

# IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center

## EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Model Policy  
March 2002

### I. PURPOSE

This policy is intended to assist police supervisors and managers in identifying officers and other employees whose performance warrants review and, where appropriate, intervention in circumstances that may have negative consequences for the employee, fellow employees, this agency, and/or the general public.

### II. POLICY

It is the policy of this agency to establish a system for tracking and reviewing incidents of risk to this agency and the involved employees. To this end, the Early Warning System (EWS) shall be used as a means to identify and assess employee performance involved in potential-risk incidents and intervene where appropriate.

### III. DEFINITIONS

*Office of Professional Standards (OPS) or equivalent office, division, or bureau:* Also sometimes referred to as internal affairs, this function is executed by the employees or unit with primary responsibility for conducting investigations of employee misconduct allegations. It is recognized that in smaller departments, this function may be administered by an individual officer or other department employee.

*Use of Force:* Efforts employed by an officer to compel compliance from an unwilling subject, to include but not limited to the use of hands-on physical force; chemical, electronic; and impact devices; firearms; and other weapons or means.

*Excessive Use of Force:* The application of an amount and/or duration of force greater than that required to compel compliance of a non-compliant subject.

*Potential-Risk Incidents:* Actions that may result in injury to employees or the public, cause civil rights violations, increase the civil liability to the department, or cause this agency to lose public support and confidence in its ability to perform its duty in a professional manner.

### IV. PROCEDURES

#### A. General

1. It is the duty of line supervisors to directly monitor the performance and behavior of personnel under their charge on a daily basis.
2. The EWS is a tool to assist supervisory personnel in monitoring employee performance.
3. Supervisory personnel shall be familiar with alternatives and authorized actions they may take (as detailed in the Employee Mental Health Policy) in response to personnel exhibiting behavioral problems with or without information provided through the EWS.

#### B. Reporting Procedures

This agency's Office of Professional Standards (OPS) shall be responsible for establishing and administering the EWS and generating reports specified in this policy or as otherwise directed by the agency Chief Executive Officer (CEO). OPS shall receive copies of the following:

1. Complaints lodged against employees in accordance with provisions of this agency's policy on investigation of employee misconduct, to include the following:
  - a. Complaints lodged by one employee against another;
  - b. Summary disciplinary actions taken against an employee by supervisor with or without a formal complaint;
  - c. Complaints lodged by citizens against agency personnel;
  - d. Incidents of spousal abuse;
  - e. Disciplinary actions taken against employees;
  - f. Administratively defined examples of improper actions and/or improper conduct.
2. Use-of-Force Reports  
All use-of-force reports shall provide the following information:
  - a. Name, rank, badge number, and assignment of the officer;
  - b. Case number, date of the incident and the report;
  - c. Name of subject(s);
  - d. Location of the incident;
  - e. Nature of force and weapon used by the officer and subject, and injuries sustained by the officer and subject, if any; and
  - f. Narrative report of the incident.
3. Performance-based and related information shall also be included in the EWS, to include the following:
  - a. Traffic accidents;
  - b. Pursuits, both within and out of policy;
  - c. Lawsuits and claims;
  - d. Assaults on the officer (i.e., officer as victim);
  - e. Officer reports of resisting arrest, and obstruction;
  - f. Sick leave used;
  - g. Criminal arrests made; and
  - h. Commendations and awards.

#### C. Reports

1. OPS shall collect and report on the aforementioned data and information by comparing it to historical norms of all agency personnel functioning in the same or similar assignments. Norms will be updated on an on going basis for each behavioral or performance indicator. Reports on individual officers based on deviations from those norms will be distributed to respective organizational supervisors.
2. Reports shall be developed on a routine basis for all employees but shall be generated whenever an officer has exceeded the threshold established by this agency requiring supervisory review and intervention. (For example, an agency threshold might be an employee who has received two or more complaints and/or

- has been involved in two or more use of force incidents within a twelve-month period).
3. Reports shall provide a brief summary of complaints, uses-of-force incidents, and/or performance indicators and their respective dispositions where available. Reports shall draw no conclusions nor make any determinations concerning job performance. Reports are intended to assist supervisory personnel evaluate and guide their subordinates. Reports alone shall not form the basis for disciplinary action.
  4. Supervisors shall review reports with the subject officer and encourage him or her to provide insight to the itemized incident and problems identified in the report.
  5. The subject officer's commander or designee and the officer's supervisor shall meet to discuss the report and other relevant information and determine if corrective actions are warranted. These actions may include but are not limited to the following:
    - a. Refer the officer to an agency peer counselor;
    - b. Refer the officer to an agency-authorized mental health professional or other mental health care provider authorized by the department;
    - c. Require that the officer participate in agency-authorized training, targeting personal or professional problems that the officer may be facing (e.g., communications, cultural awareness, coping with stress, anger management);
    - d. Initiate reassignment or transfer; or
    - e. Conclude that the officer's actions do not warrant immediate need for corrective action.
  6. A report of action recommendations and justification for those recommendations shall be forwarded through OPS to the CEO or his/her designee for approval.
  7. Once approved, the employee shall follow the plan to completion. The employee's progress shall be monitored and formally reported to the CEO at intervals prescribed by this agency. Indications of employee compliance or non-compliance, to include evidence on completion, of the agreed upon plan should be included in the employee's EWS jacket for future reference.

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Every effort has been made by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this model policy incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no "model" policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities among other factors.

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