

Woodbury Heights Police Department Policy and Procedure

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Subject: Early Warning System					
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Date	Page	Section	Date	Page	Section
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I. Purpose

To provide guidelines for establishing an Early Warning System to identify employees who may require proactive intervention efforts.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Woodbury Heights Police Department to provide early intervention to employees who meet established criteria. The Woodbury Heights Police Department has a responsibility to its employees and the community to identify and assist employees who show symptoms of job stress or personal problems. Such symptoms may be exhibited in on-the-job performance behaviors that results in complaints from citizens or may be indicated in the frequency of use-of-force incidents. The Woodbury Heights Police Department has existing programs available to assist employees, including- Cop-2-Cop Assistance Program, and other counseling, which are available to employees. In order to enhance these services, the Department has implemented the Early Warning System (EWS). It is the policy of the Department to provide for the protection and confidentiality of the Early Warning System records maintained by the Chief of Police.

An Early Warning System (EWS) is an essential component in a well-managed law enforcement agency. The early identification of potential problems and a menu of remedial actions can increase accountability and offer employees a better opportunity to meet the agency’s values and mission statement. The intent of this system is to provide non-disciplinary intervention, whenever possible, to assist our employees in their professional development in order to provide the highest level of service and satisfaction to the public.

III. Procedures

A. Early Warning System

1. The EWS is a non-disciplinary system that is designed to improve the performance of the Department and its employees through counseling, training and types of professional development as described in this directive.

B. Performance Indicators

1. Many different measures of employee performance can be regularly examined for patterns or practices that may indicate potential problems. These performance measures include, but are not limited to, the following documented indicators:
 - a. Internal affairs complaints against the officer, whether initiated by another officer or by a member of the public;
 - b. Civil actions filed against the officer;
 - c. Criminal investigations of or criminal complaints against the officer;
 - d. Any use of force by the officer that is formally determined or adjudicated (for example, by internal affairs or a grand jury) to have been excessive, unjustified, or unreasonable;
 - e. Domestic violence investigations in which of officer is an alleged subject;
 - f. An arrest of the officer, including on a driving under the influence charge;
 - g. Sexual harassment claims against the officer;
 - h. Vehicular collisions involving the officer that are formally determined to have been the fault of the officer;
 - i. A positive drug test by the officer;
 - j. Cases or arrests by the officer that are rejected or dismissed by a court;
 - k. Cases in which evidence obtained by an officer is suppressed by a court;
 - l. Insubordination by the officer;
 - m. Neglect of duty by the officer;
 - n. Unexcused absences by the officer; and
 - o. Any other indicators, as determined by the agency's chief executive.

C. Initiation of Early Warning System

1. Three separate instances of the performance indicators (as listed in Section B, above) within any twelve-month period will trigger EWS review process. If one incident triggers multiple performance indicators, that incident shall not be double- or triple-

counted, but instead shall count as only one performance indicator. The Chief of Police, may, at their discretion determine that a lower number of performance indicators within a twelve-month period (i.e, one or two performance indicators) will trigger the EWS review process.

2. Once an officer has displayed the requisite number of performance indicators necessary to trigger the EWS review process; assigned supervisory personnel shall initiate remedial action to address the officer's behavior
3. When an EWS review process is initiated, personnel assigned to oversee the EWS should:
 - a. Formally notify the officer, in writing;
 - b. Conference with the subject officer and appropriate supervisory personnel
 - c. Develop and administer a remedial program including the appropriate remedial/corrective actions listed below;
 - d. Continue to monitor the subject officer for at least three months, or until the supervisor concludes that the officer's behavior has been remediated (whichever is longer);
 - e. Document and report findings to the appropriate supervisory personnel and, if warranted, the internal affairs unit. Any statement made by the subject officer in connection with the EWS review process may not be used against the subject officer in any disciplinary or other proceeding.

D. Administration and Tracking

1. Typically, the EWS should be administered by the internal affairs unit. Supervisory officers in the subject officer's chain of command also should be directly involved in any EWS review process.
2. The department utilizes an automated system that is capable of flagging emerging behavioral patterns. At least every six months, personnel assigned to manage the EWS shall audit the tracking system and records to assess the accuracy and efficacy of the tracking system.

E. Review of Index File

1. If the review reveals that an employee has violated department directives, the department may proceed with an internal investigation. If the review reveals that the employee has engaged in conduct that indicates a lack of understanding or inability to comply with accepted procedures, the department shall determine the appropriate course of remedial action.

2. All action taken will be documented and submitted to the Internal Affairs Officer who will maintain EWS records along with Internal Affairs records.

