

	Houston Independent School District Police Department Directives	DIRECTIVE: 410-004
		EFFECTIVE DATE: March 19, 2013
SUBJECT: Unity of Command		REVISED DATE: January 10, 2022

PURPOSE

This directive aims to prescribe unity of command for the Houston Independent School District Police department personnel.

POLICY

To accomplish the functions of direction and supervision, there is a need to recognize and establish the authority of the Chief of Police, designation of command during the absence of the Chief of Police, and accountability of supervisors for the performance of subordinates. It is also the purpose of this directive to establish guidelines for imposing accountability on officers for their use of discretion and state the principles to be followed regarding the delegation of responsibility. This directive applies to all Houston Independent School District Police Department Personnel.

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The Office of the Chief of Police is responsible for the administration and management of the police department. The Texas Education Code Title 2, Public Education Chapter 37-Sec. 37.081. (F), grants the Chief of Police of the school district police department authority and requires the position to be accountable to the school district's superintendent.

COMMAND PROTOCOL

In the absence of the Chief of Police. The Assistant Chief of Police will assume all duties and responsibilities of the Chief of Police and delegate authority commensurate with the department's needs. The Assistant Chief is appointed by the Chief of Police.

Any officer or supervisor, usually the ranking officer, shall take immediate charge of a scene as necessary until the appropriate supervisor arrives or delegates authority to another.

Situations involving personnel of different functions engaged in a single operation will normally be supervised by the head of the function (or their designee) that initiated that operation.

Each division will handle its responsibilities within the chain of command of the HISD Police Department.

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Each position within the HISD Police Department specifies the rank required to ensure the person assigned the position's responsibility also has the authority to gain the compliance necessary to accomplish its objectives.

Supervisors will enforce the rules, regulations, and policies of the Houston ISD Police Department and the applicable laws of the State of Texas and the constitution of the United States. Supervisors will be responsible for maintaining (through such means as close observation) an awareness of subordinates' work demands and capabilities to determine the at which their subordinates are operating and make appropriate scheduling and assignment level decisions. From using roll calls or other official unit gatherings to express their opinions; if these are counter to departmental or district policy and nor will supervisors permit subordinates to do so.

Supervisors will report violations of HISD or departmental rules, policies, or procedures to their immediate superior without delay. Where possible, supervisors will actively prevent such violations or interrupt them as necessary to ensure efficient, orderly operations. While on duty, supervisors will maintain communication with their immediate superior and always make themselves available. Supervisors will remain available for duty on short notice when off duty and so instructed.

Each employee will be accountable for the use of delegated authority. Each employee has the power to delegate authority to subordinates to accomplish objectives. The subordinate is accountable for the authority used; however, the supervisor remains responsible for accomplishing the objectives.

The Chief of Police may find it necessary or appropriate to delegate responsibility for a specific task from time to time. The member to whom the responsibility is delegated will be accountable for their actions regarding the task. A member delegated the responsibility for a task will be granted the authority necessary to accomplish the assignment.

COMMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

To avoid confusion among employees and establish accountability, departmental components will each be under the direct command of only one supervisor.

EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTABILITY

Each employee will be accountable to only one supervisor at any given time.

SUPERVISORY ACCOUNTABILITY

Supervisors are accountable for the activities of employees under their immediate control. The Houston ISD Police Department maintains a system of employee accountability. Personnel designated as supervisors have an essential role in making accountability practical and therefore are given serious responsibilities in connection with their supervisory activities.

SPAN OF CONTROL

To achieve effective direction, coordination, and control, the total number of employees supervised by anyone during normal day-to-day operations will be set at a level that will allow for an optimum level of supervision and control of the assigned personnel: except during temporary periods of adjustment or emergency.

OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS

All officers shall promptly obey any lawful order of a supervisor, including any order relayed by an employee of the same or lesser rank. Officers' failure or deliberate refusal to obey such orders will be considered insubordination and is prohibited.

No commander or supervisor shall knowingly or willfully issue an order that violates a federal or state law, a municipal ordinance, HISD Board policy, or a departmental policy.

Any employee receiving an order believed to be unjust or contrary to departmental policy must first obey the order to the best of their ability and then appeal the order to the Chief of Police through the chain of command.

No employee is required to obey an order contrary to the laws of the United States, the laws of the State of Texas, County or Municipal ordinances, or HISD board policy. Any employee receiving an unlawful order shall report the incident in writing, including their action, to the Chief of Police through the chain of command.

If an employee receives an order that conflicts with one previously given by a supervisor, the employee shall respectfully point this out to the supervisor who gave the second order. If the supervisor giving the second order does not change the order to eliminate the conflict, the second-order shall stand and shall be the supervisor's responsibility. If the second supervisor so directs, the second-order shall be obeyed first.

COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, AND COOPERATION AMONG DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

Each division and function shall make every possible attempt to maintain active communication and coordination with other divisions and functions to minimize unnecessary duplication of responsibilities and possible interference or compromise of ongoing investigations or operations. This may be accomplished through attendance at shift briefings, staff meetings, e-mail, voice mail, other electronic systems, exchange of duty schedules or bulletins, and any other means of sharing information.

PLANNING FOR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES

The Assistant Chief of Police is responsible for coordinating planning activities for unusual occurrences. Additionally, the Assistant Chief of Police shall act as an expeditor of resources during an emergency.

Approved By


Pedro Lopez Jr., Chief of Police