8.01.01 PURPOSE

To establish a process for detection and intake of allegations of misconduct, assignment of responsibility for handling complaints, and execution of investigative responsibilities.

8.01.02 AUTHORITY

The Florida Highway Patrol will administer a complaint resolution process in accordance with the provisions of existing laws, rules and regulations. This chapter codifies that process pursuant to Chapter 60L-36, Florida Administrative Code; DHSMV Policies #3.06 and #3.08; Sections 110.201(2), 110.227, 112.532, and 120.53(1), Florida Statutes.

8.01.03 POLICY

The Division of the Florida Highway Patrol will maintain and rely upon an effective complaint resolution procedure to actively seek feedback regarding employee adherence to recognized standards of professional and individual conduct. Violations of this policy or other Department directives are grounds for initiating disciplinary procedures.

All complaints involving employees will be thoroughly reviewed and investigated as appropriate. The requirements of Section 112.532, Florida Statutes, the Law Enforcement Officer’s Bill of Rights, and the relevant provisions of applicable collective bargaining agreements and Division procedures for complaint processing will be followed.

8.01.04 DEFINITIONS

A. CENTRAL COMPLAINT FILE – The Office of Professional Compliance is the central repository for complaint records or files for cases completed prior to 2010. Internal cases initiated and completed after 01/01/2010 are housed in the DHSMV Office of the Inspector General (OIG). All files and logs will be secured and properly locked after regular hours or when unattended.

B. COACHING – A process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. Coaching brings minor performance issues to an employee’s attention thereby assisting the employee to correct them. The goal of coaching is to work with the employee to remove barriers and to optimize work performance.
C. **COMPLAINT** – Any allegation, verbal or written, against a member or employee from a citizen, supervisor or other employee coming to the Division's attention, that if true, would constitute a violation of the Standards of Disciplinary Action identified in DHSMV Policy #3.06, other Division policy, and/or Chapter 60L-36 Florida Administrative Code. A disagreement with a policy or law or the proper application of a policy or law is **not** considered a complaint.

D. **COMPLAINT CATEGORIES** – Complaints will be categorized as follows:
   1. **Citizen Complaints** - Those complaints or allegations of misconduct received from persons outside the Division.
   2. **Division Complaints** - Those complaints or allegations of misconduct initiated from within the Division.
   3. **Agency Vehicle Crashes** - Any traffic crash involving a Division vehicle.

E. **COMPLAINT CLASSIFICATIONS** – Each allegation of misconduct alleged in a complaint will be classified subsequent to a conclusion of fact based on a thorough and competent investigation using one or more of the following classifications:
   1. **Exonerated** - The allegation is true; however, the action of the agency or the employee was consistent with agency policy.
   2. **Unfounded** - The complaint was clearly false or there is no credible evidence to support the complaint.
   3. **Not Sustained** - There is insufficient proof to confirm or to refute the allegation.
   4. **Sustained** - The allegation is true; the action of the agency or the employee was inconsistent with agency policy.
   5. **Policy Failure** - The allegation is true. The action of the agency or employee was consistent with agency policy; however, the policy was deficient.

F. **COMPLAINT CONTROL NUMBER** – A sequential number used to identify and track complaint investigations. This number is assigned by the Records Technician assigned to the OIG. The complaint control number will be assigned as follows:
   1. The year in which the complaint is initiated in standard four-digit format.
   2. A four-digit sequential number.

G. **COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION** – An investigation of any complaint not resolved by a desk review or an investigation of an agency vehicle crash in addition to the initial crash investigation.

H. **DESK REVIEW** – Review of a complaint and/or violations that are documented on the FHP Complaint Intake and Inquiry Form (HSMV 60961), Observation
Forms (if any), and other items that have been gathered for consideration of possible disciplinary action.

I. EMPLOYEE – Sworn and non-sworn personnel employed by the Division of Florida Highway Patrol.

J. GRIPE – Expressed dissatisfaction with an employee that, even if true, would not be considered a violation of the Standards of Disciplinary Action. For example, a person states that they are not guilty of a charge for which they received a citation; unless there are indications that the member was rude or did not follow established procedures.

