


<p><b>RABUN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE</b></p>  <p><b>General Order Number: 2.08</b></p>	<p><b>Date of Issue</b></p> <p>2/23/2016</p>	<p><b>Effective Date</b></p> <p>2/23/2016</p>	<p><b>Revision Date</b></p>
<p>Subject: <b>PERSONNEL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM</b></p>	<p>Amends:</p>	<p>Rescinds:</p>	
<p>Index as: Early Warning System Employee Assistance Program</p>	<p>State Certification Standards: 1.26</p>		

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this General Order is to prescribe the Rabun County Sheriff's Office's Employee Assistance Program and Personnel Early Warning System.

**STATEMENT OF POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Rabun County Sheriff's Office that there exist a clear concern for the career, health, and well being of its employees. Therefore, the Rabun County Sheriff's Office will provide assistance when necessary for the wellbeing of any employee. Additionally, the Rabun County Sheriff Office will make every effort to identify employees, sworn or civilian, who exhibit behavior that may be indicative of underlying problems and assist in the resolution of any employee problems identified.

**DISCUSSION**

The department's Employee Assistance Program and Early Warning System is designed to assist in the identification and resolution of concerns or problems, personal or job related, which may adversely affect an employee's personal or professional wellbeing or job performance.

**DEFINITIONS**

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) — A formal program designed to assist in the identification and resolution of concerns and problems (personal or job related), which may adversely affect an employee's personal or professional wellbeing or job performance. These professional concerns may include, but are not limited to health, marital status, family, financial, substance abuse, emotional/stress and other personal matters.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (EWS) — A system utilized for the early identification of departmental employees who may need some type of corrective action and a procedure for the collecting and evaluating materials required for implementing such corrective action.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS — IA

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS — OPS

## **I. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

- A. Employees may seek or be asked to seek, independent of or in accordance with the Early Warning System (EWS) services through the department's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Direct services provided by the EAP will be at no charge to the employee.
- B. Employees may access these services by contacting the EAP independently or referral related to job performance concerns may be made through supervisory personnel or the Rabun County Government's Human Resource Office.
- C. The EAP will provide timely assessment and referral, when indicated, for diagnosis, treatment and follow up. Referral resources will include both sliding fee options as well as service providers participating in the county's insurance plan. Services provided will be confidential in accordance with all applicable federal and state confidentiality laws.
- D. Upon promotion to a supervisory rank, employees will participate in a supervisor-training program. This program will include instruction on this policy as well as the supervisor's role and responsibility for employee assistance, and the identification of employee behaviors that would indicate the existence of employee concerns, problems, and/or issues that could impact employee job performance.

## **II. EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (EWS)**

- A. General
  - 1. The Early Warning System is necessary for the department to exercise its responsibility to evaluate, identify, and assist employees who exhibit signs of performance and/or stress related problems, which if left unattended could have a detrimental effect on the employee. The system is based on a concern for the welfare of each department employee and identifies employees whose involvement in specifically identified incidents may indicate behavior in need of further review.
  - 2. Any time an employee is identified by the department's early warning system, that employee's name will be held in the strictest confidence. Any unauthorized disclosure of an individual's identity and/or the circumstances surrounding an employee's involvement in the EWS will be considered a violation of the department's code of conduct.

## B. Procedures

1. Immediately following the end of each calendar year the Internal Affairs (I/A) unit will review the following departmental records, to ascertain whether there is an indication a deputy is starting to reveal any unusual pattern of duty performance, suggesting the possible need for intervention to prevent negative consequences for the employee and the department:
  - a. The Internal Affairs database for the previous 18-month period. This query will identify all employees whom, during the most recent 18-month period, have any of the following targeted incidents; use of force incidents, complaints received, and/or disciplinary actions as recorded by I/A; and
  - b. The department's computer reporting system for the previous 18-month period. This query will identify officers who have charged numerous offenders with "Obstruction".
2. If an employee is identified during the annual query for the above incidents, the I/A officer will notify the Office of Professional Standards (OPS) in writing that the annual queries have been completed and request a meeting to review the results. Internal Affairs will not list any employee names on this written correspondence.
3. The division commander of any employee who has any sustained unjustified use of force will automatically conduct a review of that employee to identify whether the employee is in need of assistance or other intervention.
4. Information Gathering
  - a. Since use of force incidents, citizen complaints, and/or disciplinary actions alone cannot be taken to automatically mean an employee may be having underlying problems, the OPS will determine which employees, if any, identified by I/A's query show a need for further concern. If further review of the employee's behavior is needed, the OPS will gather any additional agency documentation regarding the employees work behavior that may show further indication of or dispel the concern that the employee may be in need of assistance. Information gathered may include, but is not limited to:
    - (1) Counseling or other records of discipline such as those completed by a supervisor for job related problems and are not contained in I/A files;
    - (2) Records of use of sick or other leave time;
    - (3) Performance evaluations;
    - (4) Reports of vehicular or other accidents;
    - (5) Extra or off-duty job requests;
    - (6) Transfer requests; and
    - (7) Records of remedial training.

