



WHITFIELD COUNTY



WRITTEN REPRIMAND

Employee Name: Orlando Almon

Department: Sheriff's Office/ Detention

Employee ID No.: A5725

Date of Counseling: 10/26/2020

Date of Employment: 12/15/18

Time in Position: 7 months

Job Title: Sergeant

DATE OF INCIDENT: 10/18/2020

STATE REASON FOR ACTION:

- Violation of Policy: (WCSO) Operations Manual Section 11.16 Insubordination**
- Violation of Policy: (WCSO) Operations Manual Section 11.12 Competent Performance**
- Violation of Policy: (Whitfield County Merit Policy, 1-1-33(b)(8): "Violation of County ordinances, administrative, regulations, or departmental rules"**
- Violation of Policy: Whitfield County Merit Policy, 1-1-33(b)(3): "Inefficiency, negligence, or incompetence in the performance of duties".**

FACTS OF THE SITUATION:

Overview:

The command staff conducted a review of safety policy and practices after the intake of an inmate who claimed to have been in contact with Covid positive individuals. Upon review, it was determined that Detention Officer Nathan Styles, a member of Sgt. Orlando Almon's shift, was not following numerous safety and security processes. An interview with Sgt. Almon and Officer Styles on 10/23/2020 confirmed that both parties were aware of the violations, and also aware that the directives were not being followed.

Details of Incident:

An inmate was arrested on the week of 10/12/2020-10/18/2020 and claimed to have been in contact with someone who had tested positive for Covid-19. A review of the video record showed that this inmate was received by booking personnel under the authority of Sgt. Orlando Almon at approximately 1:24 am.

The following issues occurred during the video review:

1. **Failure to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as directed:** At 1:23 am, Sgt Almon hands the clipboard with Covid Screening information to Officer Styles, showing that he was

aware that Officer Styles was going to conduct Covid Screening on the inmate. Styles immediately leaves the booking area to conduct the screening, but does not wear a face shield, as required by numerous written directives.

After a Covid Screening, Officer Styles gave a “red mask” to the inmate, indicating that the inmate had the potential to be infectious to others. However, Officer Styles still failed to wear a face shield as required by policy and directives. This occurred in full view of the supervisor, Orlando Almon, who was inventorying the inmate’s property at the time.

The inmate was also fingerprinted, requiring Officer Styles to be in close proximity to the inmate. Video shows that the fingerprinting was also conducted by Officer Styles. Styles also did not wear a face shield during this process.

A review of numerous other inmates’ intake process during the same evening showed that Officer Styles did not wear his face shield when conducting their Covid Screening either.

- 2. Failure to follow directives to only allow “red mask” inmates out of their cells in “extreme circumstances”:** Numerous directives have made it clear that inmates who are either confirmed ill, or suspected to be ill are to be isolated as much as possible. It is clear that employees on the shift intended for this inmate to be included in this group, as Officer Styles provided the inmate with a red mask. Instead of being isolated, the inmate was not immediately placed in a cell to await booking, but was allowed to sit in the main booking area while his booking paperwork was being completed. The inmate remained at the booking counter for over fifteen minutes, with numerous personnel walking past him, who had no face shield, including Sergeant Almon. The inmate was in the booking area for a total of approximately 35 minutes before he was secured in a cell by himself.

Both personnel (Styles and Almon) agreed that this could have been easily avoided by placing the inmate in a cell, “pre-booking” (a common practice) the inmate, then removing him only for fingerprints and for the purpose of a photograph. This would have limited the exposure time substantially and would have been in line with current safety practices.

- 3. Failure to follow proper search procedures.** Detention procedures require that officers fully frisk search inmates prior to removing their restraints, upon intake. This search is conducted to find dangerous contraband, but also make certain that the inmate is not carrying any weapons prior to the restraints being removed.

In a review of the video, with the inmate in question and with others, it was determined that Officer Styles did not conduct a complete frisk search prior to removing the inmates’ restraints. Instead, Officer Styles would search inmate’s pockets, then simply (and lightly) search their legs. This did not include a search of the torso, neck, under-arms, waistline, or groin areas in most cases observed.

This search, and others, was conducted in full view of Sgt. Almon. Both Sgt. Almon and Officer Styles were aware that a full frisk search was required before removing restraints to search for

weapons. Both parties were shown an example video and agreed that the search did not meet those guidelines.

4. **Failure to follow group social distancing procedures.** Sgt. Almon was counseled prior to this event to make certain that individuals from other subdivisions (i.e. housing personnel) did not linger in the booking area. This has been addressed in written directives as well. In addition, the supervisor was specifically made aware that one housing officer was spending a great deal of time in booking when releasing inmates a few weeks prior to this recent event. A review of this video found that this officer was in booking again, this time moving inmate property and generally chatting about situations going on in the facility.

Supervisors have been told, and Sgt. Almon has been warned specifically, that these procedures are in place in case one work unit becomes exposed (such as housing) and to prevent the exposure from spreading to another work unit (such as Intake). In that case, as long as personnel are remaining separate, the administration can send one work unit home as opposed to the entire shift of personnel. It can also prevent potential unnecessary exposures by increasing social distancing.

Examples of issued directives relating to these tasks include:

1. **Memo: Pre-Intake Screening 4/17/2020:**

“Starting on 4/18/2020, Intake will begin pre-evaluating inmates prior to entrance into the facility. During this process, a booking officer with a face shield and a N95 respirator will meet the arresting officer in the sally port.”