K. PRE-INVESTIGATIVE AGREEMENT – A written agreement between the employee and the Division prior to the initiation of an investigation. The employee is informed of the charges against them and of the penalty associated with the charges. The employee agrees not to contest the charges and accepts the prescribed disciplinary penalty, which resolves the disciplinary issue and eliminates the need for an investigation.

8.01.05 OBJECTIVES

A. To establish procedures for the receipt and handling of complaints against division employees.

B. To ensure that complaints are handled in a manner that is fair to employees and the citizen filing the complaint.

8.01.06 RESPONSIBILITIES

The Commander of the Office of Professional Compliance (OPC) shall report directly to the Director on all complaint related matters and be responsible for:

A. Tracking the status of all complaint investigations.

B. Liaison to the Division, the OIG, the Office of General Counsel, Troop Commanders, and the Office of Employee Relations of all disciplinary matters.

C. Maintaining all complaint files prior to 2010, and all killed in the line of duty investigative files.

D. On a monthly basis, the OPC Commander will provide a complaint tracking report to the Deputy Director, Patrol Operations, pertaining to complaint investigations outstanding for longer than 30 days.

E. Statistical summaries based on complaint investigations shall be prepared annually by the OIG.

F. Providing weekly Complaint Tracking Reports to all Troop Commanders.

8.01.07 PROCEDURES

A. RECEIPT OF COMPLAINTS

1. Citizens who wish to file complaints will be informed of the manner in
which this may be done. Employees are to courteously and promptly accept a complaint and then inform their supervisor.

2. Supervisors in receipt of the complaint shall make every reasonable effort to obtain a signed written statement from the complainant; however, the complainant cannot be compelled to do so.

3. The Office of Employee Relations Standard of Conduct Guidelines, on the DHSMV Share Point site, should be consulted for guidance in complaints involving sexual harassment. Complaints alleging serious or repeated acts of sexual harassment of any employee of the Division will be referred to the Intake Officer in the Office of Employee Relations for processing and investigation in accordance with Chapter 60L-36, Florida Administrative Code and DHSMV Policy #3.05.

4. Anyone receiving a complaint in GHQ will date stamp and immediately forward for desk review/investigation to the Office of Professional Compliance. The Office of Professional Compliance will notify the complainant of the receipt of the complaint and how the complaint will be processed.

5. Complaints received in the field will be immediately forwarded to the supervisor in charge of the Florida Highway Patrol facility where the incident occurred, except for those cases which are referred to the Office of Professional Compliance or which are minor in nature and can be immediately resolved by the supervisor who initially receives the complaint.

   a. For complaints alleging criminal misconduct, the Troop Commander and the Office of Professional Compliance will be notified as soon as possible to ensure proper investigatory assignment.

   b. Complaints of a serious nature, where if the allegation is sustained, the discipline would be a suspension or greater, are referred to the OIG for investigation.

   c. Complaints of a minor nature and not referred to the OIG will be returned to the troop. An on-duty supervisor shall contact the complainant and initiate a desk review as soon as possible. When a complaint is not resolved by desk review, the Troop Commander will ensure that the intake form is marked as “Not Resolved” and forward the complaint to the Office of Professional Compliance along with a request for an investigation.

   d. Desk reviews which involve minor policy violations with documented coaching/counseling administered for corrective action may be handled by way of a resolved desk review with the approval of the District Commander. Resolved intake forms shall be forwarded to the Office of Professional Compliance for tracking purposes.
e. Any supervisor receiving a complaint for investigatory assignment shall contact the complainant and inform him/her that he/she has received the complaint. The member shall provide the complainant with his/her contact information.

6. Supervisors should be sensitive to anonymous complaints and should review the allegations to determine if any basis exists for the complaint. Generally, no action will be taken on anonymous complaints unless:
   a. The allegation would constitute criminal misconduct or a serious policy violation or,
   b. There is independent evidence available, such as Division records, which may be used to corroborate the charge.

The complaint will be considered a resolved desk review, if not covered under "a" or "b" above. All anonymous complaints will be documented on the Complaint Intake and Inquiry Form (HSMV 60961).

7. The Troop Commander will provide for the timely notification of the Division Director, via the chain of command, when any of the following occurs:
   a. Any "Use of Control" incident involving serious injury or death or the discharge of a firearm.
   b. The unauthorized discharge of a firearm.
   c. Death or serious injury of any Division employee.
   d. Allegation of excessive use of control.
   e. Allegation of unlawful search or seizure.
   f. Allegation of criminal conduct.
   g. Any matter where dismissal is a possible penalty.
   h. Any incident of an apparent or significant newsworthy nature.
   i. Any matter identified as grounds for decertification as listed in Rule 11B-27.0011, Florida Administrative Code.

8. Complaint Resolution Process Brochure (HSMV 60015)
   a. The brochure will be placed in the lobby of each district headquarters and satellite office in a location readily available to the public.
   b. Members shall maintain a supply of the brochures and will distribute them to anyone inquiring into complaint procedures.
   c. The Office of Professional Compliance is responsible for updating this brochure and all Public Affairs Officers will make the brochure
readily available during safety education programs.

B. GRIPES

1. Supervisors are to attempt to resolve gripes by clearing up any misunderstandings.

2. Gripes are not required to be documented. The Complaint Intake and Inquiry Form (HSMV 60961) may be used when documentation is desired. If the form is used, it is to have "GRIPE" clearly indicated on it.

3. Any gripe documentation is solely for inclusion in the employee’s work file.

4. While gripes are not grounds for disciplinary action, repeated gripes of a similar nature may indicate a need for coaching or training.

C. DESK REVIEW

1. Supervisors should conduct desk review into the allegations of a minor nature for the purpose of:
   a. Establishing a record.
   b. Determining the validity of a complaint.
   c. Determining jurisdiction.
   d. Determining classification and appropriate routing.
   e. Determining whether or not to continue the investigation.

2. Supervisors are encouraged to conduct a thorough desk review involving minor citizen complaints in an attempt to resolve minor disagreements or misunderstandings, prior to obtaining a complaint control number.

3. Desk reviews are to be documented on the Complaint Intake and Inquiry Form.

4. Desk reviews are classified as follows:
   a. Resolved and contain the following standard conditions:
      (1) No disciplinary action is to be taken against the employee, and
      (2) The complainant and affected employee have been contacted and notified of the outcome of the desk review.
      (3) Nothing in this policy shall prevent a supervisor from coaching or counseling an employee, if warranted, when the desk review is considered resolved. Resolved supervisory inquiries will be filed in district and the Office of Professional Compliance and may be used in the Performance Planning and Evaluation process, provided
the desk review involves the performance of a standard.

b. Not resolved because:
   (1) The allegation(s) are serious or criminal in nature, or
   (2) Disciplinary action against the employee is anticipated if the allegation(s) are proved true.

A desk review should be halted and considered not resolved at any time that information has been received which indicates a complaint investigation is warranted. Complaints not resolved by a desk review will be referred to the Office of Professional Compliance for investigative assignment.

D. INVESTIGATIVE ASSIGNMENT

1. Troop Commanders in receipt of allegations or complaints of misconduct included in the list below shall notify via the chain of command the Deputy Director, Patrol Operations before an investigation is initiated. The Deputy Director, in consultation with the Office of Professional Compliance, shall, in conjunction with the OIG, decide in each case whether to assign the case to the OIG or the Bureau of Criminal Investigations and Intelligence. The following types of cases will be evaluated for processing:

   a. Use of Control
      (1) Any incident covered by the FHP/FDLE memorandum of understanding as outlined in FHP Policy 10.01.07D(1).
      (2) The unauthorized discharge of a firearm.
      (3) The discharge of a firearm in the direction of a person to be arrested or at a vehicle that is occupied by any person, even though no intent exists to kill or inflict bodily harm.
      (4) Use of control that appears to exceed that which is necessary in the performance of duties.

   b. Criminal mischief, when an employee is alleged to have willfully, maliciously or through negligence, injured or damaged any real or personal property belonging to another.

   c. Criminal conduct, which includes any matter identified as grounds for decertification.

   d. Breaches of Civil Rights.

   e. Corruption, including but not limited to:
      (1) Accepting bribes.
      (2) Bribery or misuse of public office.
f. Allegations or complaints of serious misconduct by a Division employee.

g. Department property with serial numbers lost or stolen in unusual circumstances (i.e.; finding of possible employee theft; breaking and entering of Department vehicles involving theft).

h. Any investigation where a local supervisor may be biased or appear to be biased.

i. Other cases may be investigated by the OIG upon assignment by the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, FHP Director, or in his absence the Deputy FHP Director.

All investigations conducted by the Bureau of Criminal Investigations and Intelligence (BCII) shall be reviewed by the Bureau Commander of that component.

2. Troop Commanders will assign a troop supervisor of an appropriate rank to conduct complaint investigations not assigned to the OIG or the BCII. If the desk review indicates that a full investigative report format is required, the investigation will be assigned to a supervisor with the rank of lieutenant or above.

3. In all cases of discharge of a firearm that result in death or injury, the Troop Commander, acting Troop Commander or senior officer at the scene, will notify the Bureau Commander of the BCII; the local State Attorney; the Sheriff; the Chief of Police, if the event occurred in a municipality; and FDLE as soon as possible; as well as the on-call staff officer. If a death has occurred, the local medical examiner's office will also be notified.

E. PRE-INVESTIGATIVE AGREEMENT PROCEDURES

1. The pre-investigative agreement is designed for situations where there is an alleged violation of policy that is not criminal and if investigated would likely result in a sustained finding.

2. After consultation with the Troop Commander, OER, OIG and the OPC, and prior to initiating a formal investigation into the matter, the Division will offer the employee the opportunity to accept the proposed disciplinary action without contesting the violation.

3. The pre-investigative agreement will be in writing and occur through consultation with the employee and their representative, if requested.

4. Within 48 hours from the receipt of the pre-investigative agreement, the employee must complete and return the agreement to indicate in writing whether he/she elects or declines the alternative disciplinary action.

5. If agreement for discipline is reached, no disciplinary letter is required, as the facts of the disciplinary action will be incorporated into the agreement.
6. The action will be final and cannot be appealed or grieved, but may be used for progressive discipline.

7. If no pre-investigative agreement is reached, a formal investigation shall begin.

8. The pre-investigative agreement shall not be used as written notification to the employee that they are the subject of a complaint investigation.

F. INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

1. When Division employees are notified that they have become the subject of a complaint investigation, the notification shall be in writing and contain a statement of the allegations. The Employee’s Rights and Requirements (HSMV 61148) shall be presented to the employee. The employee shall sign and date the form. If the employee refuses to sign the form, the investigator/supervisor serving the notice shall place “Refused to Sign” on the signature line. The original form shall be placed in the case file and a copy will be provided to the employee. The timing of the notification should be as early as possible without compromising the investigation. The nature of the complaint and possible investigative techniques should be considered in determining the timing of the notification. The investigator, the Troop Commander, OPC and the OIG should confer to determine the appropriate time to notify the employee.

2. Complaints Alleging Criminal Activities
   a. Any time an allegation of criminal activity is made against a Department employee the following applicable command personnel will be notified as soon as possible:
      (1) Troop Commander
      (2) Regional Commander
      (3) Office of Professional Compliance
      (4) Bureau Commander, BCII
      (5) Deputy Directors and Director, FHP
      (6) Deputy Directors and Director of the Division in which the employee is assigned
      (7) Office of the Executive Director

   It is not necessary for the investigating member to personally notify each of the above persons. Notification should be made through the chain-of-command. Notification to Deputy Directors and Office of the Executive Director, Directors of Division of Motorist Services Vehicles and Division of Administrative Services will be made by the Director of Division of Florida Highway Patrol or may be delegated to a Deputy Director, the BCII Commander or other appropriate command personnel.
b. Complaints alleging criminal activity by any Department employee will result in a criminal and administrative investigation.

c. The criminal investigation will take precedence over the administrative investigation. The Inspector General will determine the appropriate time to initiate the administrative investigation.

d. During the course of any criminal investigation, the investigating member will maintain contact with and provide periodic updates to the State Attorney. In the event the State Attorney declines prosecution, the criminal investigation will be closed and under administrative guidelines, an administrative investigation shall be opened.

e. When there is a Settlement Agreement initiated and approved by the State Attorney, the investigation will be completed and appropriate administrative action will be taken. If there is an offer of a Settlement Agreement by the State Attorney, the Department will offer advice to the State Attorney based on a decision made by the General Counsel, the appropriate Division Director, and the Executive Director. In those cases involving criminal allegations, the absolute final approval rests with the State Attorney.

f. Upon completion of a criminal investigation of any Department employee, the case will be presented to the appropriate office of the State Attorney.

g. Any time an administrative investigation uncovers possible criminal activity on the part of a Department employee, the administrative investigation will be suspended until the investigator has a consultation with the State Attorney. The Inspector General will determine when it is appropriate to continue with the administrative investigation.

