

Conflict of Interest

1024.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to assist members in recognizing and avoiding potential conflicts of interest, thereby ensuring effective and ethical operating practices on the part of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office.

1024.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Conflict of interest - Any actual, perceived or potential conflict, in which it reasonably appears that a member's action, inaction or decisions are or may be influenced by a personal or business relationship.

Relatives - Spouse, children, step-children, parents, step-parents, siblings, half/step-siblings, uncles, aunts, first cousins, nephews, nieces, mother/father-in-law, daughter/son-in-law, brother/sister-in-law, or persons who share the same living quarters.

1024.2 POLICY

Members of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office are expected to conduct themselves with the utmost professional integrity and objectivity. Members will guard against actual or perceived conflicts of interest in order to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of office members and the public, and thereby maintain the trust of the public and office members.

1024.3 PROHIBITIONS

The Office prohibits the following types of personal or business relationships among members:

- (a) Members are prohibited from directly supervising, occupying a position in the line of supervision or being directly supervised by any other member who is a relative or with whom they are involved in a personal or business relationship.
 - 1. If circumstances require that such a supervisor/subordinate relationship exist temporarily, the supervisor shall make every reasonable effort to defer matters pertaining to the involved member to an uninvolved supervisor.
 - 2. When personnel and circumstances permit, the Office will attempt to make every reasonable effort to avoid placing members in such supervisor/subordinate situations. The Office, however, reserves the right to transfer or reassign any member to another position within the same classification in order to avoid conflicts with any provision of this policy.
- (b) Members are prohibited from participating in, contributing to or recommending promotions, assignments, performance evaluations, transfers or other personnel

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decisions affecting a member who is a relative or with whom they are involved in a personal or business relationship.

- (c) Whenever possible, field training officers (FTOs) and other trainers will not be assigned to train relatives. Office FTOs and other trainers are prohibited from entering into or maintaining personal or business relationships with any member they are assigned to train until such time as the training has been successfully completed and the person is off probation.

1024.3.1 ADDITIONAL PROHIBITIONS

The Office prohibits members from (COMAR 19A.04.02.04):

- (a) Participating in a County matter that would have a direct economic impact, distinct from the impact on the public at large, on the member or that, to the knowledge of the member, would have a direct economic impact on any of the following:
 - 1. A spouse, parent, sibling or child of member.
 - 2. A business entity with which the member or member's spouse, parent, sibling or child is affiliated.
- (b) Having a financial interest in an entity that:
 - 1. Is subject to the authority of the member.
 - 2. Is negotiating or has entered a contract with or is a subcontractor on a contract with the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office.
- (c) Soliciting or receiving gifts.
- (d) Any other conflict of interest or financial interest identified by County law enacted pursuant to COMAR 19A.04.01.03.

These prohibitions do not apply if the member is granted an exemption pursuant to the provisions of County local law enacted pursuant to COMAR 19A.04.01.03.

1024.4 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members shall avoid situations that create a conflict of interest. Members should take reasonable steps to address a perception of a conflict of interest when such a perception is reasonably foreseeable and avoidable (e.g., deferring a decision to an uninvolved member).

Whenever any member is placed in circumstances that would require him/her to take enforcement action or to provide official information or services to any relative or individual with whom the member is involved in a personal or business relationship, that member shall promptly notify his/her uninvolved, immediate supervisor.

In the event that no uninvolved supervisor is immediately available, the member shall promptly notify the dispatcher to have another uninvolved member either relieve the involved member or minimally remain present to witness the action.

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The marriage of two employees must be reported in writing to the Sheriff, or to the county Department of Human Resources, within thirty days of the date of the marriage.

1024.5 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified of, or otherwise becoming aware of any circumstance that could result in or constitute an actual or potential violation of this policy, a supervisor shall take all reasonable steps to promptly mitigate or avoid such violations whenever possible. Supervisors shall also promptly notify the Sheriff or the authorized designee of such actual or potential violations through the chain of command.