

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF HAMILTON COUNTY

Austin Garrett, Sheriff



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

PRD - SOP (32)

HCSO PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

Updated: January 2025



Hamilton County Sheriff's Office

Public Relations Office

Mission Statement

"To promote the operations and activities of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office with integrity, consistency, accuracy, and respect"

PRD - SOP – 32 Version #4

Guidelines for the Public Relations Office and Release of Public Information

Table of Contents

1. Purpose
2. Mission
3. Structure of the Public Relations Office
4. Requesting Official Information from the HCSO Public Relations Office
 - a. Tennessee Open Records Request (TNORR)
 - b. Requesting Reports and Official Documents
 - i. HCSO Records Office
 - ii. General Sessions Court Clerk's Office
 - iii. Circuit Court Clerk's Office
 - iv. Mugshot Requests
 - v. Additional Information Requests
5. HCSO Press Releases (General Information / Requirements)
6. Qualifications for HCSO Press Release
7. Media Requests for Information (Weekends / After Hours)
8. Request for On-Camera Interviews
9. HCSO Crime Data Dashboard Operations
10. Sheriff's App Operations & Usage
11. Jurisdictional Questions
12. Warrants & Serving Warrants
13. Active & On-Going Investigations
14. Hamilton County Jail & Detention Center Operations
15. Fire Investigations & Fire Investigators
16. Crime Scene Perimeters & Access
17. Information Requests/Events/Incidents Not Covered under the HCSO PIO Jurisdiction
18. Officer Involved Shootings & Protocol
19. Death Investigations
 - a. Homicides
 - b. Suicides
 - c. Accident
20. Release of Information Regarding Deceased Parties

Table of Contents Continued...

21. Release of Information Regarding On-Going Criminal Investigations
22. Juvenile Cases / Investigations
23. Hospital / HIPPA Regulations
24. DRONE (UAS) System Operations
25. HCSO Frequently Used Acronyms
26. HCSO Ranks / Classification
27. Law Enforcement Terminology
26. Statement of Approval/ Signatures

Guidelines for the Public Relations Office and Release of Public Information

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) - 32

1) Purpose

To create a fair and equitable protocol for the release of public information to the community and to media representatives.

2) Mission

The mission of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office Public Relations Office is *"To promote the operations and activities of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office with integrity, consistency, accuracy, and respect"*

The HCSO Public Relations Office and its staff strive to be fair and impartial to all media outlets and citizens who request legitimate information pertaining to the daily activities and operations of this agency.

Neither the HCSO Public Relations Office nor its personnel are allowed to willingly offer information that can be used to jeopardize or endanger an active or on-going investigation, confidential information protected by law, judicial proceedings, or a victim or victim's rights.

3) Structure of the Public Relations Office

- The HCSO Public Relations Office consists of one full-time Public Relations Manager and one full-time Public Information Officer who are available during business hours Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm unless otherwise defined. A member of the Public Relations Office will be available on a limited on-call basis after hours, weekends, and on holidays.
- The HCSO Public Relations Office will make reasonable efforts to respond to inquiries regarding critical incidents after normal business hours in the evening/overnight/early morning hours, but those not of a critical nature will be addressed the next business day.
- The Public Relations Manager reports directly to the Sheriff of Hamilton County. All subsequent staff in the Public Relations Office report to the Public Relations Manager and ultimately the Sheriff and Chief Deputy.
- Media requests must be directed through the Public Relations Office. No Inquiries should be made directly to the Sheriff of Hamilton County, members of the Executive Staff, or personnel. Any inquiries made in an attempt to avoid the Public Relations Office or its staff cannot be guaranteed a response.
- In an effort to structure the method information is requested from the HCSO, the following standard operating procedure has been established.
- This standard operating procedure is part of the HCSO's Media Policy which has been approved by the Sheriff. The items in this SOP can be altered or changed by order of the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or in exigent circumstances.
- This SOP is designed so that the Public Relations Office and its staff may equitably and consistently address the requests received by the public or from media representatives.

- The HCSO Media Policy dictates that any employee who speaks to the media must have prior approval from the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or their direct supervision. Law enforcement personnel with the rank of sergeant or higher may also speak to members of the media as required without prior authorization. Any HCSO personnel who communicate with members of the media shall notify the Public Relations Manager or Public Information Officer to ensure the continuity and consistency of the information being provided.

4) Requesting Official Information from the HCSO

- **Tennessee Open Records Requests**

- Technically speaking, any request for information from a member of the media or from a private citizen can be, by law, treated as a Tennessee Open Records Request. Under the Tennessee Open Records Act (TNORR), once a request has been made, the HCSO has seven (7) working days to respond. Upon such request, normal fees for procurement of information and printing can be charged to the entity or person who requests said information.
- The HCSO reserves the right to treat any request from the media as a TNORR. The factors below are examples of when it may be necessary for the HCSO to respond to a media request for information as a TNORR as opposed to an immediate response from the Public Information Officer:
 - a. Lack of staff availability
 - b. The request for information will require extensive review and time to compile information
 - c. The request will require the printing of information
 - d. The request pertains to personnel records and other HR related issues
 - e. The request pertains to a closed Investigative Report (Closed)
- Tennessee Open Records should be directed to the HCSO General Counsel's Office via email at openrecords@hcsheiff.gov.
- The following information requests must be made to the HCSO via the TNORR process:
 - a. Requests for personnel records, service time, employment status, or salary
 - b. Requests for closed Internal Affairs Investigation Reports
 - c. Inmate Records (booking reports, phone/audio conversations and inmate medical records)
- The following information requests must be made either to the Hamilton County District Attorney or the HCSO General Counsel's Office.
 - a. Requests for dash cam, body cam, or any other type of official video record pertaining to an active or pending criminal case or investigation must be directly requested from the Hamilton County District Attorney's Office*

**If approved by the HCDA, the information will then be requested from the HCSO Information Services and will be supplied to the DA's office and ultimately to the requestor.*

- b. Requests for dash cam, body cam, or any other type of official video record that is not part of an active or pending criminal case or investigation may be requested directly from the HCSO's General Counsel's Office via the Tennessee Open Records process.

- **Requesting Reports and Official Documents**

- The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office Public Relations Office does not issue or supply reports or official documents. Incident reports from other law enforcement agencies are also not released through the HCSO Public Relations Office. All requests for records must be directed to the HCSO Records Office or the originating agency. The number for the HCSO Records Office is 423-209-7111.
- Incident reports can take up to (4) business days or longer to process depending on the circumstances of the incident, charges, or type of offense.
- Incident/Arrest Reports involving an on-going investigation may not be released through the Records Office until the conclusion of the investigation.
- Reports that have not been completed and released to the Records Office will not be issued to the general public or members of the media.
- Reports involving juveniles will not be released to the media or the public without court approval.
- The reports and official documents below should be requested from the following offices:

The HCSO Records Office is open Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Reports from this office are not issued on the weekends or after-hours. The following reports and official documents can be requested through the HCSO Records Office:

- 1) HCSO Incident Reports*
- 2) HCSO Arrest Reports*
- 3) HCSO Traffic Reports*

**(Please note, all HCSO internal reports can take up to 48 hours or longer to process through the system. The PIO cannot release information on reports until they have been approved, cleared, and issued to the Records Office.) Refer to section (ii)*

The media or citizens may pick up hard copies of HCSO incident reports, arrest reports, and accident reports at the HCSO West Sector located at 6233 Dayton Boulevard Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. As noted above, reports can be requested online.

Incident and Traffic Reports can also be requested online at <https://secure.hcsheriff.gov/irro/default.php>.

- The General Sessions Court Clerk's Office is open Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Reports from this office are not issued on the weekends or after hours. The phone number for the Sessions Court Clerk Office is 423-209-7600.

The following reports and official documents can be requested through this office:

1) Affidavits

- The Circuit Court Clerk's Office is open Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Reports from this office are not issued on the weekends or after hours. The phone number for the Circuit Court Clerk Office is 423-209-6700.

The following reports and official documents can be requested through this office:

1) Order of Protection

- Mugshot Requests

Local members of the media have access to the HCSO mugshot system. Mug shots are generally available within (1) to (2) hours after the booking process. The length of time it takes to book an inmate depends on the number of people ahead of them in the line to be booked, staffing levels, and in some cases, the priority level of the offender.

