

What rights do Deputy Sheriffs have when a complaint is made against them?

Deputy Sheriffs and Detention Deputies are protected by the Police Officer's Bill of Rights, which provides that they shall not be subjected to harassment, intimidation, threats from supervisors, or unreasonable periods of interrogation. They have a right to counsel or other representative during the investigation.

Will the Sheriff's Office be impartial when they investigate their own employees?

Yes, this question goes right to the heart of what professional law enforcement is all about. We strive to ensure quality performance from Sheriff's Office employees, and want the public to know that we will not tolerate misconduct. We are acutely aware that any tolerance or perceived tolerance of officer misconduct will lead to a breakdown of the public trust, which would adversely affect the ability of the Sheriff's Office to function effectively.

The task of policing in today's society is demanding and challenging. The Seminole County Sheriff's Office demands the highest standards from its employees. Realizing that it is not possible to enforce the rules of society without incurring some animosity, we will endeavor to protect our employees from unwarranted and false complaints. Our goal is to ensure that an objective and thorough process is in place that maintains our community partnerships and the public trust.

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PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT REVIEW SECTION



Protecting the Public Trust

The mission of the Professional Conduct Review Section is to protect the public trust. The Seminole County Sheriff's Office believes our most important partnership is with the community we serve. We consistently strive to strengthen and protect our relationship with the residents of Seminole County. This is a responsibility shared by every employee of the Sheriff's Office, and is the primary task of the Professional Conduct Review Section.

The Professional Conduct Review Section answers directly to the Captain of the Professional Standards Division but also has authority to report directly to the Sheriff.

Professional Conduct Review Section Duties

The Section coordinates the receiving, processing, and conducting of administrative investigations arising from citizen and internal complaints. The Section investigates:

- Allegations of unnecessary response to resistance by an employee of the Sheriff's Office in the performance of duty;
- Any allegation of criminal conduct by a member of the Sheriff's Office;
- Allegations of false arrest;
- Any on duty discharge of a firearm by personnel; and
- Any major violation of Sheriff's Office policy.

The Section also maintains a comprehensive central index of all complaints received and performs statistical analyses to identify trends and make recommendations for addressing concerns. They also serve as liaison to SCSO's Civilian Review Board, which reviews the disposition of all response to resistance complaints.

How Are Complaints Made?

Complaints are accepted from any source and may be made anonymously, in person, or by telephone. It is preferred that complaints be made in person by the individual directly concerned in the allegation against the employee.

Any supervisor at the Sheriff's Office can take a complaint, and upon receiving it, will forward it to the Professional Conduct Review Section.

All complaints received are thoroughly examined. If the complaint is for unnecessary or excessive response to resistance, false arrest, a violation of a specific criminal statute, or allegations of major violation of policy, the Professional Conduct Review Section will investigate the complaint.

Complaints regarding discourtesy or poor service are investigated by a line supervisor who has received specialized training in conducting administrative investigations. Once the investigation is concluded by the supervisor, it is forwarded to the Professional Conduct Review Section for review and filing.

Is There Any Risk To Me When I Make A Complaint?

All complaints are taken seriously and reviewed appropriately. Persons who deliberately make a false complaint against an employee may be prosecuted criminally and/or held civilly liable.

What Happens When I Make A Complaint?

In the event of a serious accusation, you will be asked to give a sworn statement to a Professional Conduct Review Section investigator. An appointment will be made at a time convenient to you and you may bring with you anyone of your choosing. You will be treated courteously and need not fear any type of intimidation or other improper behavior. When making a complaint, simply relate the facts as you know them; don't attempt to add to or embellish your complaint, and be mindful that you will be asked specific questions regarding factual information.

Based on the result of the investigation, the Section makes a recommendation to the Sheriff that the complaint be sustained, not sustained, exonerated, unfounded, or determined to be a policy failure. If a complaint is sustained, the investigation may be reviewed by a Disciplinary Review Board which recommends appropriate disciplinary action to the Sheriff. The Sheriff makes the final decision involving disciplinary action.

After your complaint has been investigated you will be notified by letter of the results and provided the opportunity to review the investigation and ask questions. Making a complaint in no way limits you from pursuing any other course of action or availing yourself of other complaint forums if you feel you have been wronged. Every complaint that involves a possible violation of law is forwarded to the State Attorney's Office for review.