

4.7 Employee Performance, Planning, and Appraisal

The purpose of this General Order is to: (1) foster fair and impartial personnel decisions, (2) maintain and improve performance, (3) provide a medium for personnel counseling, (4) facilitate proper decisions regarding probationary employees, (5) provide an objective and fair means for measurement and recognition of individual performances in accordance with prescribed guidelines, (6) identify training needs, (7) identify needs for improvement, (8) work with employees to improve their effectiveness and efficiency and make the best use of their knowledge, skills, and abilities. This written directive will serve as an overview in the training of new raters. The primary authority governing employee task analysis and position classifications, to include PP&A process, is the Anne Arundel County Office of Personnel. They should be consulted for specific guidance when questions arise.

4.7.1 General Performance, Planning & Appraisal Process

The Anne Arundel County Office of Personnel is responsible for developing and administering an employee evaluation system for Sheriff's Office personnel. The procedures set forth below are not intended to take precedent over those set by the Office of Personnel, but merely to supplement and give guidance to employees. These procedures implement and set forth the day-to-day Performance, Planning, and Appraisal (PP&A) process within the Sheriff's Office. The employee performance planning and appraisal shall occur in three inter-related phases that shall take place at least once every twelve months. The phases of the program are performance planning, performance review, and performance appraisal.

4.7.2 Performance Planning

Performance planning is the process of setting forth an employee's major work responsibilities and expectations for work accomplishments established by an employee's supervisor, in consultation with the employee. The plan that results from the process sets forth the standards of performance which will be used as a basis for appraising the employee's performance. This is/may be incorporated into a formal *position description*.

The substance of each employee's performance plan/position description is to state all major skills for the job, the frequency of different tasks performed, and the significant performance guidelines for each major task or responsibility. Performance guidelines are to describe a satisfactory level of performance in terms that are explicit and which permit a reasonably objective assessment.

The performance plan of every supervisor shall include performance planning and appraisal for subordinates as a major task or responsibility.

At the beginning of the PP&A review period, the immediate supervisor will prepare a statement of major work tasks, responsibilities, and performance guidelines for the employee to accomplish during the review period. This statement will constitute a preliminary performance plan.

The performance plan/position description is to be thoroughly discussed between the supervisor and employee in a planning session. After the planning session discussion, the performance plan is finalized by the supervisor based on employee input. The performance plan/position description must be agreed upon by the employee, the employee's immediate supervisor, and the Sheriff or a designee. Performance plans should be established within 30 days after an employee begins a new work assignment which does not involve the same major tasks or responsibilities as the previous assignment. Performance plans must be initiated by the supervisor so that the appraisal is done to coincide with the employee's employment date and/or anticipated increment date. A copy of each performance plan/position description should go to the employee, the employee's supervisor, and the employee's personnel files maintained by the Administrative Bureau and the Office of Personnel.

4.7.3 Performance Review

The performance review focuses comprehensively on progress being made by the employee in carrying out his/her performance plan as opposed to a review of one or two specific aspects of performance. Products from a performance review may be strategies for resolving performance problems or the development of the employee's career or skills.

Each employee is to receive at least one performance review in each twelve month period. The required performance review is to take place concurrently with the performance appraisal. The employee and/or supervisor may prepare comments prior to the discussion. A performance appraisal may be generated prior to or in the course of the conference. A space has been provided on the PP&A form for a notation of the performance review.

Performance reviews shall be conducted for an employee who is serving a probationary period. Performance problems which emerge late in the probationary period may be addressed by extending the probationary period in accordance with Office of Personnel regulations.

Progress discussion is the on-going process of discussion, assessment, and feedback that occurs between a supervisor and an employee regarding the employee's performance. During the review period, the supervisor may hold one or more progress discussions with the employee.

On a day-to-day basis during the review period, the supervisor should provide recognition to an employee for work exceeding requirements. Likewise, the supervisor should encourage an employee to correct unsatisfactory performance at the time an incident occurs. Employees must be advised in writing when their performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory. Supervisors should strive to accomplish this notification at least 90 days prior to the end of the rating period. Supervisors are to document both types of performance on a continuing basis and should keep periodic informal notes for the rating period review (see Section 4.7.6 below).

4.7.4 Performance Appraisal

The performance appraisal is the last phase in the PP&A cycle. Once the performance appraisal occurs, the cycle begins again with the establishment of a new performance plan. The new plan may include many of the elements of the previous plan. The employee's position description may also be reevaluated to reflect modified expectations and/or responsibilities.