- The following items are available online 24 hours a day for the media agencies and residents:

Hamilton County Jail Booking Reports

http://www.hcsheriff.gov/cor/cor_booking.php

Inmate Information Online

<http://www.hcsheriff.gov/cor/iio/default.php>

Hamilton County Top 12 Most Wanted

http://www.hcsheriff.gov/most_wanted/most_wanted.php

Submit a Tip to Patrol Deputies

http://www.hcsheriff.gov/uniform_services/patrol_feedback/feedback.php

Tennessee Crime Online Statistics (Provided free via the TN Bureau of Investigation)

<http://www.tncrimeonline.com/>

5) **HCSO Press Releases**

- A press release issued by the HCSO Public Relations Office is an official informational document released to the media and the community via the HCSO's website and the HCSO's social media platforms. Press Releases are used to describe an incident, event, or as a notification of something newsworthy in the community.
- A press release that has been officially issued by the HCSO Public Relations Office has been vetted and approved by HCSO administration. A HCSO press release is the appropriate official notification issued from the HCSO to the community with the available facts as they are available at the time of release.

- When a press release states “*No Further Information is Available,*” no further information will be released at that time from the HCSO. In order to be fair, once a release has been issued, any reporter who requests additional information despite the notice on the release will not receive a response.

Having multiple reporters from one media organization calling routinely will neither speed up nor increase their ability to acquire additional information from the Public Relations Office.

6) Qualifications for HCSO Press Release

- The HCSO holds the right to voluntarily issue whatever information it deems necessary for public safety or for public information. Typically, the HCSO will voluntarily issue press releases on the following incidents:
 - Homicides (Except Suicides)
 - Aggravated assaults with a weapon:
 - Stabbing (this excludes minor lacerations)
 - Shootings (this excludes self-inflicted (suicide or accidental))
 - Aggravated robberies with serious/fatal injury
 - Officer Involved Shooting (fatal/non-fatal)
 - Pedestrian struck with critical or life threatening injury
 - Motor vehicle wrecks or accidents involving fatalities
 - Serial Crimes
 - Arrests, criminal investigations, or an Internal Affairs investigation that results in administrative leave of an employee of the HCSO
 - Prisoner Escapes from the Hamilton County Jail & Detention Center
 - Officer Pursuits where death or serious injury has occurred
 - SWAT Call-Outs that Involve Safety Issues for Citizens
 - Requests for Community Knowledge/Assistance (example: Missing Children/Wanted Individuals)

Please note, the list above is not comprehensive, but it does adequately represent the major crimes and incidents that often result in information being dispersed to the public, community concern, or requested information from media representatives. Media requests for information regarding the information above will be fulfilled after hours and on weekends as personnel availability permits.

7) Media Requests (After-Hours, Weekends & Holidays)

- a) Media requests for information regarding the issues below (Section 7 – Subsection B) will not be fulfilled after-hours, during weekends, or holidays.
- b) Information regarding the incidents below will be answered during normal business hours and are not considered critical public information requests necessary for public safety. Media representatives can make inquiries after-hours, but they will not be fulfilled until normal business hours.

- Statistical Information
- Agency Policies/Procedures
- Updates Regarding Ongoing or Previous Investigations
- Dog Bites (*non-life threatening*) - (*non-serious injuries*)
- Fires under investigation (*Initial info will be released by the HC Emergency Services*)
- Minor Traffic Accidents without critical injuries or death
- Domestic Calls involving non-life threatening injuries
- Stabbings involving lacerations (non-fatal non-critical injuries)
- Routine/Random Calls listed on the 911 Active Call List
- Officer pursuits where no serious injuries occur or death
- Arrests involving non-violent offenders
- Requests for agency records
- Non-Emergency Issues at the Hamilton County Jail & Detention Center

NOTES: There are exceptions to this list and official press releases on these issues can be issued based on law enforcement assessment and advisement.

8) Requests for On-Camera Interviews

- The HCSO understands that broadcast journalists/reporters desire on-camera interviews for incidents involving high profile incidents and news worthy events. In accordance with this, the HCSO will make every attempt to offer on-camera interviews when personnel are available and as the situation allows. Requests after hours, on weekends or holidays will be considered based on the severity of the incident/event and availability of personnel.
- Please note, the HCSO is not required to give on-camera interviews. They are offered as a courtesy when time and personnel are available.
- On-Camera interviews are not conducted on active/ongoing investigations. However, exceptions may be made based on law enforcement assessment and advisement.

9) HCSO Crime Data Dashboard Operations & Usage

- a) The HCSO provides an online Crime Data Dashboard that is maintained by our Crime Intelligence & Analyst Unit (CIAU). This free, online tool is extremely useful for members of the media and the public to locate various statistics related to crime data throughout the unincorporated areas of Hamilton County.
- b) The HCSO Crime Data Dashboard can be found by visiting our website at www.hcsheriff.gov or by clicking the following link:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/be2af81aa59045dcb8f58779d6931c9f>
- c) The Crime Data Dashboard is updated every 24 hours and provides information on law enforcement-related calls specifically based off incident reports. The information displays general incident statistics as well as charts and graphs that visually represent current and historical crime trends.

- d) While many agencies can provide general statistics upon request, our HCSO Crime Data Dashboard allows citizens the opportunity to view, 24 hours a day, important data broken down by crimes against persons, property, and society.
- e) When utilizing the new dashboard, citizens can choose, based on their preference, any area of the county in the unincorporated areas via a map, street, or zip code where they wish to see crime data and the information will be mapped to the block range of where the incident occurred.
- f) Once a search has been made, the user will initially see hot spots on the map, however as the user zooms in they will be able to see the crime by type.
- g) The data shown will include incident reports taken within the unincorporated areas of Hamilton County. However, some incidents may be visible within a local municipality's jurisdiction (e.g. Chattanooga Police Department) due to the fact HCSO personnel may have been the primary responding law enforcement agency to that specific incident or generated a report.
- h) Crime data can be selected by year or by specific month ranges, and the user will be able to utilize tabs located at the bottom left corner of the page to navigate to different categories of data and filters.

10) Sheriff's App Operation & Usage

- a) The HCSO provides a mobile app that can be downloaded for free by members of the media or the public by visiting your provider's app store and features important information, real-time alerts, access to press releases, and links to services to help make our agency more accessible to the public.
- b) The Sheriff's App offers residents the ability to search for active warrants, request an incident report, deposit funds for inmates, and submit important tips anonymously, including those pertaining to our schools.
- c) The app also allows citizens to download our annual report, view our agency's operational policies and procedures, learn about our Citizens Academy, DARE Program, view a contact directory of important county offices, and other items pertaining to public safety.
- d) The app can be downloaded from the Apple or Android Store for free by searching Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, Tennessee. The App can also be accessed via the following link from the appropriate app store at: <https://apps.myocv.com/share/a111937402>

11) Jurisdictional Questions

- The HCSO is the lead law enforcement agency in Hamilton County. It is managed by a sheriff who is elected by the residents of Hamilton County and is a Tennessee Constitutional Office.
- HCSO Deputies have jurisdiction over all of Hamilton County. They are able to operate in a law enforcement capacity within any of the municipal boundaries inside Hamilton County and the

State of Tennessee. However, HCSO deputies primarily patrol and respond to the unincorporated areas of Hamilton County. Police authority is typically deferred to the local municipal governing body unless otherwise noted or requested.

- Generally speaking, if a crime or incident takes place in a municipality within Hamilton County (i.e. Chattanooga, East Ridge, Collegedale, Soddy Daisy, Signal Mountain, Red Bank, or Lookout Mountain), that municipality's police department will address the issue.
- The HCSO will not comment on issues or incidents that fall outside our normal operations and purview. These types of events include gas leaks, structure fires, or law enforcement operations in other municipalities or counties.

12) Warrants & Serving Warrants

- As long as there is sufficient probable cause to obtain a warrant, any law enforcement officer/deputy in Hamilton County (including municipal officers) may swear out a warrant for criminal behavior, etc. providing a judge/magistrate has approved.
- Under the Tennessee Constitution, the local sheriff's office is directly responsible for issuing and serving warrants; however, as long as sufficient probable cause has been shown for a warrant to be issued, any municipal law enforcement officer or deputy may serve a warrant.

