

VANDERBURGH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
GENERAL ORDER:
Subject: Inmate/Participant Grievance

Index: 4.0408
Section: Confinement
Effective Date: 01/18/06

It is the policy of the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office to provide inmates an internal grievance process to resolve complaints about conditions of confinement. The process shall resolve complaints at the lowest possible level.

Purpose

Personnel shall use the grievance process to provide two way communications between administrators and inmates/participants about concerns within the Confinement Center. The grievance process will be used to reinforce the policies, procedures, and rules for inmate/participant conduct and to defend against civil lawsuits brought by inmates/participants. At times, the grievance process will allow confinement officers to assess the working and living climate of the facility and to maintain control of inmates/participants in a humane and effective way.

An inmate may grieve confinement matters over which Sheriff's Office personnel have control. Also, the issue must personally affect the inmate/participant and there must be a reasonable remedy. All inmates/participants, regardless of their custody classification or disciplinary status may make a grievance.

An inmate/participant may not file a grievance for actions or decisions not under the authority or control of Sheriff's Office personnel such as those of the courts, probation or parole, detainers, and other agency holds or disciplinary hearing sanctions or the due process of formal discipline. An inmate/participant may not file a grievance on behalf of another inmate/participant. A grievance abuser or chronic abuser is subject to the limits of this guideline.

Sheriff's Office personnel shall not retaliate against an inmate/participant who files a grievance in good faith. Retaliation includes a threat or act which violates and inmate/participant's civil rights, discriminates against, harasses, coerces, or punishes the inmate/participant or is intended to reduce the willingness to inmates/participants to make grievances.

An inmate/participant must file a grievance within seven (7) days after the event or knowledge of the event that has caused a problem. A housing officer/dorm officer may contact the shift supervisor if the inmate persists in wanting to file a grievance after the seven (7) day mark. The restriction does not apply to criminal acts. The responder may extend the time limit to respond to a grievance for good cause.

If an inmate/participant has a legitimate complaint, the confinement staff should listen to the complaint, and if possible, address the complaint at that time. If the confinement staff feels that they are unable to address the complaint, the inmate/participant may ask for and will receive, at that time, a Confinement Center grievance form. Confinement Staff shall sign and date properly submitted grievance forms. The grievance form shall be reviewed for accuracy and the Confinement Staff should attempt to address the grievance when received.

If the Confinement Staff believes the grievance can be resolved at that time, the actions taken to satisfy the grievance should be documented in the area marked **FINDINGS & DISPOSITION**. The document should also be signed by the Confinement Staff in the area marked **SATISFIED BY**. The involved Confinement Officer shall provide the inmate with the bottom copy and place the original in the grievance basket located in the Center Control area of their dorm/housing unit.

If the confinement officer is unable to satisfy the grievance they should **not** fill out in the findings & disposition area and **not** sign the satisfied area. The confinement officer will place the grievance in the Center Control area of their housing unit in a basket marked "**GRIEVANCES**" for their dorm/housing unit. If the confinement officer believes the grievance to be of a serious nature they should contact a Sergeant, as soon as possible, and make them aware of the grievance.

Officers should be aware that grievances are to be dealt with in a professional manner. No information should be disseminated or discussed with inmates, other than the grieving inmate. If the grievance is not of a serious nature and the dorm/housing unit officer believes that neither a Sergeant nor themselves are able to address the grievance, they should give the bottom copy of the grievance to the inmate and place the top original in the grievance basket located at the dorm/housing unit's respective Control Center.

At the end of each shift a confinement officer from that housing unit will transport any grievance(s) to the roll call room and place the grievance(s) into the mail slot marked **GRIEVANCES**.

Lieutenant(s) will check the grievance mail box during their shift. They will assign a grievance number, and address any grievance(s) pertaining to their shift when possible. If they are unable to address the grievance, the lieutenant(s) will forward the grievance(s) to the proper division to for a response. The lieutenant(s) will then do a written response of the grievance making copies for the inmate, inmate shuck, and file and have them disseminated accordingly.