

Chapter 17E.

North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission.

Article 1.

General.

§ 17E-1. Findings and policy.

The General Assembly finds and declares that the office of sheriff, the office of deputy sheriff and the other officers and employees of the sheriff of a county are unique among all of the law-enforcement offices of North Carolina. The administration of criminal justice has been declared by Article 1 of Chapter 17C of the General Statutes to be of statewide concern to the people of the State. The sheriff is the only officer of local government required by the Constitution. The sheriff, in addition to his criminal justice responsibilities, is the only officer who is also responsible for the courts of the State, and acting as their bailiff and marshal. The sheriff administers and executes criminal and civil justice and acts as the ex officio detention officer.

The deputy sheriff has been held by the Supreme Court of this State to hold an office of special trust and confidence, acting in the name of and with powers coterminous with his principal, the elected sheriff.

The offices of sheriff and deputy sheriff are therefore of special concern to the public health, safety, welfare and morals of the people of the State. The training and educational needs of such officers therefore require particularized and differential treatment from those of the criminal justice officers certified under Article 1 of Chapter 17C of the General Statutes. (1983, c. 558, s. 1; 1995, c. 103, s. 1; 2021-107, s. 3(a).)

§ 17E-2. Definitions.

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following definitions apply to this Chapter:

- (1) "Commission" means the North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission.
- (1a) "Critical incident" means an incident involving any use of force by a law enforcement officer that results in death or serious bodily injury to a person.
- (2) "Office" or "department" means the sheriff of a county, his deputies, his employees and such equipment, space, provisions and quarters as are supplied for their use.
- (3) "Justice officer" means:
 - a. A person who, through the special trust and confidence of the sheriff, has taken the oath of office prescribed by Chapter 11 of the General Statutes as a peace officer in the office of the sheriff. This term includes "deputy sheriffs", "reserve deputy sheriffs", and "special deputy sheriffs", but does not include clerical and support personnel not required to take an oath. The term "special deputy" means a person who, through appointment by the sheriff, becomes an unpaid criminal justice officer to perform a specific act directed by the sheriff; or
 - b. A person who, through the special trust and confidence of the sheriff, has been appointed as a detention officer by the sheriff; or
 - c. A person who is either the administrator or other custodial personnel of district confinement facilities as defined in G.S. 153A-219; however, nothing in this Chapter transfers any supervisory or administrative

control over employees of district confinement facilities to the office of the sheriff; or

- d. A person who, through the special trust and confidence of the sheriff, is under the direct supervision and control of the sheriff and serves as a telecommunicator, or who is presented to the Commission for appointment as a telecommunicator by an employing entity other than the sheriff for the purpose of obtaining certification from the Commission as a telecommunicator. (1983, c. 558, s. 1; c. 745, s. 1; 1991, c. 265, s. 1; 1995, c. 103, s. 2; 1997-443, s. 20.11(b); 2021-107, s. 3(a); 2021-138, s. 3(c).)

§ 17E-3. North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission established; members; terms; vacancies.

(a) There is hereby established the North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission. The Commission shall be composed of 17 members as follows:

- (1) Sheriffs. – Twelve sheriffs appointed by the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association, 10 representing each of the Commission Districts established in this section, and two appointed at large in such manner as shall be prescribed by the Constitution or bylaws of the Association.
- (2) Appointees of the General Assembly. – One person appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives pursuant to G.S. 120-121 and one person appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate pursuant to G.S. 120-121.
- (3) County Commissioners. – One county commissioner appointed by the Governor as recommended from three nominees from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.
- (4) Others. – The President of the Community Colleges System or the President's designee and the Dean of the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill or the Dean's designee shall be ex officio, nonvoting members of the Commission.

(b) Terms. – Members shall be appointed for staggered terms. Beginning September 1, 1995, sheriffs representing Commission Districts 3, 6, and 9 shall be appointed to three-year terms; sheriffs representing Commission Districts 1, 4, and 7 shall be appointed to one-year terms; sheriffs representing Commission Districts 2, 5, 8, and 10 and the two at-large sheriffs, shall be appointed to two-year terms. The appointee of the House of Representatives shall serve a term of two years. The appointee of the Senate shall serve a term of two years. The county commissioner appointed by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners shall serve a term of two years. After the initial terms established herein have expired, all sheriffs appointed to the Commission shall be appointed to terms of three years.

If an individual ceases to be a sheriff then his seat on the Commission becomes vacated upon his ceasing to be qualified to hold that seat. Any individual appointed or designated to serve on this Commission shall serve until his successor is appointed and qualified.

(c) Vacancies. – If any vacancy occurs in the membership of the Commission, the appointing authority shall appoint another person to fill the unexpired term of the vacating member.

(d) Compensation. – None of the members of the Commission shall receive compensation for serving on the Commission. However, if the North Carolina Department of Justice has funds available, then members of the Commission who are State officers or employees may be reimbursed for their expenses in accordance with G.S. 138-6; members of the Commission who are full-time salaried public officers or employees other than State officers or employees may be reimbursed for their expenses in accordance with G.S. 138-5(b). All other members of the Commission may receive compensation and reimbursement for expenses in accordance with G.S. 138-5.

(e) Officers. – The chairman shall be elected from among the membership. The Commission shall select its other officers from among the membership as it deems necessary. All officers serve for one year, or until successors are qualified.

(f) Removal. – The Commission may remove a member for misfeasance, malfeasance, nonfeasance or neglect of duty.

(g) The Commission has power to adopt its own rules of procedure. The Commission shall meet no less than four times a year. It shall also meet on the call of the chairman or vice-chairman, or any four members of the Commission.

(h) The Commission may appoint any resident of the State to an adjunct or special committee created or appointed by it to study or make recommendations or reports on any subject matter related to its duties or the office of sheriff.

(i) Members of the Commission shall have the authority to designate, in writing, one member of his office to represent them and, if the member possesses voting authority, vote for them on the Commission at all meetings the voting member is unable to attend. This voting authority shall extend to all matters brought before the Commission which require a vote, to include the entry of final agency decisions and the adoption of administrative rules.

(j) The State is divided into 10 Commission Districts established for the appointment of members of the North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission as follows:

District 1: The Counties of Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Gates, Hertford, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, and Washington.

District 2: The Counties of Caswell, Edgecombe, Franklin, Granville, Halifax, Nash, Northampton, Person, Vance, and Warren.

District 3: The Counties of Beaufort, Craven, Dare, Duplin, Hyde, Jones, Lenoir, Martin, Pamlico, and Pitt.

District 4: The Counties of Chatham, Durham, Greene, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Orange, Wake, Wayne, and Wilson.

District 5: The Counties of Alleghany, Alexander, Ashe, Catawba, Gaston, Lincoln, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yadkin.

District 6: The Counties of Alamance, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Iredell, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, and Stokes.

District 7: The Counties of Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Robeson, and Sampson.

District 8: The Counties of Anson, Cabarrus, Hoke, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Stanly, and Union.

District 9: The Counties of Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Cleveland, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, and Yancey.

District 10: The Counties of Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Swain, and Transylvania. (1983, c. 558, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1005, ss. 1, 2; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 562, s. 1; c. 767, s. 33; 1995, c. 103, s. 3; c. 490, s. 48; 2006-264, s. 29(e); 2021-107, s. 3(a).)

§ 17E-4. Powers and duties of the Commission.

