5.01 POLICY

This policy establishes the utilization of the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office Canine Teams. This policy does not cover all circumstances that will be encountered by the canine handler. It is meant to act as a guideline for all person(s) connected with the Sheriff’s Office. Incidents will be handled according to current policies, statutes, training and accepted protocol. Decisions should be discussed by all persons involved and a decision rendered which is in the best interest of the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office.

5.01.001 General Utilization of Canine Teams

A. Tracking fleeing criminals or persons who are an immediate danger to themselves or others, and an immediate response by Law Enforcement may prevent injury or death.

B. Locating lost or abandoned articles or hidden implements of crimes.

C. Searching buildings where a possible break-in is indicated or where a suspect may be hiding provided such buildings are believed to be clear of innocent persons.

D. Effecting the arrest or preventing the escape of a person who the deputy sheriff has reasonable grounds to believe has committed a felony or a misdemeanor involving violence. In these cases law enforcement officers must believe that, due to already obtained information, the use of the canine will improve law enforcement officer safety.

E. Protecting law enforcement officers or other persons from injury or death.

F. Assisting in the service of narcotic search warrants.

G. Detecting the presence of concealed narcotics.
H. Locating and indicating the whereabouts of lost or missing children and elderly adults with medical history.

I. Locating and indicating the presence of explosive material.

J. Locating victims suffering from Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders such as Down syndrome and Autism with the use of the Project Lifesaver Program.

5.01.002 Operational Guidelines for Canine Teams

A. Members of the Canine Unit have a specific objective, which is to render assistance to all divisions of the Sheriff’s Office and surrounding agencies. The police dog is most advantageous in search situations and providing law enforcement officer protection. The primary purpose of the canine team is to locate and/or indicate the whereabouts of a suspect(s), narcotics or explosive material.

B. The most important factor in the successful use of the Canine Unit is for the law enforcement officers on the scene to remain out of the area to be worked.

C. Do not destroy or wound an agency canine unless a non-involved person’s life or wellbeing is at immediate and serious risk.

D. All Canine Handlers will be trained as Mobile Locator Operators for the Project Lifesaver Program. It is the responsibility of the K-9 Unit Supervisor or his/her designee to respond and deploy any additional operators as needed to locate any individual that is on the program that goes missing. In addition, they are to ensure all Project Lifesaver equipment is operational and to complete budgetary requests as needed for continuity of program operations.

5.01.003 Arrest – Apprehension

The Canine Unit is reactive and when it responds to assist a deputy sheriff, the Canine Team often is able to apprehend the violator. The suspect is then turned over to the deputy sheriff, who makes the arrest and completes the necessary reports. When a canine deputy sheriff observes a criminal violation and makes the arrest, the canine deputy sheriff completes all the necessary reports. On routine building searches, wood seeks, and tracks, the individual canine handler is in charge of that aspect of the scene and deploys deputy sheriffs to aid in the search.

A. In the event a canine deputy sheriff makes an arrest and the suspect receives injury requiring hospitalization, whether from the
use of physical force or the use of the canine, that canine deputy sheriff will immediately notify the duty officer and the canine supervisor. It will be the responsibility of the canine supervisor or his designee to respond to the scene and complete the necessary reports.

B. Accidental Canine Bites – Any time a civilian or another law enforcement officer is accidentally injured by a canine, it is the handler’s responsibility to have that person transported to St. Mary’s Hospital for treatment. This will be done by ambulance. At no time will a canine deputy sheriff transport the injured person. The handler immediately notifies the duty officer and canine supervisor. A written statement will be requested from the victim of the accidental bite. If victim refuses to give a statement it will be noted in the report. The canine supervisor should take statements if the canine deputy sheriff in charge is not on duty.

5.01.004 Bail-Outs

A. Generally canines will not be used to apprehend bailout suspects wanted for traffic charges only.

B. If a bloodhound canine is available the patrol canine team will follow behind the bloodhound team for officer safety during the track.

5.01.005 Patrol Deputies Assisting the Canine Teams

In order to realize maximum benefit from a canine team, the deputy sheriff, or first law enforcement officer on the scene of an incident, should be aware of the following:

A. Building Searches

1. If possible, locate and secure the point of entry to the building before the canine team arrives.

2. Remain outside of the building to be searched if there is a canine team en route.

3. Surround and observe for suspect(s) running from the building in an attempt to evade the canine team.

4. Have one deputy sheriff remain with the car and maintain radio contact with the canine team in the building.
5. Do not enter the building while the canine team is inside conducting a search, unless told to do so by the canine handler.