13) Active & Ongoing Investigations

Active investigations routinely occur in all law enforcement agencies. Investigations are the proper process of collecting evidence and testimony.

- a) During the period an investigation is being conducted, there can be sensitive and critical information gathered that cannot be released to the general public so as to prevent tampering with evidence, tainting jurors, or witnesses, etc. This includes individuals of interest, evidence that has been collected, dashboard video, body cameras, surveillance video, 911 calls, incident and arrest reports, sealed affidavits, and other means utilized by investigatory staff.
- b) Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct 3.8 (f) (located in the Tennessee Supreme Court Rules) states, *"(f) except for statements that are necessary to inform the public of the nature and extent of the prosecutor's action and that serve a legitimate law enforcement purpose, shall refrain from making extrajudicial comments that have a substantial likelihood of heightening public condemnation of the accused and exercise reasonable care to prevent employees of the prosecutor's office from making an extrajudicial statement that the prosecutor would be prohibited from making under RPC 3.6 or this Rule; and discourage investigators, law enforcement personnel, and other persons assisting or associated with the prosecutor in a criminal matter from making an extrajudicial statement that the prosecutor would be prohibited from making under RPC 3.6 or this Rule."*
- c) In accordance with 11 (b) above, the HCSO nor its people will make statements regarding ongoing investigations. If we do make comments about an incident involving our people, it can taint the investigation and have a negative impact on the rights of the suspect, the victim, or the employee.

14) Hamilton County Jail & Detention Center Operations (HCJDC)

- The Hamilton County Jail & Detention Center is operated by the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office as our only jail facility.
- HCSO Corrections Services is responsible for the day to day operation and staffing of the Hamilton County Jail & Detention Center.
- The Hamilton County Jail & Detention Center is supervised by the Deputy Chief of Corrections who reports to the Chief Deputy.

15) Fire Investigations & Fire Investigators

- a. As a matter of practice, the HCSO is informed of any residential or commercial fires that occur in the unincorporated areas of Hamilton County where the origin/cause of the fire is not easily determined or deemed to be suspicious in nature. *It is important to note that just because a fire investigator with the HCSO has been asked to investigate does not automatically mean that any criminal wrong-doing is suspected or has occurred.*
- b. Several municipalities have their own fire investigators including the City of Chattanooga, Tri-Community Fire Department, and the City of Red Bank, Tennessee.
- c. Fire investigations can take time and can require extensive work and review. The HCSO generally does not comment on fire investigations until the conclusion of the investigation. Media may obtain initial fire information from the Hamilton County Emergency Services/HCEMA PIO. If this is an ongoing investigation, the whole report cannot be released.
- d. Fire investigators are not called "Arson Investigators." Fire Investigators investigate a fire to determine the origin and cause of a fire to decide if the fire was accidental, natural, incendiary (arson), or undetermined. Fire Investigators are specially trained detectives working out of Investigative Services.

16) Crime Scene Perimeters & Access

- a) News media shall be allowed to come within a reasonable distance of scenes of crimes, fires, natural disasters or major catastrophic events as long as the media presence does not interfere with any law enforcement or rescue function or operation and do not cross any visible law enforcement boundary placed to protect the integrity of the scene or incident.
- b) News media shall obey sheriff's office identified boundaries and not cross them unless the incident commander or Public Relations Manager/PIO has given prior approval. News media representatives have no legal right to interfere with law enforcement operations at the scene of an incident or crime. News media will be allowed into areas in which the general public is allowed.
- c) Media representatives should not engage in photographing or videoing any deceased persons or other situations where the carnage or bloodshed has occurred as a matter of respect for the deceased and their family as well as the possibility of an ongoing investigation.

- d) Media representatives who do not obey established crime scene boundaries or who interfere with crime scenes or evidence may be subject to criminal charges.
- e) Media personnel may not park their vehicles where they block road access to the scene.

17) Information Requests/Events/Incidents Not Covered Under the HCSO Public Relations Office

The following incidents are not covered under the purview of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office or the HCSO Public Information Office:

- a) Incidents involving crimes/accidents occurring on Tennessee Waterways - Refer to the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA) PIO.
- b) Incidents involving Hamilton County EMS or fire departments serving the unincorporated parts of Hamilton County should be referred to the Hamilton County Emergency Services PIO.
- c) Serious incidents occurring on federal or state highways – Refer to the Tennessee Highway Patrol (THP)
- d) Incidents involving Public Health and Awareness – Refer to the Hamilton County/Chattanooga Health Department
- e) Incidents, events, or investigations occurring in other municipal law enforcement jurisdictions (*The municipality where the event takes place is who should be contacted*).
- f) Incidents involving statewide disasters and emergency incidents – Refer to the TN Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) or in some cases, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Local disasters can fall under the HCSO jurisdiction
- g) Cause of Death Reports are released by the Hamilton County Medical Examiner's Office, not the HCSO.

18) Deputy-Involved Shootings & Release Protocol

- Deputy-Involved shootings are priority calls which result in numerous requests for information from members of the media and garner intense interest/concern from the general public.
- The HCSO can be requested to work any officer involved shootings that occur in Hamilton County (*including within other municipal law enforcement boundaries within Hamilton County*) at the request of the Hamilton County District Attorney's Office.
- For officer involved shootings where the HCSO has been asked to investigate, a brief, initial statement (*either in person or written*) will be made to the media and the community at the onset of the shooting once enough information has been collected to inform the public. After the initial release, all additional information released regarding the shooting will be released by the Hamilton County District Attorney's Office at their discretion. No further details will be released from the HCSO as they are merely the investigative arm of the DA's office for that particular event.

- For HCSO related deputy-involved shootings where the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) has been requested to investigate, after an initial statement has been made to the media by the HCSO, any additional requests for information or incident details should be directed to the TBI Public Information Office.
- Any additional information following the initial statement from the HCSO will be released by the TBI PIO or the Hamilton County District Attorney as deemed necessary. Please note, under T.C.A. § 10-7-504(a)(2), all investigative records of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) shall be treated as confidential and shall not be open to inspection by members of the public.

19) Death Investigations

- Death Investigations can take several days, weeks, and even months.
- The HCSO will not release the name of a deceased victim until proper notification has been made to the family of the deceased. Please note, this can take several days. Notification to the next of kin will be conducted according to TCA 38-1-106.
- The HCSO will not comment on deaths ruled as suicides.
- Information regarding the cause of death is determined by the Hamilton County Medical Examiner (ME). ME Reports are not issued by the HCSO. They are issued by the Medical Examiner's Office
- The HCSO does not routinely offer information to the public regarding the following death investigations:
 - i. Accidental Shootings where no criminal act has been ruled to have occurred
 - ii. Suicides/Attempted Suicide (Adult or Juvenile)
- Information regarding Investigations that are ongoing to determine the cause of death of an individual will not be released until the following criteria is met either in part or as a whole:
 - i. The Hamilton County Medical Examiner will make the determination as to when they will release their findings to the public.

20) Release of Information Regarding Deceased Parties

- HCSO Investigative Services and Uniformed Services will provide media updates via the HCSO Public Relations Office related to the identity of victims after the next of kin have been properly notified as per TCA 38-1-106

TCA 38-1-106. Notification to next of kin -- Determination of "seriously injured".

- *(a) Law enforcement officers and employees of law enforcement agencies shall make a reasonable effort to promptly notify the next of kin of any person who has been killed or seriously injured in an accidental manner before any statement, written or spoken, is delivered or transmitted to the press by any law enforcement official, employee or agency, disclosing the decedent's or seriously injured person's name.*
- *(b) For the purposes of the notification requirements of this section, the investigating officer shall make the determination, based upon the officer's personal opinion, as to whether a person is "seriously injured." Neither the officer nor the officer's employer shall incur any liability based upon the officer's opinion as to whether a person is seriously injured or not.*

21) Release of Information Regarding On-Going Criminal Investigations

- a) Law enforcement investigative files are not public records. In 2016, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that law enforcement investigative records are not subject to disclosure under the Tennessee Public Records Act. In *Tennessean v. Metro Government of Nashville*, the Court held that investigative files are exempt from public disclosure under Tennessee Rule of Criminal Procedure 16(a)(1) and 16(b)(1).

