

Light Duty Status

1026.1 ADMINISTRATIVE POINT OF CONTACT

The Administrative Captain is the Division Commander's point of contact for personnel and human resources matters under this document. The Administrative Captain oversees the Sheriff's Office Personnel Office and Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager. Both the Administrative Captain and the Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager coordinate and work with the St. Mary's County Human Resources Office and Human Resources Director. This coordination does not change the approval authority assigned to the Sheriff or authorized designee.

1026.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- (a) This policy establishes the requirements for requesting and approving Light Duty Status for employees temporarily unable to perform the essential functions of their regular assignment because of an injury, illness, medical condition, or other qualifying circumstance.
- (b) This policy applies to sworn and civilian employees. Provisions concerning police powers and Non-Officer Status apply only to members who exercise those powers. Light Duty Status authorizes the employee to work in a suitable temporary modified duty assignment; the assignment is not a separate status or application.

1026.3 POLICY

- (a) Employees shall submit one request for Light Duty Status through the chain of command. Before final approval, the Office shall review documented medical restrictions and identify suitable available work that the employee can perform within those restrictions.
- (b) Approval shall establish both the Light Duty Status category and the temporary modified duty assignment. Ordinarily, the employee shall begin work on or after the effective date of the approving Personnel Order. The verbal-approval exception below permits an earlier start. Medical clearance for restricted work alone does not authorize a return to work.
- (c) Based on the time of day a Light Duty request is made, the Assistant Sheriff or designee may give verbal approval directly to the Division Commander. The approval shall identify the Light Duty category, suitable temporary modified duty assignment, applicable restrictions, and authorized start date and time. The employee may begin that assignment at the authorized time before the written request is submitted and before the Personnel Order is issued. The written request shall be submitted the following working day, and the Division Commander shall document the verbal authorization in the endorsements of the Blue Team Detail. The endorsement shall state the Assistant Sheriff or designee authorized the assignment, the date and time of approval, the authorized start date and time, the assignment, and any restrictions or conditions. The Personnel Order shall follow through the regular administrative process and reflect the authorization and effective date.

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- (d) Light Duty Status is not guaranteed. Requests shall be evaluated individually, consistent with applicable law, County Personnel Policies and Procedures and Office policies. If no suitable temporary modified duty assignment is available, the Light Duty Status request shall not be approved under this policy. An employee who remains unable to perform the regular assignment shall remain off work and use available sick leave unless another approved leave or benefit provision applies. Before the final determination, the Administrative Captain shall coordinate review of applicable leave, workers' compensation, and reasonable accommodation requirements with the Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager and County Human Resources, as appropriate. Non-approval under this program does not end any separate obligation to consider a legally required accommodation.
- (e) The Assistant Sheriff or designee shall administer the approval process when acting as the Sheriff's authorized designee. Supervisory recommendations and medical documentation do not constitute final approval.
- (f) Light Duty Status and Non-Officer Status are separate determinations. Light Duty Status authorizes work in an identified temporary modified duty assignment within documented medical restrictions. Non-Officer Status suspends a sworn member's police powers. A member may hold both statuses. Non-Officer Status alone does not authorize an assignment or determine leave or pay status. When the criteria for Non-Officer Status apply, the separate Non-Officer Status Policy and Procedure shall also be followed.

1026.4 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- (a) Light Duty Status is temporary. The temporary modified duty assignment consists of the specific work the employee is authorized to perform while in that status.
- (b) The following general considerations shall apply:
 - 1. The Division Commander shall assess whether meaningful, productive work is available within the employee's documented restrictions before recommending approval.
 - 2. Priority consideration for available Temporary Modified Duty Assignments may be given to employees with temporary work-related injuries or illnesses. Nothing in this provision shall limit or otherwise affect the rights of an employee entitled to a reasonable accommodation under applicable federal or state law.
 - 3. The Office is not required by this voluntary Light Duty program to create or permanently maintain a position solely to provide a temporary modified duty assignment. This provision does not limit legally required reasonable accommodations, which shall be evaluated through the Administrative Captain in coordination with the Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager.
- (c) Recommendations for Light Duty Status and the associated assignment shall consider:
 - 1. The employee's documented limitations or restrictions;
 - 2. The anticipated duration of those limitations or restrictions;

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3. The essential functions and requirements of the proposed assignment;
 4. The availability of meaningful and productive work; and
 5. The operational and staffing needs of the Sheriff's Office.
- (d) Approved Light Duty Status and its assignment shall be reviewed at least every 30 days or when restrictions, work availability, or operational needs change. Before an assignment is discontinued, the Office shall assess suitable alternative work and applicable accommodation requirements. Changes, extensions, or termination shall be documented in writing (refer to Procedure 1016.2.3 (h)). If no suitable work remains and the employee cannot resume the regular assignment, the leave provisions in Procedures 1016.2 (l) apply.
- (e) The approving Personnel Order shall identify restrictions related to duties, uniform, badge, firearms, vehicles, and law enforcement authority, as applicable. Restrictions shall comply with medical limitations and the Non-Officer Status Policy (if applicable). Assignment authorization shall not override a suspension of police powers. When verbal approval precedes the Personnel Order, those restrictions shall be communicated before work begins, documented in the Blue Team endorsement the following working day, and included in the subsequent order.
- (f) Continuation beyond 1,040 hours actually worked in Light Duty Status during a rolling 12-month period requires documented review and approval by the Sheriff or authorized designee and the County HR Director before the threshold is exceeded. Continuation beyond one year of a continuous Long-Term Light Duty episode requires the same review and approval. These are review thresholds, not automatic grounds for denying a legally required accommodation. The Administrative Captain shall coordinate personnel and human resources review of extension requests with the County Director of Human Resources.
- (g) For the 30-day classification and Non-Officer Status referral, the period begins on the first calendar day the employee is unable to perform the essential functions of the regular assignment because of the current medical restrictions. Consecutive medical leave and Light Duty for the same continuous episode count together. Moving between leave and Light Duty, or between modified assignments, does not restart that period. Classification shall reflect the anticipated total duration and shall be updated when medical information changes.

