

## CITIZEN COMPLAINT PROCESS



### ENNIS W. WRIGHT, SHERIFF CUMBERLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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#### **A MESSAGE FROM THE SHERIFF**

Cumberland County Sheriff's Deputies are sworn to protect the rights of all citizens regardless of race, age, sex, nationality, religion, or political preference. This applies to those who are taken into custody as well.

The men and women of the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office take this charge seriously, and for that reason, we have adopted internal safeguards to discourage abuse of authority by our employees. Complaints regarding such abuse are vigorously investigated.

If you feel an employee of this Office has acted in an abusive or unprofessional manner toward you or others, I encourage you to report that employee to a supervisor. This information is being provided to assist you in that process.

Our goal is to provide you with quality law enforcement in the spirit of community cooperation. You help us improve and perpetuate that service when you report poor law enforcement performance.

Ennis W. Wright, Sheriff  
Cumberland County Sheriff's Office  
131 Dick Street  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
(910) 323-1500

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## **OUR POLICY . . .**

It is the policy of the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office to vigorously and thoroughly investigate all complaints against its employees. These investigations ensure to preserve the public's confidence in our willingness to oversee and control the actions of our employees. All such investigations are conducted in a fair and expeditious manner in accordance with established policies and procedures, as well as State and Federal laws and regulations.

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## **WHO MAY COMPLAIN?**

Any citizen, regardless of age, sex or nationality, who witnesses or has direct knowledge of police misconduct may file a complaint. The citizen does not have to be personally involved to do so.

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## **RESPONSIBILITY – OURS AND YOURS . .**

The Sheriff's Office views all citizen complaints against its employees very seriously and actively pursues investigations into misconduct. For this reason, you must ensure that your complaint is based on fact. False reporting in an attempt to unjustly subject an employee to undeserved discipline, slander, or place their employment in jeopardy can result in criminal charges and/or a civil suit by the employee involved.

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## **WHEN SHOULD YOU COMPLAIN?**

Whenever you witness behavior by any employee which is contrary to the Sheriff's Office policy, is in violation of County, State or Federal law, involves the use of excessive force, or involves discourteous or abusive treatment.

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## **HOW DO YOU FILE A COMPLAINT?**

Generally, complaints are filed through the supervisor of the employee involved. If you do not know the name of the employee involved, you may file the complaint through any supervisor or the Watch Commander on duty. A complaint may also be filed by mail and a supervisor will contact you.

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## **WHO INVESTIGATES COMPLAINTS?**

Supervisors are responsible for maintaining discipline and overseeing the conduct of employees assigned to their section. In most cases, the supervisor of the employee would conduct the investigation and report the incident through the chain of command. In more serious incidents, the investigation is conducted by the Office of Professional Standards.

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## WHAT IS THE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE?

The investigating supervisor interviews all witnesses and parties involved. The disposition will fall into one of the following categories:

- Sustained: The employee committed all or part of the alleged act.  
Not Sustained: The investigation produced information insufficient to prove or disprove the allegation.  
Exonerated: The employee committed all or part of the alleged act, but the act was justified, lawful and proper.  
Unfounded: The employee did not commit the alleged act.

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## WHAT IS THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS?

If a complaint is sustained, disciplinary action is taken which consists of one or more of the following progressive measures.

- Counseling: A written form of discipline to assist in problem solving and may be preventative or corrective in nature.  
Training: Remedial training to correct or improve performance.  
Reprimand: A written form of discipline used in cases where an offense has been committed which requires more serious disciplinary action than a counseling notice.  
Suspension: The employee is suspended from duty without pay.  
Demotion: The employee is reduced in rank and pay.  
Termination: The employee is removed from duty, ending that employee's employment with the Sheriff's Office.

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## WHAT WILL YOU BE TOLD?

County, State and Federal personnel laws govern an employee's rights. Disciplinary action is not subject to public disclosure without a court order. You will be advised of the completion of the investigation, but not the findings.

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## OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU . . .

Courteous and professional law enforcement, coupled with a prompt and objective response to complaints, is highly valued in our organization. The Cumberland County Sheriff's Office enjoys an excellent service record, and it is our hope that your contacts with our employees are positive. If not, it is our goal to achieve a resolution to your complaint. Of course, we would also like to hear from you when we have provided you with commendable service.

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**NON-EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS:**

Administration: 677-5412  
Detective Division: 677-5490  
Detention Center: 672-5692  
Human Resources: 321-6760  
Operations Division: 677-5426  
Professional Standards: 677-5420  
Services Division: 321-6765  
Victim's Assistance: 677-5454  
Watch Commander: 677-5432

Crime Alert: 484-TIPS or 484-8477

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**INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR COMPLAINT . . .**

Supervisor taking your complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Reported: \_\_\_\_\_

Complainant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Complainant's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Complainant's Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee(s) involved, if known:

Comments: