

Oakland County Sheriff's Office
General Order # 3.21



SUBJECT: Comfort K9 Unit		NUMBER: 3.21
EFFECTIVE DATE: 8/3/2026 REVIEW DATE: Annually		MACP Standard Impact: N/A
REPLACES AND RESCINDS: N/A	DISTRIBUTION: All Personnel	NUMBER OF PAGES: 5

This order replaces and rescinds all previously issued orders, procedures, rules and regulations, notices and/or practices in conflict with this General Order.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to provide guidelines for operating an agency Comfort K9 Unit.

II. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office to operate a Comfort K9 Unit, consisting of trained Comfort K9's and Comfort K9 handlers.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Comfort K9 – Sheriff's Office Comfort K9's shall be American Kennel Club (AKC) certified Cavalier King Charles Spaniels that are trained to assist in providing critical incident stress management to first responders and the community during and after critical incidents and recognized as a *Support Service K9*.
- B. Comfort K9 Handler – Comfort K9 handlers shall be comprised of agency personnel assigned and approved by the Sheriff.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Comfort K9 Unit

- 1. The Comfort K9 Unit shall be supervised by the Homeland Security, Wellness & Professional Development Division Commander.
- 2. Comfort K9's and their handlers shall be assigned throughout the agency that best meets the needs of the agency and the community.

B. Comfort K9 Handler Selection and Training

- 1. Agency personnel interested in consideration for the Comfort K9 Unit shall submit the "Oakland County Sheriff's Office Request for Assignment – Letter of Interest" to Administrative Services.

Oakland County Sheriff's Office
General Order # 3.21

- a. Selection of individuals for the unit will be made by the Sheriff.
2. Handlers are required to comply with all program requirements, acknowledged by signing the *Comfort K9 Handler Agreement* (Appendix A).

C. Comfort K9 Expenses

1. The County of Oakland shall pay the below expenses for Comfort K9's, while they are *in service*:
 - a. Veterinary bills – Emergency and non-emergency
 - b. Boarding (requiring Comfort K9 Unit Supervisor prior approval)
 - c. Food
 - d. Medicine
 - e. Grooming (monthly)
 - f. Any other essential costs as approved by the CFO through the chain of command
2. The above expense shall be paid by the established Sheriff's Office procedures.

D. Comfort K9 Care & Grooming

1. The Comfort K9 Unit Supervisor will ensure all Comfort K9's receive proper nutrition, grooming, necessary medical care, and maintain a healthy weight as recommended by their assigned handlers.
2. Handlers will be individually responsible for 24-hour care and maintenance of their K9, ensuring their K9's receive the proper nutrition, grooming, and medical care, as necessary.
 - a. Handlers may be allowed to perform these functions during their normal work shift, if time allows and with approval of their immediate supervisor.

E. Comfort K9 Handler Assignments & Responsibilities

1. The Comfort K9 handlers have the sole responsibility for the daily stewardship of their K9, function as the Comfort K9's advocate, and will be expected to kennel/house the K9 at their personal residence.
 - a. The Comfort K9 handler has be responsible to ensure the K9 stays current on all vaccines and medical appointments.
 - b. All Comfort K9's shall be spayed or neutered.

F. Comfort K9 Training

1. The Comfort K9 Unit Supervisor shall ensure that each Comfort K9 and the respective handler completes the agency approved Comfort K9 Training and obedience certifications.
 - a. Comfort K9/Therapy K9 Training Course
 - b. AKC Good Canine Citizen Basic Certification
 - c. AKC Good Canine Citizen Advanced Certification
 - d. AKC Good Canine Citizen Urban Certification

Oakland County Sheriff's Office
General Order # 3.21

2. Any concerns regarding training should be addressed directly with the unit supervisor.
3. If a Comfort K9 continues to fail required training or certifications, a plan shall be made to transition the K9 out of service.
4. Handlers are required to work with their K9 daily to maintain the K9's obedience to commands.

G. Comfort K9 Deployment

1. The Comfort K9 will be an extension of the handler and accompany them as they perform their daily duties; unless unsafe for the handler, unsafe for the Comfort K9, or the Comfort K9 is likely to be a distraction to the specific task being conducted.
2. While Comfort K9's are assigned to specific areas within the agency, they may be requested to participate in details or respond to incidents, if available. Details may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Major/Traumatic Incidents
 - b. Grief, Loss, and/or Trauma Related Events
 - c. Crisis Intervention for both citizens and OCSO personnel/families
 - d. Natural Disaster Incidents
 - e. Victim Forensic Interviews
 - f. Criminal Investigation Interviews
 - g. Community Outreach and Engagement
 - h. School Demonstrations
 - i. Public Events
 - j. Medical Facility Visits (Hospitals, VA Clinics, Nursing Homes, etc.)
3. Request for Comfort K9's shall be directed to the Comfort K9 Unit Supervisor and Community Liaison through chain of command.
4. The below CLEMIS L-Codes for Comfort K9 details are to be used in Calls for Service and case reports.
 - a. L6340 - Comfort K9 Deployment
 - b. L6341 - Comfort K9 Presentation
5. The Comfort K9 handler will be compensated by comp time or overtime, when hired for details or providing *required* services (i.e. veterinary visits, in-person training) during non-duty hours, with approval from the Comfort K9 command.

H. Equipment

1. The Sheriff's Office will furnish all equipment necessary for the maintenance and deployment of a K9 to include collars, harnesses, beds, clothing within reason, etc.
2. It will be the responsibility of the K9 handler to see that the equipment is properly maintained and cleaned.

I. Training Certificates

1. All Comfort K9 handlers are to submit training certificates to the Sheriff's Training

Oakland County Sheriff's Office
General Order # 3.21

Unit.

2. The Sheriff's Training Unit shall track Comfort K9 training and certifications.

J. Incident Reporting

1. If a bite or injury occurs from a Comfort K9, the following shall be done.
 - a. The Comfort K9 shall be secured in a safe area immediately.
 - b. Emergency Medical Services shall be contacted and first aid rendered to the injured.
 - c. The Comfort K9 Supervisor shall be notified.
 - d. Injuries are to be documented in a report including photos of the injuries and witness statements.
2. The Comfort K9 Unit Supervisor shall be immediately notified of serious injury or illness of a Comfort K9.
 - a. The Comfort K9 veterinarian is to be contacted, and medical aid is to be administered without delay.

K. Transitioning Out of Service

1. Transitioning out of service may be appropriate when:
 - a. If a Comfort K9 fails to successfully complete the required training or certification(s); and it is deemed that additional training would not be beneficial to continue.
 - b. Recommendation for cause made to and approved by the Sheriff.
 - c. Recommendation by veterinarian and approved by the Sheriff.
 - d. Separation of the handler (in good standing) from the agency.
2. Recognizing the unique bond between the handler and the Comfort K9, the handler shall be given the first opportunity of adoption.
 - Pursuant to the Comfort K9 County Miscellaneous Resolutions, the handler can purchase the Comfort K9 for \$1.00.
 - If the handler declines adoption, it will be the responsibility of the Comfort K9 Unit Supervisor to find a suitable home within the community.



ISSUED BY: Sheriff Michael J. Bouchard