



## LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE/CORONER

### Citizen Complaint/Compliment Form

406 Fuller Ave Helena, MT 59601 Tel: 406-447-8235

The Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office is dedicated to providing professional law enforcement services in partnership with the community. We take all compliments/complaints seriously regarding the service provided by the Sheriff's Office and the conduct of its members. The Sheriff's Office will accept and address all allegations of employee misconduct, and will respond to inquiries about employee actions or department policy.

We investigate allegations of misconduct and inquire for the following reasons:

1. To protect citizens from misconduct by an employee;
2. To protect the Sheriff's Office and those employees who conduct themselves appropriately;
3. To identify policies and procedures that may need review or change, and to find ways to improve the quality of our service to the community.

As a citizen, you are encouraged to contact the Sheriff's Office if you have a complaint about the actions of a deputy sheriff, detention officer, or other office employee if you believe his/her conduct was inappropriate, or he/she has violated the law. The supervisory members of the office can answer questions about policies, procedures, law and about the actions of office employees. They can help you initiate a complaint against an employee and conduct investigations of office employees.

Although we encourage citizens to report employee misconduct, all complaints must be made in good faith. False or highly exaggerated complaints serve no good purpose for either the citizens or the employee, and only tend to thwart our complaint taking process. Anyone who willfully makes any false accusation for the purpose of discrediting a law enforcement employee may be prosecuted under Montana Code Annotated Perjury (45-7-201) or False Swearing (45-7-202).

#### **How to begin**

To initiate a complaint, compliment or inquiry you should contact the Sheriff's Office. The office is open from 8:00 a.m to 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday) and may be reached by calling 447-8235. The office is located at the Law and Justice Center, 406 Fuller Ave, second floor. During non-business hours, if you need to make immediate contact concerning an inquiry or complaint, you may call dispatch by calling 457-8866 and ask to speak to the Officer in Charge.

#### **The Inquiry/Complaint Process**

1. Initial inquiries may be made by phone, or in person, to any Sheriff's Office employee. If they are unable to satisfy your inquiry, you will be referred to the Officer in Charge. If the Officer in Charge is able to satisfy your inquiry, the matter will be considered resolved. If not, your inquiry will be treated as a complaint and will require written documentation from you to proceed further.
2. You may mail or hand-deliver your written complaint on the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office Employee Complaint Form. Depending on the severity of the complaint, you may be asked to provide additional written or recorded statements of your complaint with more detail concerning the incident and why you believe the officer's conduct is inappropriate.
3. Complaints should be made by the person aggrieved/wronged. Third party and anonymous complaints will be accepted, but be aware that anonymous complaints can be difficult to investigate. For this reason, please consider providing contact information when submitting your complaint, as the complainant may be the only source of information. Complaints received from parents or legal guardians of aggrieved minors will be investigated in the same manner as a complaint received directly from an aggrieved adult.



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- 4. Your complaint will be investigated in a timely manner and you will likely be contacted for an interview by the assigned investigator.
- 5. If your complaint is an allegation of criminal wrong doing, the investigation may be referred to an outside agency.
- 6. After completing the investigation and obtaining a preliminary finding, the investigation will be passed up the employee's chain of command for review. Upon concurrence, one of the following findings will be used to close the complaint.

**Findings:**

Inquiry	If during the investigation it is determined that a citizen is merely requesting clarification of a policy or procedure, may be considered an inquiry.
Unfounded	When the investigation indicates the alleged wrongdoing did not occur.
Exonerated	When the investigation indicates that the act occurred, but was justified, lawful and proper.
Not Sustained	When the investigation discloses insufficient evidence to prove or disprove clearly the allegations made.
Sustained	When the investigation discloses the action alleged did, in fact, occur.
Sustained with Qualifications	When the investigation discloses the action complained of did, in fact, occur but not in the manner or to the degree stated.
Misconduct not based on a complaint	When the investigation of an allegation discloses misconduct that is not part of the original complaint.

- 7. If a complaint is sustained against an employee, appropriate action will be taken. The action may involve counseling, verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension from duty or termination. The investigator will call to inform you of the findings and you may receive a follow-up letter within 30 days.
- 8. In accordance with the law and to respect to an employee's privacy, we cannot release what specific discipline was imposed on the employee.
- 9. If you are dissatisfied with the results, you may contact the Sheriff and request a meeting.

**Complaint/Compliment form Instructions**

Please fill out the attached form completely and describe in detail the incident that led to this complaint/compliment. Please be clear and as specific as you can be and include as much information as possible. If you do not know the name(s) of badge number(s) of the employee(s) involved, please try and describe the person to the best of your ability. Please type or print neatly.

Your statement must be accurate and true and you must sign the complaint/compliment form. You may mail or hand-deliver the complaint form to:

*Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office  
406 Fuller Ave  
Helena, MT 59601*

If you have further questions or need help, you may contact our office at 447-8235