Employees who are serving probationary periods shall receive at least an informal performance review every three (3) months, or as specified by negotiated union contract. Employees who have merit status shall receive a yearly performance appraisal on or about the increment/anniversary date. Supervisors are to be evaluated annually regarding the quality of ratings given employees. An employee's level of achievement or performance will be rated according to standards adopted by the Office of Personnel.

Supervisors must indicate in the narrative section of the PP&A form and in their appraisal interview and review session with the employee, the extent to which they feel an employee's performance has met, exceeded, or fallen below the acceptable levels of performance.

Toward the end of the review period, the supervisor prepares a preliminary draft of the level of achievement and narrative sections of the PP&A form, making use of documentation and informal notes that have been prepared during the period. Where one or more tasks and responsibilities were assigned and completed satisfactorily, but not made a part of the performance plan, their achievements should be assessed as part of the performance appraisal. The supervisor may ascertain and consider the opinions of other employees or supervisors when formulating their assessment.

The immediate supervisor's superior (i.e., reviewer) shall review and sign the preliminary PP&A form for compliance with the program's objectives and procedures. Discrepancies shall be brought to the attention of the supervisor for correction. If a reviewer disagrees with a supervisor's judgments concerning an employee's performance, the reviewer may discuss the disagreement with the supervisor and recommend modifications. The reviewer does not have the

authority to make changes on the form or direct the supervisor to do so. If a reviewer or higher level departmental official disagrees with a supervisor's rating, he/she shall have the option of attaching a memorandum to the rating form. Within reason, such differences of opinion shall be resolved before the supervisor and employee hold an appraisal session.

After consulting with the reviewer, the supervisor holds an appraisal session with the employee during which the appraisal for the period just completed is thoroughly discussed. Following the discussion, the supervisor may make such modifications as he/she believes are warranted before finalizing these sections. Upon finalization of the PP&A form, the employee must sign it. Refusal to sign a PP&A may result in disciplinary action. The employee shall be permitted the opportunity to agree or disagree with the overall rating and individual assessments, and shall be provided ample opportunity to document his/her concerns in writing. The employee and the supervisor each receive a copy of the completed form after it is signed by the reviewer. A copy of each completed PP&A form is to be retained by the employee's supervisor, and a copy placed in the employee's Office and County personnel files for a period as specified by the Office of Personnel.

4.7.5 Contested Appraisals

Employees who disagree with their performance plan or performance appraisal should discuss the reasons for the disagreement with their immediate supervisor. Should there still be a lack of consensus, the employee may utilize his/her chain-of-command to rectify a contested review. If such disagreement is not resolved using this avenue, the employee shall sign the line of disagreement, make suitable comments, and follow the procedures outlined by the Office of Personnel and/or contract agreements established for a represented employee to pursue a grievance or appeal.

4.7.6 Supervisory Files

Supervisors are to document and maintain notes on each employee's performance on an ongoing basis. These notes will be useful when determining the quality of performance for the whole appraisal period. This type of documentation may also be referred to as an *Incidents Diary* or a *Facts and Information (F&I) File*.

Supervisors will maintain a file for each employee under their supervision which contains informal notes by the supervisor concerning the employee's job performance or conduct, notes made in performance review or other counseling sessions with the employee, copies of completed work assignments, drafts of work in progress, and informal written communications between the employee and the supervisor concerning performance or conduct issues.

A supervisory file, at the supervisor's discretion, may be reviewable by the subject employee upon request, and is to be safeguarded from review by any other individuals except on a need-to-know basis. The purpose of supervisory files is to encourage supervisors to maintain an informal record on a continuing basis which will provide substantiation for performance ratings and other performance or conduct related actions.

4.7.7 Uses for Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are to be considered in decisions on granting merit system status and merit increases, and for demotion, removal or other adverse administrative actions to resolve performance problems.

Performance appraisals are an appropriate basis for decisions to grant performance awards. At a minimum, where a performance award is recommended for an employee, the recommendation and relevant aspects of the employee's most recent performance appraisal are to be consistent.

Performance appraisals may not be used in any competitive testing procedure unless this use has been reviewed by the Office of Personnel.

The performance appraisal process will be used to address career counseling relative to advancement, specialization, and training appropriate for the employee's position. The process is to concurrently show an employee where they excel and are weak.

4.7.8 Inspection of System

Once annually, the Sheriff's Office Administrative Bureau and/or the Anne Arundel County Office of Personnel will inspect submitted PP&A forms to determine how well the system is functioning. The objectives of this inspection are to identify instances of extremely high and low ratings, consistency of ratings by supervisors, and the number and reason of contested appraisals.