of

the receiving member.

CIVILIAN AUTHORITY:

Civilian command personnel and supervisors are vested with the same authority and responsibility as sworn command and supervisory personnel. Civilian command and supervisory personnel are held to the same standards of performance in their areas of assignment as their sworn counterparts. Civilian personnel are not authorized to issue orders that require sworn police authority to originate or to execute.

ABSENCE OF COMMANDING OFFICER:

In the absence of a superior officer of any component of the Sheriff's Office, the senior member of the next lower echelon within the component will assume the duties and responsibilities of that rank when required, unless an alternate has been designated by a higher authority in the chain of command, or unless higher authority has indicated that the position should remain temporarily vacant.

TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENTS:

When responsibility for an assignment requires temporary assistance from employees assigned to other components, a commander or supervisor attached to the responsible component and present for duty will have authority over employees of the same or lesser rank temporarily detailed from another component.

COMMAND DURING EMERGENCIES/ON-GOING INCIDENTS:

1. Command of all police personnel assigned to the scene of an emergency or on-going incident will be assumed by the senior sworn individual on the scene, regardless of assignment. The senior officer will supervise until the arrival of a counterpart of equal rank from the command handling the incident or until the arrival of higher command who assumes control of the scene.
2. Any Deputy assuming command at the scene of an emergency will inform the person being relieved of the superior officer's intent to assume command and will then notify Communications that command has been assumed.
3. Designation of command during an emergency or on-going incident does not preclude the use of the Incident Command System, Unified Command System, or other organizational structures to manage the incident.

SENIORITY:

1. Seniority within the Sheriff's Office or within a component of the Sheriff's Office will be determined as follows:
 - A. Higher ranking personnel are senior to lower ranking personnel.
 - B. For members of the same or equivalent rank, the member who has served the longer period of time in the highest rank for which there is a differing time of

service shall be senior;

- C. For members of the same or equivalent rank who have served the same periods of time in all ranks, the member who graduated the CLEET full-time basic academy first shall be senior.
 - D. Although the rank of Master Patrol Deputy does not appear in the chain of command, it is considered a "rank" above that of officer for determination of seniority;
 - E. For members who have been demoted, their time served in higher ranks will not be considered as continuous time served in the rank to which they were demoted;
 - F. For members who were promoted on the same day, order of promotion on that day will play no part in determination of seniority.
2. If a command decision is necessary and none of the personnel present have designated authority over the situation by function, assignment, or other provision of the General Orders, the most senior member present will assume command.

AUTHORITY OF THE UNDERSHERIFF:

OS 19-180.65 (B) Each principal officer named in paragraph 1 of Section 180.61 of this title, except judges, shall designate of record in the office of the county clerk a first or chief deputy, ***undersheriff***, or assistant who shall be chargeable with all the duties of such principal officer, while subject to the direction of the same. The first or chief deputy, ***undersheriff***, or assistant shall carry on the duties of the office during the absence of the principal officer or, in the event of the death, removal or resignation of said principal officer, until a successor shall have qualified. During periods of vacancy of the principal office, resulting from the death, removal or resignation of the principal officer, the chief deputy, undersheriff, or assistant shall be bonded in the same manner and in the same sum as required for the principal officer.

- 1. The Sheriff's Office designates only one employee to directly command or supervise each of its components. However, the Sheriff's Office also designates an Undersheriff for the command or supervision of all department members.
- 2. The Undersheriff shall fall within the chain of command directly below the Sheriff.
- 3. The Undersheriff shall have overall command, other than when assumed by the Sheriff, of all operations and functions within the Pawnee County Sheriff's Office.

ORDER OF SUCCESSION OF THE SHERIFF:

- 1. The Sheriff will appoint the undersheriff to serve during periods when the Sheriff is unavailable for duty. During this time, the Undersheriff shall have the same powers and authority as the Sheriff and performs the duties of the Sheriff.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPERVISORS:

- 1. An employee's personal friendship, relationship, or associations to a higher-ranking member of the Pawnee County Sheriff's Office shall not be use as an attempt to bypass chain of command. Calling, texting, messaging, e-mailing, or any other form of communication with a higher-ranking member of the Pawnee County Sheriff's Office about department business shall be considered a violation of Chain of Command and may result in disciplinary action.

2. Contacting the Sheriff or Undersheriff before following proper chain of command is prohibited under any circumstances, unless requested to do so, will result in disciplinary action.
3. Employees should not contact supervisors for idle conversation about the agency, nor should they seek the personal advice form supervisor reference to personal decisions.