

Controlled Substance Training Aids

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Policy Statement

Controlled substance training aids are required for training and maintaining the skills of drug detection dogs. They can also be useful during training sessions for law enforcement personnel and public presentations.

Due to the responsibilities and liabilities involved with possessing readily usable amounts of controlled substances and the ever present danger of accidental ingestion of controlled substances by a canine, all personnel will diligently work together to ensure that each training aid is properly maintained and accounted for at all times.

Persons Affected

- Employees who require the use of training aids
- Controlled substance detection canine handlers
- Canine unit supervisor
- Evidence supervisor and custodians
- Command staff members

This policy does not apply to Northwest Regional Gang and Drug Task Force personnel, with the exception of any canine handlers that may be assigned to that unit.

Definitions

Canine handler – controlled substance detection canine handler, including one in training

Controlled substance – as defined in [RCW 69.50.101\(d\)](#)

Drug paraphernalia – as defined in [RCW 69.50.102](#)

Training aid - controlled substance training aid

Authorization and Immunity

Whatcom County Sheriff's Office personnel and any person working under their immediate direction, supervision or instruction, may possess **controlled substances** and **paraphernalia** only when such possession is in conjunction with the performance of their official duties, while providing substance abuse training to law enforcement personnel or the community, or while providing canine drug detection training.

Controlled Substance Detection Canine Handlers

Canine handlers may take and maintain custody of a total of [REDACTED] of each controlled substance in the form of **training aids** at any given time without further authorization. Handlers who required the use of a training aid larger than [REDACTED] must have **written authorization** from a command staff member in their chain of command.

Other Employees

Any employee other than a **canine handler** who requires the use of a **training aid** must have **written authorization** from a command staff member in that requesting employee's chain of command limiting the employee's possession to a specific event or time period.

Written Authorization

The chief inspector will develop a form and supporting process that will ensure training aid requests and approvals can be made and documented in a timely manner in accordance with this policy, preferably in electronic form via PowerDMS. The form will include specific details about the type and size of aid requested and the dates and purpose for which it is needed.

Training Aid Life Cycle

Sources

Only [controlled substances](#) first placed into evidence at the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office and held under one or more of the following circumstances may be used as [training aids](#):

- Criminal cases that have been adjudicated.
- Criminal cases in which the Whatcom County Prosecutor no longer requires the controlled substance to be held (e.g. cases in which the Prosecutor has declined to pursue criminal charges.)
- Found property.
- Controlled substances transferred to the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office from another law enforcement or government agency for use as training aids.

Preparation

The evidence supervisor is responsible for creating new training aids from appropriate [sources](#). He or she will ensure that a sample of each material is tested and that each aid is then packaged, sealed, weighed and individually marked with a unique control number before it is issued to an [authorized employee](#). The evidence supervisor will ensure that these actions are properly recorded.

Issue

If an evidence custodian is not able to issue a training aid directly to an authorized employee, he or she may secure the aid in a previously-designated secure container locked with a code or combination unique to that transaction (e.g., a padlock whose combination can be set by the custodian ahead of time). The custodian should then communicate the code or combination directly to the employee who will later retrieve the aid. See also [chain of custody](#).

Field Storage

[Canine handlers](#) will store all training aids in issued or approved locked metal boxes at all times except during training. [REDACTED]

All other personnel in possession of training aids shall keep the aids under their immediate control at all times.

Return

Canine handlers will return any training aid that is no longer needed or usable to evidence custodians. All other personnel shall return training aids to evidence custodians as soon as possible after the specific event for which the aids were required has concluded in conformance with the applicable command staff member authorization.

Accountability

Chain of Custody

The transfer of custody of [training aids](#) shall only occur between evidence custodians and individual [authorized employees](#). Employees who are not evidence custodians shall not transfer custody of training aids to one another in the field.

Damage or Loss

Any person whose training aid becomes damaged should return it to evidence custodians as soon as possible thereafter.

Any person who loses or discovers the loss of a training aid shall immediately report such loss to a command staff member via the chain of command. Loss of a training aid will normally necessitate an administrative investigation.

Both damage and loss of a training aid requires the responsible person to document the incident in an event report.

Monthly Inspection

The **canine unit supervisor** shall physically inspect every training aid in the possession of each [canine handler](#) every three months. This inspection will include checking each aid for damage or evidence of tampering. The supervisor will record the inspection results and issue a certificate of inspection to each handler.

Annual Recall

The **evidence supervisor** shall recall all training aids that are in the field once every twelve months. All employees in possession of training aids shall return them to evidence custodians as soon as possible thereafter. The purposes of this recall are to account for all training aids, and repair or replace them as needed.

Automated Reminders and Monitoring

The **chief inspector** will assist the appropriate personnel with setting up and using the PowerDMS system to send automated reminders, and capture and route reports about inspections and recalls.

The chief inspector will also monitor inspections and recalls for compliance with this policy, including by using the PowerDMS system.