(a) The Commission shall have the following powers, duties, and responsibilities, which are enforceable through its rules and regulations, certification procedures, or the provisions of G.S. 17E-8 and G.S. 17E-9:

- (1) Promulgate rules and regulations for the administration of this Chapter, which rules may require (i) the submission by any agency of information with respect to the employment, education, and training of its justice officers, and (ii) the submission by any training school of information with respect to its programs that are required by this Chapter.
- (2) Establish minimum educational and training standards that may be met in order to qualify for entry level employment as an officer in temporary or probationary status or in a permanent position. The standards for entry level employment of officers shall include all of the following:
 - a. Training in response to, and investigation of, domestic violence cases, as well as training in investigation for evidence-based prosecutions. For purposes of the domestic violence training requirement, the term "officers" shall include justice officers as defined in G.S. 17E-2(3)a., except that the term shall not include "special deputy sheriffs" as defined in G.S. 17E-2(3)a.
 - b. Training on juvenile justice issues, including (i) the handling and processing of juvenile matters for referrals, diversion, arrests, and detention; (ii) best practices for handling incidents involving juveniles; (iii) adolescent development and psychology; and (iv) promoting relationship building with youth as a key to delinquency prevention.
 - c. Education and training to develop knowledge and increase awareness of effective mental health and wellness strategies for justice officers.
- (3) Certify, recertify, suspend, revoke, or deny, pursuant to the standards that it may establish for the purpose, persons as qualified under the provisions of this Chapter who may be employed at entry level as officers.
- (4) Establish minimum standards for the certification of training schools and programs or courses of instruction that are required by this Chapter.
- (5) Certify, recertify, suspend, revoke, or deny, pursuant to the standards that it has established for the purpose, training schools and programs or courses of instruction that are required by this Chapter.
- (6) Establish standards and levels of education or equivalent experience for criminal justice school instructors, including instructors with probationary or limited teaching privileges, qualified assistants, in-service training coordinators, executive officers, and school directors, who participate in programs or courses of instruction that are required by this Chapter.
- (7) Certify, recertify, suspend, revoke, or deny, pursuant to the standards that it has established for the purpose, criminal justice school instructors, including

- instructors with probationary or limited teaching privileges, qualified assistants, in-service training coordinators, executive officers, and school directors, who participate in programs or courses of instruction that are required by this Chapter or are required and approved by the instructor's agency, including programs or courses of instruction certified under Chapter 17C of the General Statutes or offered by an educational institution accredited by the Commission.
- (8) Investigate and make such evaluations as may be necessary to determine if agencies, criminal justice school instructors, including instructors with probationary or limited teaching privileges, qualified assistants, in-service training coordinators, executive officers, and school directors, are complying with the provision[s] of this Chapter.
 - (9) Adopt and amend bylaws, consistent with law, for its internal management and control.
 - (10) Enter into contracts incident to the administration of its authority pursuant to this Chapter.
 - (11) Establish minimum standards for in-service training for justice officers. In-service training standards for sworn law enforcement officers shall include all of the following training topics:
 - a. Response to, and investigation of, domestic violence cases, as well as training in investigation for evidence-based prosecutions. For purposes of the domestic violence training requirement, the term "justice officer" shall include those defined in G.S. 17E-2(3)a., except that the term shall not include "special deputy sheriffs" as defined in G.S. 17E-2(3)a.
 - b. Juvenile justice issues, including (i) the handling and processing of juvenile matters for referrals, diversion, arrests, and detention; (ii) best practices for handling incidents involving juveniles; (iii) adolescent development and psychology; and (iv) promoting relationship building with youth as a key to delinquency prevention.
 - c. Training to develop knowledge and increase awareness of effective mental health and wellness strategies for justice officers. The standards established shall include two hours of training on this issue every three years.
 - d. Ethics.
 - e. Mental health for justice officers.
 - f. Community policing.
 - g. Minority sensitivity.
 - h. Use of force.
 - i. The duty to intervene and report.
 - (12) Establish minimum standards and levels of training for certification of instructors for the domestic violence training and juvenile justice training required by subdivisions (2) and (11) of this subsection.
 - (13) Establish minimum educational and training standards for employment and continuing education for officers concerning:
 - a. Recognizing and appropriately interacting with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- b. Drivers license and vehicle registration identifiers of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, as authorized by G.S. 20-7(q2), including that those identifiers are optional.
- (14) Monitor compliance with G.S. 20-185.1(d).
 - (15) Establish minimum standards and levels of training for certification of diversion investigators and diversion supervisors, as defined in G.S. 90-113.74(i). As part of these minimum standards, the Commission shall require that certified diversion investigators receive training in the following:
 - a. Definition of drug diversion.
 - b. Categories of drugs most subject to diversion and misuse.
 - c. Methods used to divert drugs.
 - d. Proper investigation of drug diversion cases.
 - e. Appropriate use of the controlled substances reporting system to investigate drug diversion cases.
 - f. Requests of prescriptions and records related to prescriptions pursuant to G.S. 90-107.1, including best practices for working with pharmacies in a manner that minimizes disruption of customer service and pharmacy operations.
 - g. Data privacy and security provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and other pertinent federal and State laws governing privacy and security of confidential data and records.
 - h. Proper handling of confidential data and records from any source.
 - i. Criminal and civil penalties under federal and State law for improperly accessing, handling, or disclosing confidential prescription data or other confidential data or records.
 - (16) Certify and recertify at least once every three years, suspend, revoke, or deny, pursuant to the standards that it has established for the purpose, persons as qualified to be employed at entry level and retained as diversion investigators and diversion supervisors, as defined in G.S. 90-113.74(i).
 - (17) Search the National Decertification Index (NDI) maintained by the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) using the name of every applicant for certification or applicant for lateral transfer, and any other personal identifying information necessary to complete the search, and shall utilize any record of conviction of a criminal offense received as a result of the search during the application and lateral transfer process to determine if the applicant has any record that would disqualify the applicant for certification.
 - (18) Establish initial and in-service educational and training standards for school resource officers, as set forth in G.S. 115C-105.58.

