

## VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

### CITIZEN COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Law enforcement personnel often face an almost impossible task. They must enforce the law in a fair and impartial manner and still protect the rights of all parties involved. They come in contact with people under the most stressful circumstances and yet must remain patient and courteous. They must exercise good judgment at all times, though they are often called upon to make split-second decisions. They see the worst sides of life but still are expected to give only their best. Being only human, they make mistakes and may appear to be conducting themselves improperly.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office has established rules of conduct for its employees and guidelines for appropriate corrective action when those rules are breached. In addition to providing citizens with a procedure to present their complaints, the system protects police employees from false charges and unwarranted criticism.

#### The Professional Standards Bureau

A function of the Professional Standards Bureau is to protect the integrity of the Office of the Sheriff and its personnel, both sworn and professional staff. Only through citizen's trust and confidence in their police is effective law enforcement possible.

The investigation of certain minor allegations is handled at the division level by an employee's immediate supervisor. Serious complaints are investigated by the Professional Standards Bureau.

#### How to Register a Complaint

While the Sheriff's Office does not actively solicit complaints against its personnel, it encourages any person who believes he or she has a valid complaint to come forward. Only by knowing about internal problems can the Sheriff or his designee deal with them properly.

You may register a complaint in person, by mail, or phone. If you have a complaint, contact the Human Resources Bureau, whose regular office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Human Resources Bureau is located on the first floor of the Pre-Trial Detention Facility building, Ventura County Government Center, 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009, (805) 654-2375. On weekends, holidays or after hours, you may contact us at (805) 654-9511. Complaints may also be registered with any member of the Sheriff's Office.

It is necessary that as much specific information as possible be provided about the incident, including time and date of occurrence, location, the employee's name (if you know it), and names of witnesses, if any.

Every complaint of misconduct, regardless of its nature is reviewed for an appropriate level of investigation.

## Investigation of Complaints

The Professional Standards Bureau Commander, acting on behalf of the Sheriff, will assign your complaint to a staff investigator or to the appropriate supervisor in the employee's division through the chain of command. A comprehensive investigation will be conducted.

Upon completion of the investigation of your complaint, it will be reviewed by the Sheriff or his designee, as well as the employee's supervisor. The disposition of your complaint will be determined in one of five ways:

<b>Unfounded</b>	The allegation is not supported by the evidence.
<b>Exonerated</b>	The incident complained of occurred, but the employee involved acted lawfully and properly.
<b>Not Sustained</b>	The investigation did not disclose enough information to either prove or disprove the allegation.
<b>Sustained</b>	The allegation is supported by the evidence.
<b>Abated</b>	A complaint is deemed to be abated due to lack of merit; the complainant withdraws the complaint or refuses to cooperate with the investigation, and/or there is insufficient evidence or alternative sources of information to pursue the matter further.

If the allegation is sustained against the employee, the Sheriff or a supervisor acting on the Sheriff's behalf will take proper corrective measures. These measure may include additional training, verbal or written reprimand or suspension without pay. In severe cases, the Sheriff may demote an employee or terminate the employee from the Department.

Employees are notified promptly of any action taken against them.

**CALIFORNIA LAW PROHIBITS THE SHERIFF FROM REPORTING BACK TO YOU THE SPECIFICS OF THE INVESTIGATION OR THE EXTENT OF ANY ACTION, WHICH MAY RESULT FROM YOUR COMPLAINT.**

*As Sheriff of Ventura County, it is my responsibility to ensure that my office enforces the law fairly and impartially with respect for each person's dignity. An element of that role is to investigate objectively all Department and citizen complaints as expeditiously as possible. These investigations must be done in order to get to the truth of the matter at hand.*

*-Geoff Dean, Sheriff*

**VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BUREAU  
800 SOUTH VICTORIA AVENUE #3300, VENTURA, CA 93009**

CITIZEN COMPLAINT FORM

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident or action: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident or action: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s), address(es) and phone number (s) of witness(es) or other(s) involved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was a deputy sheriff involved? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Can you identify the deputy? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If yes, give the badge number and name, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

Please use the back of this form and explain, in your own words the action or inaction that caused this complaint: (attach additional pages, if necessary)

**California Penal Code § 148.6 states:**

**You have the right to make a complaint against a police officer for any improper police conduct. California law requires this agency to have a procedure to investigate citizens' complaints. You have a right to a written description of this procedure. This agency may find after investigation that there is not enough evidence to warrant action on your complaint; even if that is the case, you have the right to make the complaint and have it investigated if you believe an officer behaved improperly. Citizen complaints and any reports or findings relating to complaints must be retained by this agency for at least five years.**

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE STATEMENT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Complainant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

FILING A FALSE COMPLAINT AGAINST A PEACE OFFICER MAY SUBJECT YOU TO CIVIL AND CRIMINAL LIABILITY. If you file a false complaint against a peace officer alleging misconduct, criminal conduct, or incompetence, you may be sued for defamation under Civil Code section 47.5. If your false complaint alleges criminal conduct, you may also be prosecuted under Penal Code section 148.5.

Complaint Control # \_\_\_\_\_ Rec'd by: \_\_\_\_\_ ID# \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