- b. Once the OPS has gathered all additional employee information available, it will be determined whether a need exists for further review into the employee's behavior. If further review is warranted, the OPS will contact the identified employee's division commander and together they will review the gathered material.
- c. The OPS will remind the employee's division commander of the necessity for confidentiality regarding the identity of any employee identified by the EWS or the circumstances around such identification.
- d. The employee's division commander is responsible for a final review, including interviews with the identified employee and/or with the employee's supervisors, field or detention training officers and/or coworkers if necessary, to determine if employee intervention is necessary. The employee's first and second level supervisors will be available and will provide any information necessary to aid in the Division Commanders review.
- e. If any supervisor (sworn or civilian) observes work behavior that may indicate an employee has underlying problems, that supervisor will consult with the employee's division commander. The division commander will then initiate any review and action he feels is necessary.

5. Recommended Action

After conducting all necessary inquires, the employee's division commander will recommend a specific course of action for the employee. Recommended action will not include any discipline or adverse disciplinary action, but instead be directed at assisting the employee in overcoming the identified problem. Recommended actions include, but are not limited to:

- a. No additional action;
- b. Formal monitoring for a minimum of 12 weeks with weekly written status reports submitted to the employee's division commander by the employee's first line supervisor;
- c. Supervisor referral to the EAP; and/or
- d. Mandatory referral to a mental health or behavioral counseling professional and/or medical doctor.

6. Follow Up

- a. The identified employee's Division Commander is responsible for monitoring the employee's work performance and behavior once a recommended action has been given and to:
  - i. Monitor the employee throughout the action period to ensure the employee is receiving the appropriate assistance;
  - ii. Provide a final report of action recommended and completed and provide a copy to the OPS for placement in the employee's confidential employment file as maintained by I/A. Under no circumstances will written information related to this assistance program be placed in an employee's personnel file.

- b. During any promotion process, the Chair of the promotion board will instruct the promotion board members not to let their knowledge of an employee's identification by the department's EWS influence their decision whether or not to recommend an employee for promotion.

### III. ANNUAL EVALUATION OF THE SYSTEM

Immediately following the end of each calendar year, the OPS will conduct a documented and confidential review of the early warning system procedures to:

- A. Ensure the policies and procedures contained in this General Order are being followed;
- B. Ensure employees are not being targeted for discriminatory or disciplinary reasons;
- C. Ensure the system is effective in identifying employees who truly need intervention;
- D. Ensure the same employees do not keep getting identified, possibly indicating intervention efforts are not working;
- E. Identify why known problem employees were not identified by the system;
- F. Recommend necessary changes to the system; and
- G. Forward the findings to the Sheriff or his designee(s) for necessary action.

### IV. MANDATORY CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING

- A. Certain incidents by their seriousness require Mandatory Critical Incident Debriefing. Employees who are involved in such incidents will be automatically referred for debriefing at departmental. While Critical Incident Debriefing is designed to take place in a group format, some situations may involve only one employee. Individuals will be provided with appropriate one-to-one services in such cases via the EAP. Supervisor, regardless of rank or years of experience, will participate in this program when directed to do so. Such participation will serve to set an example for younger, less experienced officers who may otherwise be reluctant to attend.
- B. The following are examples of incidents that will require mandatory debriefing:
  - 1. Any accidental, criminal, or natural death where an employee experienced extreme visual trauma or where the victim's injuries were exceptionally severe;
  - 2. Any death or severe injury to a young child that is seen by an employee, especially one who is a parent;
  - 3. Any death crime scene that is processed where the body is in an obvious state of extreme decomposition;
  - 4. An employee-involved shooting, resulting in death or serious injury to another individual(s);
  - 5. Any violent situation in which an employee is directly involved that places him/her in extreme or imminent danger of grievous bodily harm or death;

6. An incident where an employee is seriously injured or killed while on duty;
7. A motor vehicle crash whereby an employee kills or seriously injures another person;
8. An unusual circumstance that causes an employee to request debriefing;
9. Involvement in search, rescue, and recovery efforts following natural or man-made disasters;
10. Any involvement in a Special Response Team call out where an employee used deadly force to resolve the incident or where circumstances require it; or
11. Upon the request of a supervisor who has knowledge that an employee was adversely affected by an incident, regardless of severity.

C. Request and Follow-up Procedures

1. When an employee is involved in one or more situation(s) described above, the OPS will schedule a critical incident debriefing with the department's EAP provider or with another aid provider as indicated; and
  2. When scheduling the appointment, the EAP or other aid provider will be told to forward any reports or documentation directly to the Sheriff or his designee(s).
- D. Based upon the preliminary debriefing, any follow up consultation will be scheduled by the Sheriff or his designee(s).
- E. All records of consultations will be kept confidential.



By Order of the Sheriff: **Chad K. Nichols**  
Sheriff, Rabun County