“4. Isolate the inmate in the booking area, in a negative pressure room if available.”

“5. Minimize the inmate's access outside of his or her cell.”

2. **Email, Captain Lynch, 9/8/2020:**

*“When dealing with individuals who are potentially contagious, or known to be contagious, employees **should use full face shields** and respirators (N95’s).”*

3. **Email, Captain Lynch, 9/18/2020:**

*“**Visitors in Work Areas:** We shouldn’t be unnecessarily comingling with individuals from other Divisions or outside agencies in our work areas. Patrolmen, detectives and probation officers should refrain from entering the booking area. Officers from Court Services should likewise not hang out in Housing. This goes against the very nature of our generally welcoming attitude, but it is necessary to make sure that transmissions don’t occur in the work areas.”*

4. **Email, Lt. McMillan, 9/30/2020:**

“ We also noticed officer hanging out in the booking area when they did not need to be there. This includes housing officers hanging out in booking and booking officers hanging out in housing. We need to keep our distance as much as possible and when we cannot we need to have masks on.”

5. Email, Captain Lynch, 10/9/2020:

“Red: These inmates have been placed in (individual) isolation due to a valid reason that they either have Covid or have been exposed to someone who has. Any individuals in an area with these individuals must wear an N95 respirator, not simply a surgical or cloth mask. Individuals in close contact should wear face shields as well. These inmates should not be removed from their cells except in extreme circumstances. They should not be in areas with other inmates.”

6. Memo, Lt. McMillan, “Colored Masks”, 10/16/2020:

“Inmates that have had a possible exposure, symptoms, or segregated by medical due to illness should receive a red mask. (These inmates will also need to be placed in a holding tank alone and medical notified.

“If an inmate has a red mask they should be treated as if they are sick and when officer deal with these inmates, a face shield, N95(KN95), and gloves will be worn.”

7. Detention Policy, Frisk Searches:

“Newly admitted inmates are to be frisk searched immediately upon entering the facility and before their restraints are removed. After their property has been removed and inventoried, they are to be frisk searched again.”

“All searches should be systematic by following a logical procedure, and thorough by ensuring that the search is complete and correctly performed. Example; generally search from the top of the body down to ensure no area is missed.”

Conclusion:

Management has a right to develop safety and security procedures, and the organization has an obligation to ensure that employees can perform job related tasks. Employees have an obligation to conform to these expectations and shift supervisors have an obligation to see that they do so. **WCSO Policy and Procedure Section 11.16 Insubordination** indicates that employees must subordinate their personal preferences to a supervisor’s directives. This conduct qualifies as insubordination in that the employee agrees that he and his subordinate were informed of the procedures, but he did not ensure that his staff was following them. It also qualifies in that the employee is violating written policies, as noted below.

This qualifies as a violation of **WCSO Policy and Procedure Section 11.08 Competent Performance**, in that the supervisor has (11.12.C.2) failed “to correct a subordinate’s infraction when such infraction is first made known or when the supervisor could have been reasonably

expected to be aware of the problem.” In this case, Sergeant Almon was aware that the procedures were not being followed, but allowed his subordinate to violate those procedures, instead of correcting the behaviors.

Previous Counseling and Date(s) for Same Infraction:

The employee has been verbally counselled in the last month to make certain that his personnel wear PPE appropriately, when video showed that they were lax in doing so in their work area. He has also been directed to make sure that personnel from other Divisions do not loiter in the booking area, to promote social distancing in the workplace.

Changes in Performance or Conduct since Last Counseling: Similar behaviors have continued, see above. _____

FUTURE CONDUCT OR PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Actively seek and find proper ways to comply with the expectations of the office, including safety and security procedures, and ensure that all others do so as well.
2. Correct and address staff deficiencies when they occur.
3. Report violations to command.

CONSEQUENCES:

Consequences of Failure to Correct or Improve Conduct/Performance: Progressive disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

TIME PERIOD FOR IMPROVEMENT AND FOLLOW-UP:

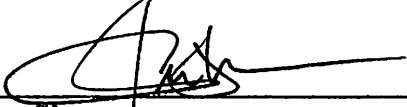
1. Time period for improvement: Immediately as the standard is known.
2. Follow-up date(s): The employee’s behavior will be monitored bi-monthly by the Division Lieutenant for a period of three months.

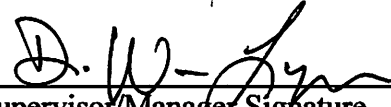
EMPLOYEE COMMENTS:

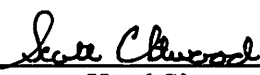
(Attach additional sheets if necessary)

This written reprimand along with any other related documents shall be filed with the Human Resources Director. At your request, you shall be entitled to a review of this written reprimand to be conducted by the Human Resources Director. Three written reprimands within a twelve (12) month period shall be grounds for dismissal pursuant to Section 1-1-33(a) (4) of the Merit Policy.

I have read and understand the contents of this document, and understand that it will be part of my personnel record. My signature confirms that the content has been reviewed with me.


Employee Signature _____ Date 10/29/2020


Supervisor/Manager Signature _____ Date 10/29/2020


Department Head Signature _____ Date 11/25/2020

Human Resources Signature _____ Date _____