

Department Written Directives

3.01.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to describe the San Francisco Police Department's (Department's) written directives, assign written directive management responsibilities, and outline the process for their creation, revision, and maintenance.

Modern policing requires policies and standards that are clear, concise, regularly updated, and consistent with the law.

The framework outlined in this order will allow the Department to maintain the highest standard of professionalism by ensuring its directives remain timely, regularly updated, relevant, and compliant.

3.01.02 DEFINITIONS

- A. Annual Review List** – The document that determines and authorizes which Department General Orders (DGOs) will be created, amended, or rescinded during each calendar year, and identifies which DGOs require working groups. This list should not exceed 20 DGOs.
- B. Calendar Days (Days)** – All timelines in this document refer to calendar days, including federal and City holidays. When a timeline starts or ends on a holiday or weekend, the date is moved to the following business day.
- C. Limited Revision** – Narrowly scoped updates that make targeted changes (i.e., updating terminology, shifting responsibilities, making law-driven procedural adjustments, revising contact information, amending a single section, clarifying language, correcting references and citations, editing grammar and spelling errors, etc.).
- D. Recommendation Grid (Rec. Grid)** – A document used to capture Department responses to stakeholder and public feedback.
- E. Written Directive** – A document that details a procedural or operational standard for the Department that may apply to the entire Department or to specific units and are issued by the Policy Development Division (PDD).
 - 1. **Department General Order (DGO).** The most authoritative directive, outlining the Department's administrative and operational goals. They are general in nature so that officers in the field can easily recall procedures and provide services quickly and uniformly. DGOs have sustainable procedures that can be consistently enforced across

commands. DGOs are adopted by the Police Commission (per [San Francisco Charter § 4.102](#)) and remain in effect until amended or rescinded by the Police Commission.

2. **Manual.** An internal directive that outlines the Department's detailed instructions, protocols, and procedures for daily operations. Manuals are approved by the affected Deputy Chief(s) or Chief. Manuals are the practical application of DGOs and must comply with active DGOs.
3. **Department Notice (DN).** A Department-wide directive regarding administrative matters, legal or training updates, and operational changes that are effective upon issuance. DNs are approved by the Chief. DNs may not contradict or be used to amend active DGOs. DNs related to changes in law will remain in effect until superseded or rescinded. All other DNs must have an expiration date no more than 3 years from date of issuance.
4. **Bureau Order.** A directive applicable to operations within a specific Bureau, approved and distributed by the Deputy Chief. Bureau Orders cannot direct Department employees outside of the specific Bureau and must comply with active DGOs and Manuals.
5. **Unit Order.** An internal directive applicable to operations within a specific Unit, approved and distributed by the Commanding Officer. Unit Orders cannot direct Department employees outside of the specific Unit and must comply with active DGOs, Manuals, and Bureau Orders.
6. **Regulatory Standard/Compliance Directive.** A policy or procedure required by other governmental authorities (Cal/OSHA, Board of State and Community Corrections, accrediting bodies) which are periodically updated.
7. **Department Form (Form).** A standardized document used to capture and communicate information. Forms may be for internal or external use and are updated as necessary.

3.01.03 POLICY

The Department shall centralize the development and maintenance of its policies within the Policy Development Division (PDD) to ensure consistency across directives and compliance with state and federal law and City ordinances. Compliance with the development process as outlined in this order shall be overseen by PDD.

When adopting or revising policies, the Department shall minimize administrative burdens on patrol officers and reduce all recordkeeping and reporting requirements to the extent allowed by law in order to ensure their primary focus remains on public safety ([San Francisco Administrative Code § 96I.2 \(a\) & \(b\)](#)).

3.01.04 INVOLVED PARTIES

- A. **Chief of Police (Chief)** – Approves the Annual Review List in consultation with the Police Commission President and provides approval for Department-wide directives prior to Police Commission submission or publication.
- B. **Command Staff** – Leadership responsible for review of the final draft of a directive before the Chief's approval.

- C. Policy Development Division (PDD)** – The Department's designated authority for written directive management. PDD is responsible for drafting, revising, and maintaining directives, implementing the Annual Review List, controlling directive versions, and managing the working group process. All directive creation, modification, or publication must occur through PDD to ensure accuracy, accountability, and compliance with Department standards.
- D. Subject Matter Expert (SME)** – Department employee(s) appointed by a Deputy Chief or Executive Sponsor. The SME has operational knowledge relating to a specific policy. The SME's role is to act as a consultant to PDD during the policy drafting process.
- E. Executive Sponsor** – The Deputy Chief or Commanding Officer designated to approve timelines for directive development, assign SMEs, as requested by PDD, and provide DGO draft approval for Stages I through III.
- F. Working Group** – A group comprised of community members, Department employees, Department of Police Accountability (DPA), and other stakeholders, created and managed by PDD for the purpose of gathering input through a rec. grid about a specific DGO (see PDD Working Group Unit Orders and Chief's Directive on Working Groups).
- G. Concurrence Group** – Responsible for final review of the draft of a directive (via meeting or through electronic routing) prior to final approval. Concurrence group members differ based on the type of directive and are determined by PDD. Identified members are required to participate in the concurrence process.
- H. Police Commission (Commission)** – The oversight body with the Charter authority to review, adopt, or rescind policies at a public hearing. All official acts are adopted by majority vote (San Francisco Charter [§ 4.102](#) & [§ 4.109](#)).
- I. Department of Police Accountability (DPA)** – An outside city agency where one of several charter authorities is to provide policy recommendations to the Commission ([San Francisco Charter § 4.136 \(h\)](#)).

3.01.05 DGO DEVELOPMENT

[San Francisco Administrative Code § 96I.1 \(a\)](#) shall be followed, or waived per [San Francisco Administrative Code § 96I.1 \(b\)](#), before the Police Commission agendas any proposal to establish, modify, or abolish policies or procedures related to Department operations.

A. Initiation

1. **Annual Review List.** Drafted by PDD by December 1st based on internal review findings, Department surveys, discussions with Command Staff and specialized units, or DGO review cycles. Approved by the Chief, in consultation with the Commission President, no later than December 31st each year. Once approved, PDD will provide the Annual Review List to Department employees, the Commission Office, and DPA. PDD

shall submit the Annual list to the Commission Office for agendaizing in the first two meetings of the calendar year. If the Commission takes no action in those meetings, the list shall be deemed approved.

2. **Chief Initiated.** The Chief has the discretion, in consultation with the Commission President, to modify the Annual Review List at any point in the year. The Chief will notify PDD within 7 days of the determination. PDD will follow the development process as outlined in this order.
3. **Commission Initiated.** The Commission, by vote, may determine the need for a DGO to be created or revised, after following [San Francisco Administrative Code § 96L.1 \(a\)](#) requirements. This requirement may be waived per [San Francisco Administrative Code § 96L.1 \(b\)](#). The Commission Office will forward the Commission Resolution to PDD within 7 days of issuance. PDD will follow the development process as outlined in this order.
4. **Employee Initiated.** Any Department employee may request the creation or revision of a DGO via email to the Written Directives Unit (WDU) and their Deputy Chief. Granting requests will be at the discretion of PDD and the Chief of Police, in consultation with the President of the Police Commission.

B. Development

1. **Determine Timeline(s)**
 - a. **Approved Annual Review List.** PDD will recommend a start date and Stage I timeline for each DGO approved by the Executive Sponsor by February 1st of each year.
 - b. **Chief-Initiated.** PDD will recommend, with Executive Sponsor's approval, a Stage I timeline for the DGO within 10 days of the Chief's notification.
 - c. **Employee Initiated.** The PDD Commanding Officer will request the Executive Sponsor's identification of an SME and the development timeline for drafting within 10 days of the Chief's approval.
2. **Stage I – Drafting (65 days max.)**
 - a. **Notification.** PDD will notify the Executive Sponsor, SME, and DPA on the start date and provide the Stage I deadline.
 - b. **Information Gathering.** Within 20 days of the start date, PDD will seek:
 - i. Feedback from Department employees.
 - ii. Information from the Risk Management Office (RMO) and DPA about sustained complaints, policy failures, and recommendations relating to the DGO.
 - c. **Drafting.** PDD will incorporate feedback, research, and evidence-informed updates to complete a Stage I draft.
 - d. **Approval.** PDD will receive approval from the Executive Sponsor by the Stage I deadline.

3. Stage II – Stakeholder Feedback

- a. No Assigned Working Group (45 days max.)
 - i. **Notification.** Within 5 days of Stage I approval, PDD will send a Stage II commencement notification to the Executive Sponsor, SME, and DPA, providing the Stage II deadline and a blank rec. grid for DPA.
 - ii. **Drafting.** PDD will accept a rec. grid or DPA recommendations provided in accordance with [San Francisco Charter § 4.136 \(h\)](#) within 14 days of notification. If received within the timeframe, PDD will consult with the SME to determine which DPA recommendations, if any, will be included in Stage II draft and provide responses on the rec. grid.
 - iii. **Approval.** PDD will receive approval from the Executive Sponsor for the rec. grid and Stage II draft and send the completed rec. grid to DPA by the Stage II deadline.
- b. Assigned Working Group (140+ days)
 - i. **Notification.** Within 5 days of Stage I approval, PDD will announce the first working group meeting date.
 - ii. **Working Group.** The working group will meet over a maximum period of 120 days from the first meeting to provide feedback (via rec. grid) on the Stage I draft.
 - iii. **Drafting.** PDD will consult with the SME to determine which working group recommendations to include in Stage II draft and provide responses on the rec. grid.
 - iv. **Approval.** PDD will receive approval from the Executive Sponsor for the rec. grid and Stage II draft and post the completed rec. grid on the Department website within 14 days of the final working group meeting.

4. Stage III – Public Review (60 days max.)

- a. **Posting.** Within 5 days of Stage II approval, PDD will post the approved Stage II draft on the Department website for public review.
- b. **Public Review.** The comment period will be open for 30 days.
- c. **Drafting.** PDD will consult with the SME to determine what public feedback will be included in the Stage III draft and provide responses to every recommendation on the rec. grid.
- d. **Approval.** PDD will receive approval from the Executive Sponsor for the Stage III draft within 25 days of the end of the comment period.

5. Stage IV – Concurrence (30+ days)

- a. **Concurrence Date.** Within 5 days of Stage III approval, PDD will assign a tentative concurrence meeting date.

- b. **Concurrence Meeting(s).** Must conclude within 3 meetings. PDD will send the Stage III clean and redline draft to the concurrence group at least 3 days before the first meeting.
- c. **Drafting.** PDD will incorporate concurrence feedback in the Stage IV draft.
- d. **Close of Stage IV.** PDD will complete the Stage IV draft within 14 days of the last concurrence meeting.
- e. If a Stage II Working Group occurred, PDD will notify the working group of any substantive changes made during concurrence. This notification shall occur before Commission submission.

6. Stage V – Approval to Send to Commission (30 days max.)

- a. **Routing.** Within 5 days of Stage IV completion, PDD will begin routing the Commission Package to the appropriate parties for final approval with a deadline not to exceed 25 days from initiation of routing.
- b. Commission Package includes:
 - i. Stage IV completed draft (clean and redline version)
 - ii. Stage I, Stage II, Stage III rec. grids updated based on the changes made in concurrence and uploaded to the Department website
 - iii. Chief's waiver letter, if applicable ([San Francisco Administrative Code § 96L.1 \(b\)](#))
- c. **Submission to Commission.** PDD will email the approved Commission Package to the Commission Office, the Chief, and the Executive Director of DPA before the Stage V deadline.

7. Meet and Confer

- a. If applicable, following a closed session to consider labor union proposals, the designated Department employees who manage labor negotiations shall forward the final Commission-accepted proposals to PDD to document in the impacted DGO.
- b. PDD will submit a clean DGO reflecting the Commission-accepted proposals to the Commission Office within 7 days of receipt for scheduling final Commission adoption in open session.

- 8. **Issuance.** PDD will issue the DGO via DN, timed to align with the Commission-approved effective date.

C. Requests for Extensions or Process Deviations

- 1. **Extension Requests.** Requests must include the reason for delay, the current stage of development, the original deadline, and the proposed new deadline.
 - a. 30 Days or Less. Requests shall be submitted to the Chief.

- b. 31 Days or More. Requests shall be submitted to the Chief and the Commission President.
- c. The Chief is responsible for approving all extension requests and will notify PDD of the decision within 7 days of determination.

- 2. **Process Deviations.** Requests must include the proposed deviation and rationale for the change, the current stage of development, the original deadline, and the new deadline if the deviation is approved. The Chief is responsible for approving all process deviation requests and will notify PDD of the decision within 7 days of determination.

D. Limited Revisions – Any Department employee may request a limited revision by emailing WDU.

- 1. PDD will submit a request to the Chief and affected Deputy Chief that includes the scope of revision and proposed drafting timeline, not to exceed 40 days. The Chief will notify PDD of the decision within 7 days of receipt.
- 2. **Initiation.** Upon approval, PDD will confirm the SME and notify DPA about the revision, including the scope and timeline.
- 3. **Drafting.** PDD will work with the appropriate parties to draft, adhering to the approved scope of work and completed within the designated timeline.
- 4. **Approval.** PDD will follow Stage IV and Stage V of the regular DGO development process.
- 5. **Issuance.** PDD will issue the DGO via DN.

3.01.06 MANUAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Initiation – Deputy Chiefs may initiate a Manual in one of two ways:

- 1. **DGO Alignment.** The Deputy Chief will approve a request from the PDD Commanding Officer to initiate a Manual with a corresponding DGO on the approved Annual Review List.
- 2. **Deputy Chief's Discretion.** The Deputy Chief will notify PDD after determining the need for Manual creation or revision. Department employees may request the creation or revision of a Manual via email to WDU and their Deputy Chief.

B. Drafting

- 1. **DGO Alignment.** Manuals being written or updated in conjunction with a DGO will follow the same timeline and have the same SME as the DGO's development. Manual development does not have stages, but PDD will continue updating the Manual to align with changes made to the DGO throughout its development process and until the DGO is approved by the Commission for issuance.
- 2. **Deputy-Chief's Discretion.** PDD will recommend, with the Executive Sponsor's approval, a drafting timeline for the Manual, not to exceed 180 days.

- a. **Notification.** PDD will notify the Executive Sponsor and SME of the drafting timeline.
- b. PDD will request information from DPA about sustained complaints, policy failures, etc., relating to the Manual.
- c. **Approval.** PDD will receive approval from the Executive Sponsor by the drafting timeline's end.

C. Concurrence

1. Concurrence must conclude within 3 meetings.
2. If the Chief does not participate in concurrence, PDD will provide the concurrence-approved draft to the Chief for their review.

D. Meet and Confer - If applicable, PDD will route the Manual to the designated Department employees who manage labor negotiations and will make any necessary changes resulting from the Meet and Confer process with the affected labor union(s).

E. Approval & Issuance – The standard timeline for affected Deputy Chief or Chief final approval is 5 days, unless otherwise determined by the PDD Commanding Officer. Upon final approval, PDD will issue the Manual via DN.

3.01.07 ALL OTHER DIRECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

A. Initiation

1. Any Department employee may request a revision or creation of a directive that is not a DGO or Manual by emailing WDU and their Commanding Officer.
2. The authority to approve the initiation request rests with the Commanding Officer or the Deputy Chief of the affected Division/Bureau/Unit. The PDD Commanding Officer will request their approval, the identification of an SME, and the development timeline for drafting.

B. Drafting – If the requestor does not provide a draft, PDD will create one. If a first draft is submitted, PDD will review and revise it.

PDD will notify DPA during the drafting process if the primary subject matter of a DN is one of the following:

1. Fourth Amendment Issues
2. Bias and Bias-Free Policing
3. Body-Worn Cameras
4. Rights of Onlookers
5. DNs resulting from disciplinary investigations based on a referral from RMO

- C. Concurrence** – PDD will route to the appropriate concurrence group for electronic review. The standard timeline for concurrence group review is 5 days, unless otherwise determined by the PDD Commanding Officer.
- D. Meet and Confer** - If applicable, PDD will route the written directive to the designated Department employees who manage labor negotiations and will make any necessary changes resulting from the Meet and Confer process with the affected labor union(s).
- E. Approval** – The standard timeline for final approval is 5 days, unless otherwise determined by the PDD Commanding Officer.
- F. Issuance**
 - 1. **Regulatory Standards/Compliance Directives.** PDD will issue the directive via DN.
 - 2. **Other Directives.** PDD will send an email to affected employees, announcing the directive.

3.01.08 AGREEMENTS AFFECTING DIRECTIVES

Prior to executing any agreement (i.e., Memoranda of Understanding, Memoranda of Agreement, Labor Contract, etc.), that would impact or require divergence from a DGO, the Chief's Office, PDD, and other affected units as needed, shall meet to review terms and policy implications to determine the need to modify an existing written directive or create a new one.