
Investigation and Prosecution

600.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines and requirements pertaining to the handling and disposition of criminal investigations.

600.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Nobles County Sheriff's Office to investigate crimes thoroughly and with due diligence, and to evaluate and prepare criminal cases for appropriate clearance or submission to a prosecutor.

600.3 INITIAL INVESTIGATION

600.3.1 NON-SWORN MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

A non-sworn member assigned to any preliminary investigation is responsible for all investigative steps, except making any attempt to locate, contact or interview a suspect face-to-face or take any enforcement action. Should an initial investigation indicate that those steps are required, the assistance of a deputy shall be requested.

600.3.2 DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

A deputy responsible for an initial investigation shall complete no less than the following:

- (a) Make a preliminary determination of whether a crime has been committed by completing, at a minimum:
 1. An initial statement from any witnesses or complainants.
 2. A cursory examination for evidence.
- (b) If information indicates a crime has occurred, the deputy shall:
 1. Preserve the scene and any evidence as required to complete the initial and follow-up investigation.
 2. Determine if additional investigative resources (e.g., investigators or scene processing) are necessary and request assistance as required.
 3. If assistance is warranted, or if the incident is not routine, notify a supervisor or the Shift Sergeant.
 4. Make reasonable attempts to locate, identify and interview all available victims, complainants, witnesses and suspects.
 5. Collect any evidence.
 6. Take any appropriate law enforcement action.
 7. Complete and submit the appropriate reports and documentation.

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- (c) If the preliminary determination is that no crime occurred, determine what other action may be necessary, what other resources may be available, and advise the informant or complainant of this information.

600.4 CUSTODIAL INTERROGATION REQUIREMENTS

Suspects who are in custody and subjected to an interrogation shall be given the *Miranda* warning, unless an exception applies. Interview or interrogation of a juvenile shall be in accordance with the Temporary Custody of Juveniles Policy.

600.4.1 AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS

Any custodial interrogation of a person who is suspected of having committed a criminal offense should be electronically recorded (audio/video or both as available) in its entirety, including any information or discussion about the person's rights and any waiver of those rights. Regardless of where the interrogation occurs, every reasonable effort should be made to secure functional recording equipment to accomplish such recordings.

Consideration should also be given to recording a non-custodial interrogation, or any investigative interview, for any other offense when it is reasonable to believe it would be appropriate and beneficial to the investigation and is otherwise allowed by law.

No recording of a custodial interrogation should be destroyed or altered without written authorization from the prosecuting attorney and the Investigation Unit supervisor. Copies of recorded interrogations or interviews may be made in the same or a different format as the original recording, provided the copies are true, accurate and complete and are made only for authorized and legitimate law enforcement purposes.

Recordings should not take the place of a thorough report and investigative interviews. Written statements from suspects should continue to be obtained when applicable.

600.5 DISCONTINUATION OF INVESTIGATIONS

The investigation of a criminal case or efforts to seek prosecution should only be discontinued if one of the following applies:

- (a) All reasonable investigative efforts have been exhausted, no reasonable belief that the person who committed the crime can be identified, and the incident has been documented appropriately.
- (b) The perpetrator of a misdemeanor has been identified and a warning is the most appropriate disposition.
 1. In these cases, the investigator shall document that the person was warned and why prosecution was not sought.
 2. Warnings shall not be given for felony offenses or other offenses identified in this policy or by law that require an arrest or submission of a case to a prosecutor.
- (c) The case has been submitted to the appropriate prosecutor but no charges have been filed. Further investigation is not reasonable nor has the prosecutor requested further investigation.

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- (d) The case has been submitted to the appropriate prosecutor, charges have been filed, and further investigation is not reasonable, warranted or requested, and there is no need to take the suspect into custody.
- (e) Suspects have been arrested, there are no other suspects, and further investigation is either not warranted or requested.
- (f) Investigation has proven that a crime was not committed (see the Sexual Assault Investigations Policy for special considerations in these cases).

The Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse, Sexual Assault Investigations and Adult Abuse policies may also require an arrest or submittal of a case to a prosecutor.

600.6 COMPUTERS AND DIGITAL EVIDENCE

The collection, preservation, transportation and storage of computers, cell phones and other digital devices may require specialized handling to preserve the value of the related evidence. If it is anticipated that computers or similar equipment will be seized, deputies should request that computer forensic examiners assist with seizing computers and related evidence. If a forensic examiner is unavailable, deputies should take reasonable steps to prepare for such seizure and use the resources that are available.

600.7 POTENTIALLY EXCULPATORY EVIDENCE OR FACTS

Deputies must include in their reports adequate reference to all material evidence and facts which are reasonably believed to be exculpatory to any individual in the case. If a deputy learns of potentially exculpatory information anytime after submission of the case, the deputy must notify the prosecutor as soon as practical.

Evidence or facts are considered material if there is a reasonable probability that they may impact the result of a criminal proceeding or trial. Determining whether evidence or facts are material often requires legal or even judicial review. A deputy who is uncertain whether evidence or facts are material should address the issue with a supervisor.

A copy of an entire case file should be sent to the appropriate prosecutor's office. However, supervisors uncertain about the materiality of evidence or facts should address the issue in a written memo to an appropriate prosecutor. A copy of the memo should be retained in the office case file.

600.8 PHOTOGRAPHIC IDENTIFICATION OF SUSPECTS

When reasonably practicable, the employee composing and the employee presenting the photo lineup should not be directly involved in the investigation of the case. When this is not reasonably possible, the employee presenting the lineup must take the utmost care not to communicate the identity of the suspect in any way.

The following precautions should be taken by any employee presenting a photographic lineup:

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- (a) The person of interest or suspect in the photo lineup should not stand out from the other persons depicted in the photos.
- (b) At no time prior to, during or after the presentation of a photographic lineup should it be suggested to a witness that any person depicted in the lineup is a suspect or was in any way connected to the offense.
- (c) The employee presenting the photographs to a witness should not know which photograph depicts the suspect.
- (d) The employee presenting the photographs to a witness should do so sequentially (i.e., showing the witness one photograph at a time) and not simultaneously. The witness should view all photographs in the lineup.
- (e) The position of the suspect's photo and filler photos should be placed in a different random order for each witness.
- (f) In order to avoid undue influence, witnesses viewing a photographic lineup should do so individually and outside the presence of other witnesses. Witnesses should be instructed to avoid discussing details of the incident or of the photographic lineup with other witnesses.
- (g) An admonishment should be given to each witness that the suspect's photograph may or may not be among those in the lineup and that the witness need not make an identification.

The procedure employed and the results of any photographic lineup should be documented in the case report. A copy of the photographic lineup presented to the witness should be included in the case report. Witness comments of how certain he/she is of the identification or non-identification should also be quoted in the appropriate report.

600.9 ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) CARDS

Deputies shall make a report any time they arrest a person who possesses more than one welfare Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The investigating deputies shall forward this report to the Minnesota Department of Human Services within 30 days of the arrest. The report shall include all of the following (Minn. Stat. § 626.5533):

- (a) The name, address and driver's license or state identification card number of the suspect
- (b) The number on each EBT card and name, if any
- (c) The date and location of any alleged offense
- (d) Any other information the Minnesota Department of Human Services may require on related state forms

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600.10 MODIFICATION OF CHARGES FILED

Members are not authorized to recommend to the prosecutor or to any other official of the court that charges on a pending case be amended or dismissed without the authorization of a Chief Deputy or the Sheriff. Any authorized request to modify the charges or to recommend dismissal of charges shall be made to the prosecutor.

600.11 SECTION TITLE