6. One additional deputy will accompany the canine team inside the building as a cover officer.

7. Arrests are the responsibility of the patrol deputy sheriff. The canine deputy sheriff will complete all appropriate reports per use of the canine.

B. Crime Scene Searches

1. Canines can locate articles of evidence covered over by grass or other substances and other articles of evidence and identification that may have been discarded by the suspect either accidentally or intentionally. For example: spent shell casings, articles of identification such as ID cards, personalized match books, or notes. The dogs can also locate weapons discarded by the culprit.

2. Remain out of the area that is to be searched by canine teams.

C. Narcotic Searches

1. Dogs can locate small quantities of hidden drugs, to include marijuana, cocaine, etc.

2. The dog’s indication to the handler can be used as probable cause for obtaining a search warrant.

3. Keep the area secure until the canine team arrives.

4. Narcotics dogs are never used to scan people.

5. When a dog is summoned to the scene of a traffic stop for a vehicle, the scan must be completed before the deputy sheriff making the stop completes their traffic paperwork (citation, warning, or equipment repair order).

D. Tracking

1. The Canine Section can be used effectively for tracking of persons at crime scenes.

2. Remain out of the area to be searched by the Canine Team.
3. Attempt to locate witnesses that can provide a direction the suspect fled.

4. A scent article is not necessary for the canine to use at the beginning of a track.

5. If possible, try to determine how long it has been since the suspect fled the area.

6. During any track, a minimum of one deputy will provide back-up for the handler and their canine partner.

E. Apprehending Fleeing Suspects

1. Canines can be used effectively to apprehend suspects fleeing or avoiding prosecution.

2. Law enforcement officers are to remain in their vehicles or in some type of shelter. Canines are used off lead for this type of work and they cannot differentiate between the suspect and a deputy sheriff.

3. This type of work can only be done in rural areas and in residential areas when the dog has a clear target and sees the suspect flee.

F. Law Enforcement Officer Safety in Large Disorderly Crowds

1. Canine Teams will remain on the perimeter and are to be used for law enforcement officer safety only.

2. If a deputy sheriff becomes surrounded in a large disorderly crowd and the safety of that deputy sheriff is threatened, the canine team will clear an opening in the crowd so that the endangered deputy sheriff can be retrieved.

G. Public Relations

1. Canine team demonstrations are a good public relations tool.

2. Demonstrations are conducted for various groups that request them. They are mainly used to educate the people as to what the dogs can and will do in various situations. They also perform for children to familiarize the children with law enforcement officers in general.
3. Once an employee receives a request for a canine demonstration he/she will complete a K-9 Demonstration Request Form (SMCSO Form 122A) and send it through the chain of command.

4. During all approved canine demonstrations the Head Canine Instructor or senior Canine Handler on scene will ensure the safety of the audience, canines, handlers, or other support personnel. All canine exercises performed during the demonstration will consist of Canine Handlers or members of the Canine Support Team. No other person(s) will be placed in scenarios where a canine will have interaction with them.

5. The areas where the canine demonstrations are conducted will be clear of any bystanders. If the area is not fenced all exercises will be done on lead (leash).

6. Passive canines such as Search and Rescue and Explosives Detection canines will be the only type of canine utilized in the interaction with the public. All canines will have some type of muzzle on while interacting with the public.

H. Unsecured Doors

If a deputy sheriff discovers an unsecured door during a building check or after responding to a burglar alarm and requests a canine team to perform a building search, the following steps will be taken before deploying the canine:

1. The owner of the building or their representative will respond to the scene.

2. The owner or representative will advise if anyone has permission to be in the building.

3. If the owner or representative cannot be located or cannot be reached by telephone, the canine team will not perform the building search unless there are signs of forced entry into the building.

4. After considering all available information, it will be up to the canine handler to make the decision whether or not to deploy the canine.

I. Explosive Searches
In the event that the explosives detection canines are called to respond to a scene to search for suspected explosive devices:

1. The building or area will be cleared of all non-emergency personnel.
2. The canine section supervisor will be notified of the request for the explosive detection canines. Requests for additional explosive detection canines will be made by the canine handler or on-scene commander.
3. Once on the scene, canine handlers will report to the canine supervisor or the on-scene commander.
4. Explosive canine teams will not scan or search suspicious packages.