3. Assignment of an employee to administrative or alternate duty will be done in accordance with DHSMV Policy #3.03.

4. The complainant and witnesses will be personally interviewed by a supervisor.

   a. In all cases involving allegations of criminal violation, sworn statements are required from all witnesses and complainants.

   b. In all cases involving serious allegations of misconduct against a member, every effort will be made to obtain sworn statements from all witnesses and complainants.

   c. If the complaint originates from a person outside of Florida, a telephone interview will generally suffice. However, when allegations of a criminal nature or serious misconduct are made, assistance from a police agency in the area in which the complainant or witness resides will be requested to obtain a sworn statement.

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d. Anytime an investigating supervisor is unable to interview or obtain a statement from a witness, the reason(s) shall be included in the investigative report.

5. All investigations are to be completed in a timely manner. In most cases, an investigation should be resolved within 30 days. For cases involving extensive investigations, the Troop Commander or Regional Commander may request a 30-day extension. The extension must be approved by the Director or Deputy Director of Patrol Operations.

6. During a complaint investigation, the investigating supervisor will provide the complainant with an updated status report as the complaint investigation progresses. For investigations handled by the OIG, investigators will provide a status update to the complainant every 35 days until the case is closed. The contact made between the investigating supervisor and the complainant shall be documented. Generally, this should be done anytime an extension of the complaint investigation is granted. When the complaint investigation involves a protracted length of time, the investigating supervisor must make the determination of when to contact the complainant. However, this requirement may be waived anytime it is determined that such contact with the complainant may in anyway compromise the investigation.

7. At the conclusion of the complaint investigation, the complainant and the affected employee will be notified in writing of the conclusion of fact and the disposition concerning the allegation of misconduct. The Inspector General will make the notifications for all cases worked by investigators assigned to that Office (exception – Troop Commanders will notify any member of their command of the conclusion of the investigation when the allegation(s) in a complaint investigated by the Inspector General is classified as sustained.)

The Troop Commander will make the notifications for all cases worked within the troop.

8. When a complaint investigation is completed and resolved by any classification, the original complaint investigation file will be forwarded through channels to the Administrative Investigations Management (AIM) system.

a. AIM shall be the sole repository for all records relating to complaint investigation files. This shall include statements and photographs as well.

b. By doing so, the administration of public record requests ensures that the Agency is in compliance with all public record requests received.

9. Full Investigative Report

The full investigative report should be used to document the investigation when the abbreviated investigation report process is inadequate due to the seriousness of the allegation.
a. The Complaint Investigation Transmittal and Closing Form (HSMV 60217) or the Patrol Car Crash Transmittal and Closing Form (HSMV 60094) will be included at the beginning of the case file.

b. A completed CJSTC 78 Form will be included in any sustained complaint investigation (not including patrol car crashes).

c. The Investigation Report form will contain the following sections:

   (1) Predication: A brief explanation of how the investigator received the complaint and the nature of the complaint.

   (2) Investigation: A logical sequence of steps taken to bring the investigation to a conclusion.

   (3) Summary: A brief narrative statement of what can or cannot be proven by the investigation.

   (4) Classification: The overall classification of the complaint.

   (5) Exhibits: A witness list specifying what each witness will testify to, copies of documentary evidence, diagrams and any other related evidence.

   (6) Status: Case status classification.

H. AGENCY VEHICLE CRASHES

1. All Agency vehicle crashes shall be investigated and documented in accordance with FHP Policy 17.04.07(H).

   a. All agency crash investigations shall be conducted by a supervisor from Patrol Operations. The crash report will only reflect violations of Florida Statute, not policy violations.

   b. A complaint investigation will be conducted for all agency vehicle crashes by a supervisor assigned by the Troop Commander. The scope of the investigation will encompass Florida Statute and Florida Highway Patrol Policy.