The Commission may certify, and no additional certification shall be required from it, programs, courses and teachers certified by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission. Where the Commission determines that a program, course, instructor or teacher is required for an area which is unique to the office of sheriff, the Commission may certify such program, course, instructor, or teacher under such standards and procedures as it may establish.

(b) [Recodified as G.S. 17E-4.1.] (1983, c. 558, s. 1; 1991, c. 265, s. 2; 1995, c. 103, ss. 4, 5; 2004-186, ss. 2.7, 2.9, 2.10, 2.12; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(cc); 2017-191, s. 3; 2018-5, s. 35.25(e); 2018-44, s. 14(b); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2021-107, s. 3(a), (c); 2021-136, s. 1(b); 2021-137, s. 2(b); 2021-138, ss. 7(b), 11(b), 15(b); 2023-56, s. 2; 2024-1, s. 2.8A(b).)

§ 17E-4.1. Advisory powers of the Commission.

The Commission shall have the following powers, which shall be advisory in nature and for which the Commission is not authorized to undertake any enforcement actions:

- (1) Certify, pursuant to the standards that it has established for the purpose, justice officers for those law-enforcement agencies that elect to comply with the minimum education, training, and experience standards established by the Commission for positions for which advanced or specialized training, education, and experience are appropriate.
- (2) Consult and cooperate with counties, agencies of this State, other governmental agencies, and with universities, colleges, junior colleges, and other institutions, public or private, concerning the development of training schools and programs or courses of instruction.
- (3) Study and make reports and recommendations concerning justice education and training in North Carolina.
- (4) Conduct and stimulate research by public and private agencies which shall be designed to improve education and training in the administration of justice.
- (5) Study, obtain data, statistics, and information and make reports concerning the recruitment, selection, education and training of persons serving justice agencies in this State; to make recommendations for improvement in methods of recruitment, selection, education and training of persons serving sheriffs' offices.
- (6) Study and make reports and recommendations to the Governor, Attorney General, Chief Justice, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House, concerning the manpower, salary and equipment needs of the sheriffs of the State.
- (7) Make recommendations concerning any matters within its purview pursuant to this Chapter.
- (8) Appoint such advisory committees as it may deem necessary.
- (9) Do such things as may be necessary and incidental to the administration of its authority pursuant to this Chapter.
- (10) Formulate basic plans for and promote the development and improvement of a comprehensive system of education and training for the officers and employees of agencies consistent with its rules and regulations.
- (11) Maintain liaison among municipal, State and federal agencies with respect to education and training.
- (12) Promote the planning and development of a systematic career development program for sheriffs' office personnel. (1983, c. 558, s. 1; 1995, c. 103, s. 5; 2021-107, s. 3(a), (c); 2021-182, s. 3(c).)