F. Command Responsibilities

1. Chief will notify each employee who meet the criteria for EWS. The Chief will then submit all related reports for EWS to those employees.
2. The Chief will refer to the Index File and make a timely and accurate summary of the actions of the particular employee and recommendations for intervention, if necessary.
3. The Chief will maintain the Early Warning System File on every employee selected for Early Warning System. This file will be the repository for documented incidents that meet the criteria for EWS considerations.
 - a. The file will included completed Intervention Reports along with any applicable reports pertinent to the incidents (e.g. Use of Force, Pursuits, etc.).
 - b. The EWS Files will be maintained by the Chief and will be retained for four years.
 - c. The files will be secured in a separate and secure filing cabinet in the Internal Affairs Officer's office.
 - d. EWS files are considered confidential.
 - e. EWS file is on a need-to-know basis
4. The Chief of Police shall attempt to follow the following steps in the Early Warning System process:
 - a. Review of the Employee's index file and personnel file
 - b. Intervention and counseling, in the form of a meeting between the employee, and his supervisor. This meeting should focus on identifying any problems or potential problems.
 - c. The Chief of Police shall complete a follow up report once the employee has completed the recommendations. This report shall serve as a status update. The report should include whether further recommendations are required or if the employee shall be removed from the Early Warning System process.

G. Supervisor Responsibilities

1. An employee's first line supervisor is usually the first member of the department to encounter and document specific incidents that affect an employee. It is essential for the supervisor to speak with the employee, document these incidents and report findings to the Chief. The success of this program relies heavily on the first line supervisor's participation and involvement.
2. Supervisors shall forward all documentation required by the Early Warning System Policy pursuant to written directives already established - Use of Force, Internal Affairs Investigations, Investigating and Reporting Damage to Police Vehicles, Personnel Policies and Procedures, Vehicle Pursuit Actions, Sick Leave and Tardiness.
3. Supervisors will have input on recommendations affecting their employees such as required remedial training and counseling services through the Employee Assistance Program and disciplinary action.
 - a. Referrals to the Employee Assistance Program shall be made in accordance with the Employee Assistance Program protocols. Personal problems may adversely affect an employee's personal and professional well-being and job performance. The most effective means of handling these problems may be through this program.
 - b. The affected employee and their supervisor shall meet periodically to discuss the employees' progress and goals.
 - c. All employee-supervisor meetings shall be thoroughly documented and submitted to the Chief of Police as soon as possible. These reports have the same confidential status as Internal Affairs documents and are subject to the same disclosure and retention regulations and guidelines.

H. Notification to Subsequent Law Enforcement Employer

1. If any officer who is or has been subject to an EWS review process applies to or accepts employment at any law enforcement agency other than the Woodbury Heights Police Department, it is the responsibility of the Woodbury Heights Police Department to notify the subsequent employing law enforcement agency of the officer's EWS review process history and outcomes. Upon request, the Woodbury Heights Police Department shall share the officer's EWS review process files with the subsequent employing agency.

I. Remedial Action

1. If any of the indicator's outlined in this SOP warrant the activation of the Early Warning System remedial action will occur as follows. The Chief and the employee's Supervisor, will implement the appropriate remedial training with the approval of the Chief of Police.

Remedial intervention may include, but is not limited to:

- a. Training;
- b. Retraining;
- c. Counseling;
- d. Intensive supervision;
- e. Fitness for duty examination;
- f. Employee Assistance Program;
- g. Any other appropriate remedial or corrective action.

Internal disciplinary action, remedial action, and fitness for duty examinations are not mutually exclusive and should be jointly pursued if and when appropriate.

2. When remedial action has been undertaken, the Chief shall ensure that such actions are documented in writing. No entry should be made in the employee's personnel file unless the action results in a sustained complaint. If the remedial action is a training program, attendance and successful completion of that program should be noted in the employee's training record.

J. Notification to County Prosecutor

1. Upon initiation of the EWS review process, the Chief of Police or a designee shall make a confidential written notification to the County Prosecutor or his/her designee of the identity of the subject officer, nature of the triggering performance indicators, and the planned remedial program. Upon completion of the EWS review process, the Chief of Police shall make a confidential written notification to the County Prosecutor or his/her designee of the outcome of the EWS review, including any remedial measures taken on behalf of the subject officer.

K. Public Accessibility and Confidentiality

1. All EWS policies adopted by the Woodbury Heights Police Department shall be made available to the public upon request and shall be posted on the agency's website. Annual reports from the County Prosecutors to the Attorney General also shall be made available to the public upon request and shall be posted on the agency's website.