      (1) If the crash involves only agency vehicles and no injury occurs, the desk review is not necessary. A crash report shall suffice for the purpose of the administrative review process along with a case closing/transmittal cover page.

      (2) For all other crashes, an abbreviated investigation format utilizing the complaint intake and inquiry form may be utilized. Only in those cases involving serious bodily injury or death will a full complaint investigation be conducted and documented as required by this policy. Narratives need not be completed, however the desk review must be conducted marking the outcome of; Sustained, Not-Sustained, Exonerated or Non-Chargeable, etc.
(3) When the agency vehicle crash has resulted in a fatality, the complaint investigation will be conducted by a supervisor of the rank of lieutenant or above who will also oversee the traffic homicide investigation.

c. A Traffic Homicide Investigator will be assigned to conduct an investigation of all agency vehicle crashes as outlined in the Traffic Homicide Investigations Manual.

2. All crashes will be classified using one of the following classifications:

a. **Sustained** - Sufficient evidence has been documented to clearly support a policy violation by the employee.

b. **Not-Sustained** - There is insufficient proof to confirm or to refute the allegation.

c. **Exonerated** - No evidence exists to support a policy violation. It is a non-chargeable crash and no penalty is provided by the FHP Patrol Car Crash Disciplinary Action Scale (FHP Policy 8.02A); a non-preventable crash on the part of the employee.

d. **Non-Chargeable** - A minor crash involving only government vehicles where no significant damage or physical injury occurs and the member is engaged in the performance of official duties.

3. All sustained traffic crashes shall be classified as follows:

a. **A minor traffic crash:** A chargeable crash caused by slight negligence or carelessness, which does not have the potential for serious injury.

b. **A more serious clear-cut violation:** A chargeable crash caused by greater negligence or carelessness and which has an obvious potential for, or actually results in, serious injury or property damage.

c. **An extreme violation:** A chargeable crash which is caused by driving a vehicle in a reckless or irresponsible manner or with gross disregard for the safety of persons or property, or a traffic crash which exhibits willful abuse of authority in the operation of a patrol vehicle.

I. **CLASSIFICATION REVIEW PROCEDURE**

1. Each allegation of misconduct alleged in a complaint will be classified subsequent to a conclusion of fact based on a thorough and competent investigation using one or more of the following classifications: Exonerated, Unfounded, Not-Sustained, Sustained or Policy Failure. The Complaint Intake and Inquiry Form will be completed on all complaints according to the appropriate classification.

a. When a complaint investigation results in a recommendation for
disciplinary action, the factual allegation(s) will be narrowly and specifically outlined in the notice of disciplinary action. In most cases, the single most serious offense will be used as the basis for disciplinary action.

b. If no disciplinary action is recommended because the complaint is classified as Not-Sustained, Exonerated, Unfounded, Policy Failure or Non-Chargeable agency vehicle crash, the complaint summary should clearly specify the reason(s) for the classification.

c. When the complaint is classified as a Policy Failure, the District Commander shall forward a brief summary of the findings and conclusions, along with a recommendation for an appropriate policy revision, to the Deputy Director Patrol Operations.

2. After a complaint investigation is completed at the first level of supervision, the troop chain of command will review and make appropriate recommendations to the Troop Commander. Any supervisor in the chain of command who disagrees with the classification or recommended action shall include a written statement as to his/her reason(s) and include a recommendation for consideration. All agency vehicle crash complaints will go through the chain of command to the Troop Commander for final resolution consistent with the FHP Patrol Car Crash Disciplinary Action Scale (FHP Policy 8.02A).

3. The Troop Commander shall review the complaint investigation and recommendations from the chain of command and take appropriate action as follows:

   a. Take disciplinary action within the delegated authority.

   b. When the disciplinary action exceeds his/her authority, make appropriate recommendations and forward recommendations by and through the DARB process. All proposed letters of discipline will be drafted by the Office of Professional Compliance.

   c. Promptly notify the employee of the disposition of any complaint after final staff review has been conducted by the Office of Professional Compliance, Office of Employee Relations and the Deputy Director of Patrol Operations.

4. If deficiencies are noted or disagreements arise during the administrative review, the Troop Commander and Deputy Director Patrol Operations will facilitate a resolution to the deficiency or disagreement.