1026.5 DEFINITIONS

- (a) **Medical Documentation:** Documentation from an appropriate licensed healthcare provider identifying functional work restrictions, their anticipated duration, and the anticipated return to the regular assignment or next reassessment date, as applicable. Documentation shall be requested only to the extent permitted by law. Medical records shall be maintained confidentially by the Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager through the approved confidential process; supervisors shall receive the restrictions and information needed to implement the assignment.
- (b) **Full Duty:** Work status in which an employee can perform the essential functions of the regular position, with or without reasonable accommodation. For a sworn member

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whose police powers have been suspended, full-duty clearance does not itself restore those powers; restoration requires the separate Non-Officer Status process.

- (c) **Light Duty Status:** An approved temporary work status authorizing an employee to perform an identified temporary modified duty assignment within documented medical restrictions. The categories are:
 - 1. **Limited Duration Light Duty:** Light Duty Status when the employee is expected to resume the regular assignment by the end of Day 30 of consecutive calendar days, calculated under section 1026.4 (g), and an approximate return date can be established.
 - 2. **Long-Term Light Duty:** Light Duty Status when the employee is unable or is expected to be unable to resume the regular assignment within that 30-day period. It remains temporary. For sworn members, the Non-Officer Status process shall be initiated when that expectation is established, without waiting until day 31.
- (d) **Temporary Modified Duty Assignment:** The specific duties, schedule, work location, and supervision approved for an employee on Light Duty Status. The assignment allows productive work within documented restrictions and is approved as part of the Light Duty request, not through a second employee application.
- (e) **Non-Officer Status:** An agency-ordered status in which a member remains employed but is temporarily relieved of police powers. It does not itself approve modified work, establish leave or pay status, or constitute separation from employment. The Sheriff's Office Personnel Office and the Training Coordinator shall determine and document the applicable MPCTC status, notifications, training, and restoration requirements under current MPCTC rules. An agency order alone does not establish an MPCTC training exemption or change certification requirements.

1026.6 RETURN TO DUTY

- (a) Before return to the regular assignment, the employee shall provide medical documentation, when lawfully required, addressing the ability to perform its essential functions. The Office shall consider reasonable accommodation where applicable and within a legally required accommodation.
- (b) The Office may require a fitness-for-duty examination prior to returning an employee to full duty status, in accordance with the Fitness for Duty Policy.

1026.7 PREGNANCY

Requests related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions shall be evaluated under applicable federal and Maryland law, including the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and Md. Code SG § 20-609. An employee shall not be involuntarily transferred solely because of pregnancy. The Administrative Captain shall coordinate the applicable accommodation process with the Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager.

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1026.7.1 REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

- (a) An employee may request a reasonable accommodation for a limitation related to pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition. Accommodations may include:
 - 1. Changing job duties
 - 2. Changing work hours
 - 3. Being provided leave
 - 4. Being transferred to less strenuous or less hazardous positions
 - 5. Relocation
- (b) The Administrative Captain shall coordinate evaluation of reasonable accommodations with the employee and the Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager. Leave shall not be required if another reasonable accommodation can be provided as required by law. Medical documentation shall be requested only when and to the extent legally permitted. Where appropriate and permitted, documentation may address:
 - 1. The date a reasonable accommodation is medically advisable
 - 2. The probable duration of the reasonable accommodation
 - 3. An explanation as to the medical advisability of the reasonable accommodation

1026.7.2 NOTIFICATION

Employees shall promptly communicate pregnancy-related work restrictions or accommodation needs to a supervisor. Supervisors shall route the matter through the Division Commander to the Administrative Captain. No special terminology is required to initiate an accommodation request. The Light Duty workflow shall be used when an approved accommodation involves Light Duty work, without delaying or limiting any statutory accommodation right. Leave shall be administered under applicable law and County Personnel Policies and Procedures.

1026.8 PROBATIONARY EMPLOYEES

Probationary employees approved for Light Duty Status shall have any probation extension determined under applicable personnel rules and law. An extension equivalent to time in the modified assignment shall be applied only to the extent permitted by those requirements, following review coordinated by the Administrative Captain with the Sheriff's Office Human Resources Manager.

1026.9 MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING

Employees on Light Duty Status shall maintain training, certifications, and qualifications applicable to their status and assigned duties to the extent consistent with medical restrictions and Maryland Police and Correction Training Commission (MPCTC) requirements. Employees shall promptly report any inability to do so. For members in Non-Officer Status, the Sheriff's Office Personnel Office and the Training Coordinator shall determine applicable reporting, training, and restoration

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requirements under that separate policy; Light Duty approval does not itself waive certification or training requirements.