Tennessee Supreme Court Opinion, 485 S.W. 3d 857 (March 2016)

(1) "Rule 16, as state law, controls the release of these records and provides for access to these records only to the parties to the criminal case—the State and the defendant. There is no provision in Rule 16 for release of discovery materials to the public."

(2) "We hold that, based on Rule 16, the Petitioners have no right to the requested information during the pendency of the criminal cases and any collateral challenges."

22) Juvenile Cases & Investigations

- The HCSO will not release the name of a juvenile victim or perpetrator unless told to do so by written permission from the Juvenile Court and/or under the authority of state statutes.
- In the course of an investigation, the HCSO may ask for the public's assistance in locating a juvenile suspect, and/or warn the public about a suspected juvenile criminal. The request for assistance/warning may be conveyed through the media by the Public Relations Office.
- The HCSO's statement about the juvenile(s) shall not contain any information about the juvenile's prior criminal history.
- If a charge of delinquency against a juvenile is transferred for criminal prosecution under T.C.A. § 37-1-134, information may be released by the Public Relations Office concerning the juvenile defendant in the same manner as if the defendant were an adult.

23) Hospital and HIPPA Regulations

- For security purposes, the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office does not release the name of the hospital where victims or injured parties are taken via EMS.
- The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office shall not release any personal medical history of any victim, injured party, or juvenile.
- Any questions regarding the status of an individual in medical care must be referred to the Communications Office of the hospital/facility where the victim or suspect is receiving medical treatment.

24) Drone (UAS) Operations

- The HCSO has an Unmanned Aerial Systems Unit (UAS) Unit (DRONE) comprised of personnel who are FAA trained and certified ground pilots. Each member of the UAS Unit has been extensively trained and has obtained the training and flight time necessary to qualify for an FAA Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) which allows the HCSO to establish an Unmanned Aircraft System.
- After completing the necessary training and flight hours deemed necessary by the FAA, the HCSO UAS Unit was granted a Blanket COA for mission operations in September of 2016.
- The HCSO UAS Unit can be deployed very quickly to react to a variety of incidents and events, including special events, crime scenes, traffic accidents, explosive ordinance disposal (EOD), searches, and photographic evidence collection of natural disasters.
- All HCSO UAS pilots are trained to follow all rules of evidence collection and any Images collected with the use of this technology are handled and retained within industry standards, consistent with images collected with any camera by law enforcement, and are subject to professional standards and codes of conduct including TCA code 39-13-609, the Freedom from Unwarranted Surveillance Act (use of drones to gather evidence or information). *As a result, case law has been established that guides our use and there is no effort here to use Unmanned Aerial Systems to circumvent well established 4th Amendment protections.*
- Airspace is controlled by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- Upon arrival on scene of any incident where local media may utilize a drone for footage, media representatives should contact the HCSO Public Relations Manager or PIO to inform them that media drones will be utilized. The HCSO PIO can then relay this information to the UAS Unit so as to ensure no damage or interference is caused that would affect official drones being utilized for law enforcement and/or emergency purposes.

- As a general rule, drones are not allowed to be flown in airspace cleared by FAA controllers for official emergency operations; However, special coordination measures may be granted for public safety agencies for shared airspace.
- Media representatives operating DRONES near emergency scenes should be mindful at all time of their proximity to emergency personnel and bystanders and should obey all applicable FAA guidelines and state law.
- Media DRONE pilots and station representatives should be respectful of incident scenes and avoid photographing/recording family members and the deceased.

25) Hamilton County Sheriff's Office Frequently Used Acronyms

- **CID** – Criminal Investigations Services
- **CIT** – Crisis Intervention Team
- **FUG** – Fugitive Services
- **HNT** – Hostage Negotiation Team
- **IT** – Information Technology
- **K-9** – K-9 Deputy/Unit
- **NAR** – Narcotics
- **NIT** – Narcotics Intervention Team
- **NSI** – Narcotics & Special Investigations
- **PIO** – Public Information Officer
- **PRM** – Public Relations Manager
- **SWAT** – Special Weapons and Tactics
- **SRD** – School Resource Deputy
- **SRO** – School Resource Officer (Non-HCSO Personnel)
- **SURT** – Sheriff's Underwater Recovery Team
- **TI** – Traffic Investigator
- **US** – Uniformed Services
- **UAS** – Unmanned Aerial Systems (DRONE)

26) Ranks and Classification

- The HCSO is a stand-alone constitutional office. Unlike police departments who generally have a chief appointed by an elected official such as a mayor or county executive, Sheriffs are elected by the general public and serve a (4) year term. Presently, there are no term-limits for Sheriffs.
- Therefore, the correct terminology in referencing is the HCSO is the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office. Our law enforcement personnel are not classified as "officers," rather they are referred to as "Deputies."