**5.01.014 Injured Handler**

In the event a handler is injured and cannot take control of the dog, the nearest on-duty or off-duty canine handler will be called to respond and assume responsibility for the dog.

**5.01.015 Training**

All new canine handlers will attend a basic canine handler’s school conducted by a certified canine training instructor from the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office. If an in-house instructor is not available, handlers can be sent to a comparable course conducted by an outside law enforcement agency. Handlers will be expected to meet the following minimum standards for successful completion:

A. Minimum average of eighty percent on all tests/quizzes. Participants will be allowed to re-take a maximum of three tests/quizzes in which they failed to achieve a passing score of eighty percent. The score achieved on any retest will be used in the calculation of the participant’s final course average.

B. Minimum of eighty percent on the final exam (no retest will be allowed).

C. Can not miss more than one week of the basic canine handlers course.

D. Favorable recommendation from the canine instructor.

**5.01.016 Applicant Process for new Canine Handlers**
A. Application

The agency will announce anticipated openings for canine handlers agency-wide. The announcement will describe the skills, knowledge, abilities, education, and experience required. Description of the duties for canine handlers is contained within the standardized operating procedure for the canine unit.

Personnel wishing to be considered for the position of canine handler will submit a detail report through their chain of command to the Sheriff.

B. Three Phase Applicant Testing Process

Deputy applicants for the position of canine handler must complete the following three phase applicant testing process. Each phase will have a maximum score of 100 for a total maximum score of 300. The applicant must pass each phase of the application process prior to moving onto the next phase. At the end of the third phase each applicant will be scored, and an eligibility roster by ranking order will be prepared.

1. The first phase will consist of a timed Physical Agility Course. The applicant will be scored in 30 second intervals. The applicant must score 70 or better to move on to the next phase.
   a. Applicant will run a ¼ mile then stop and do 10 squat thrusts; then,
   b. Applicant will run a ¼ mile then stop and do 10 squat thrusts then grab a 50 pound bag (simulating injured K-9) and place it over a four (4) foot fence. The applicant will then climb the fence grab the bag and place it back over the fence before climbing back over; then,
   c. Applicant will run ¼ mile and stop and do 10 squat thrusts. Applicant will then place a K-9 outer carrier protective vest on, which they will wear for the remainder of the test; then,
   d. Applicant will run ⅛ mile, stop and retrieve a 50 pound bag (simulating injured K-9) and continue running for an additional ⅛ mile to the finish line.
Scoring is by completion time as follows:

- 100 points  8:00 or faster
- 95 points   8:01 to 8:30
- 90 points   8:31 to 9:00
- 85 points   9:01 to 9:30
- 80 points   9:31 to 10:00
- 75 points   10:01 to 10:30
- 70 points   10:31 to 11:00

2. The second phase will consist of a 25 question written test. The applicant will be tested on their knowledge of the Canine Policy (B5.01) and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Canine Unit. The applicant must score a 70 or higher to move on to the final phase.

3. The third and final phase is an Oral Board. The applicant will be asked 10 questions relating to the position of a canine handler. The Oral Board will consist of no more than 4 persons; one of those persons, if possible, will be a canine handler from an allied agency.

5.01.07 Reporting Procedures

A. K-9 handlers are responsible for reporting when their canine is utilized for official duties. Reports will be submitted by one of the following three methods:

1. Blue Team – A Blue Team K-9 Utilization Incident will be completed for any K-9 apprehension of a suspect either engaged or non-engaged. Once completed, the report will be forwarded via the chain of command for review and approval. The SOD Division Commander will forward the report to OPR.

2. Field Reporting – A Field Report will be completed for any K-9 utilization that does not result in the find or apprehension of a suspect. This will be a Supplement to the original case started by members from the Patrol or SOD Divisions. The report will be forwarded via the chain of command and will be filed with the Records Division.

   For instances such as K-9 CDS Scans of Schools, a Field Report will be completed by the K-9 officer titled “K-9 Scan”. This will be routed through the normal chain of command.

3. Omniform – An Omniform K-9 utilization Report will be completed
whenever a K-9 is utilized in direct support for the Narcotics Division. The report will be forwarded directly to the Narcotics Division for approval and retention.