Records Unit

701.1 VERSION

Review Date	Effective Date	Approving Authority
02/02/19	07/09/18	Eric D. English, Chief of Police

701.2 POLICY AND PURPOSE

This policy establishes the guidelines for the operational functions of the Harrisonburg Police Department Records Unit. The policy addresses department file access and internal requests for case reports. It is the policy of this department to maintain department records in compliance with Virginia Code §15.2-1722.

701.3 ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

701.4 DEFINITIONS

Records Management System – The Harrisonburg Police Department maintains a computerized records management system. Our current system is based on software created for public safety and is commonly referred to as the "RMS ".

701.5 RESPONSIBILITIES

701.5.1 RECORDS SUPERVISOR

The Chief of Police shall appoint and delegate certain responsibilities to a Records Supervisor. The Records Supervisor shall be directly responsible to the Administrative Bureau Commander or the authorized designee.

The responsibilities of the Records Supervisor include, but are not limited to:

(a) Overseeing the efficient and effective operation of the Records Unit.

(b) Scheduling and maintaining Records Unit time records.

(c) Supervising, training and evaluating Records Unit staff.

(d) Ensuring compliance with established policies and procedures.

(e) Supervising the access, use and release of protected information (see the Protected Information Policy).

(f)   Establishing security and access protocols for case reports designated as sensitive, where additional restrictions to access have been implemented. Sensitive reports may include, but are not limited to:

1.   Homicides

2.   Cases involving department employees or public officials

3.   Any case where restricted access is prudent

(g)   Overseeing the records maintenance and release

701.5.2   RECORDS UNIT
The responsibilities of the Records Unit include, but are not limited to:

(a)   Maintaining a records management system for case reports.

1.   The records management system should include a process for numbering, identifying, tracking and retrieving case reports.

(a)   An alphabetical master name index, physical or electronic, to serve as a cross reference to all documents in which a person has been named.

(b)   A process for documenting incident by type of offense or report, incidents by location, stolen property and recovered property.

2.   Entering case report information into the records management system.

3.   Maintaining compliance with federal, state and local regulations regarding reporting requirements of crime statistics.

4.   Maintaining compliance with federal, state and local regulations regarding criminal history reports and auditing.

5.   Identifying missing case reports and notifying the responsible officer.

701.6   FILE ACCESS AND SECURITY
The security of files in the Records Unit must be a high priority and shall be maintained as mandated by state or federal law. All closed case reports including, but not limited to, initial, supplemental, follow-up, evidence and any other reports related to a police department case, including field interview (FI) cards, criminal history records and publicly accessible logs, shall be maintained in a secure area within the Records Unit, accessible only by authorized employees of the Records Unit. Access to case reports or files when Records Unit staff is not available may be obtained through the Patrol Commander.

Records or reports relating to active vice, drug and organized crime investigations shall be maintained in a secure manner separate from the central records system. The Records Supervisor will ensure that procedures are in place for the separation of juvenile criminal arrest records from adult criminal arrest records pursuant to Virginia law.

In light of these responsibilities, it is the duty of the Administrative Bureau Commander to control access and data entry.

701.6.1 ORIGINAL CASE REPORTS

All original case reports removed from the Records Unit shall be recorded on a designated report check-out log, which shall be the only authorized manner by which an original case report may be removed from the Records Unit.

701.6.2 WARRANT FILES

Management of warrant files should be performed by the Records Unit.

    (a)   Warrant files maintenance procedure:

        1.   Warrant files should be cross referenced with the Master Name index.

        2.   Access to warrant files should be available 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week by members tasked with warrant verification/validation.

        3.   Warrant files should contain at least one original of the warrant bearing the seal of the court of jurisdiction and signature of the issuing judge or magistrate. In addition, the warrant file should have:

            (a)   The name, description and known identifying information of the wanted person.

            (b)   The date of issue.

            (c)   The case number.

            (d)   An attached document guaranteeing extradition up to the set limits and identifying the authorizing person.

            (e)   A separate location for the storage of served or quashed warrants pending return to the court of origination.

            (f)   All warrants that have been confirmed served or quashed should be removed from the external information systems in which they were entered.

                1.   The subject's name should be run through all systems after the removal to verify that original entry has been removed or canceled.

                2.   A warrant card indicating the warrant has been served or quashed with the service information (date, time, location, agency, etc.) should be attached to the warrant.

                3.   All warrant entries, removals and transmissions in external information systems should be conducted in compliance with NCIC, NLETS, and VCIN rules and protocols.

                4.   Warrant files shall be audited annually for out of date or quashed warrants, warrants missing essential information, or extradition guarantee.

    (b)   Warrant confirmation occurs when a law enforcement officer on the scene with the person suspected to be the wanted subject has received and matched all of the identifying information from the warrant file with the suspect. Any resolution of discrepancies in identifying information is the responsibility of the officer on the scene.

(c)   Service is completed upon the arrest of the wanted subject.

701.7 CONFIDENTIALITY

Records Unit staff has access to information that may be confidential or sensitive in nature. Records Unit staff shall not access, view or distribute, or allow anyone else to access, view or distribute any record, file or report, whether in hard copy or electronic file format, or any other confidential, protected or sensitive information except in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release and Protected Information policy.