§ 17E-5. Functions of the Department of Justice.

(a) The Attorney General shall provide such staff assistance as the Commission shall require and direct in the performance of its duties.

(b) The Attorney General shall have legal custody of all books, papers, documents, or other records and property of the Commission.

(c) Any papers, documents, or other records which become the property of the Commission that are placed in the criminal justice officer's personnel file maintained by the Commission shall be subject to the same disclosure requirements set forth in Chapters 126, 153A, and 160A of the General Statutes regarding the privacy of personnel records. (1983, c. 558, s. 1; 2021-107, s. 3(a); 2023-56, s. 3.)

§ 17E-6. Justice Officers' Standards Division established; appointment of director; duties.

(a) There is hereby established, within the Department of Justice, the Justice Officers' Standards Division hereinafter called "the Division," which shall be organized and staffed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and within the limits of authorized appropriations.

(b) The Attorney General shall appoint a director for the Division chosen from a list of nominees submitted to him by the Commission who shall be responsible to and serve at the pleasure of the Attorney General and the Commission.

(c) The Division shall administer such programs as are assigned to it by the Commission. Administrative duties and responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Administering any and all programs assigned to the Division by the Commission and reporting any violations of or deviations from the rules and regulations of the Commission as the Commission may require;
- (2) Compiling data, developing reports, identifying needs and performing research relevant to improvement of the agencies;
- (3) Developing new and revising existing programs for adoption consideration by the Commission;
- (4) Monitoring and evaluating programs of the Commission;
- (5) Providing technical assistance to agencies of the justice system to aid them in the discharge of program participation and responsibilities;
- (6) Disseminating information on Commission programs to concerned agencies or individuals;
- (7) Taking such other actions as may be deemed necessary or appropriate to carry out its assigned duties and responsibilities;
- (8) The director may divulge any information in the Division's personnel file of a justice officer or applicant for certification to the head of the department employing the officer or considering the applicant for employment when the director deems it necessary and essential to the retention or employment of said officer or applicant. The information may be divulged whether or not such information was contained in a personnel file maintained by a State or by a local government agency. (1983, c. 558, s. 1; 1995, c. 103, s. 6; 2021-107, s. 3(a).)

§ 17E-6.5. Donations to the Commission; grants and appropriations.

(a) The Commission may accept for any of its purposes and functions under this Chapter any and all donations, both real and personal, and grants of money from any governmental unit or public agency, or from any institution, person, firm or corporation, and may receive, utilize and dispose of same. Any arrangement pursuant to this section shall be detailed in a biennial report of

the Commission to the General Assembly. Such report shall include the identity of the donor, the nature of the transaction, and the conditions, if any. Any money received by the Commission pursuant to this section shall be deposited in the State Treasury to the account of the Commission.

(b) The Commission may authorize grants pursuant to this section and consistent with the powers conferred upon the Commission under G.S. 17E-6.

(c) The Commission in providing for the administration of the grant program authorized by this section shall promote the most efficient and economical program of criminal justice education and training, including the maximum utilization of existing facilities and programs for the purpose of avoiding duplication.

(d) The Commission may provide grants as a reimbursement for actual expenses incurred by the State or any political subdivision thereof for the provision of training programs providing said political subdivisions and State law-enforcement agencies do adhere to the selection and training standards established by the Commission. (1983, c. 558, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1030, s. 9; 2021-107, s. 3(b), (c).)