HCSO Ranks

- **Sheriff** – Central 1
- **Chief Deputy** – C/D
- **Deputy Chief** – D/C
- **Captain** – Cpt. [or] Capt.
- **Director** – Dir.
- **Lieutenant** – Lt.
- **Corporal** – Cpl.
- **Sergeant** – Sgt.
- **PSD** – Public Safety Diver
- **Civilian** – Non Law Enforcement Personnel
- **Sworn Civilian** – Civilian Personnel with law enforcement training and/or weapons authority

27) Law Enforcement Terminology

- **Arrest:** To take a person into custody, by authority of law, for the purpose of charging him/her with a criminal offense.
- **Arrest Warrant:** A written order issued by a judge/magistrate that directs a law enforcement officer to arrest a person and bring them to court.
- **B.O.L.O.:** Abbreviation for “be on the lookout” as applied to a suspect description. Can be a physical description of a person, what a person is wearing, a vehicle of interest.
- **Cause of Death:** A description of the specific factors leading to the termination of the biological functions that sustain life.
- **CALEA** – The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
- **CIAU** – Crime Intelligence & Analyst Unit
- **Citation:** An order issued by the police requiring a person to appear on a specific day and do something therein mentioned.
- **Child:** A person that has not yet reached the age of 13 years.
- **C.O.D.I.S.:** CODIS is an acronym for Combined DNA Index System, which is a computer software program that operates local, state, and national databases of DNA profiles from convicted offenders, unsolved crime scene evidence, and missing persons.
- **Detain:** The temporary holding of a person while officers/deputies question them prior to charges being formally issued or for safety precautions such as officer safety.
- **D.N.A.:** The abbreviation for deoxyribonucleic acid, which is the genetic material present in the cells of all living organisms. DNA is the fundamental building block for an individual's entire

genetic makeup. A person's DNA is the same in every cell (with a nucleus). DNA is contained in blood, semen, skin cells, tissue, organs, muscle, brain cells, bone, teeth, hair, saliva, mucus, perspiration, fingernails, urine, feces, etc.

- **D.O.A.:** Abbreviation for “dead on arrival” as applied to a person who expires before reaching a medical facility.
- **DOB:** Abbreviation for “date of birth.”
- **Detective:** A certified law enforcement member of the HCSO responsible for the follow-up and investigation of a crime.
- **EOD:** Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit.
- **Gang:** A gang is defined as three or more people who have a name or an identifiable leadership and engage in delinquent or criminal activity.
- **Juvenile:** a person listed under the law who has not reached the age of (18)
- **K-9:** A police dog that is specifically trained to assist police and other law enforcement personnel in their work. Their duties include searching for drugs and explosives, lost people, looking for crime scene evidence, cadavers, and protecting their handlers.
- **Large Law Enforcement Agencies:** Non-federal departments employing 100 or more fulltime sworn officers.
- **Law Enforcement:** The generic name for the activities of the agencies responsible for maintaining public order and enforcing the law, particularly the activities of prevention, detection, and investigation of crime and the apprehension of criminals.
- **LSW:** Abbreviation for “*last seen wearing*,” usually preceding a physical clothing description.
- **Manner of Death:** An explanation of how a person died, typically illustrated by a one word description of the intentions and circumstances that led to the stated medical cause of death. Essentially, the manner of death is the way in which death was caused and is typically listed as natural, accident, homicide, suicide, or undetermined.
- **Minor:** In the criminal context, a person under the age of 18 years. Also see juvenile.
- **Misdemeanor:** An offense for which the maximum term of incarceration is less than one year.
- **NIBIN:** National Database of Digital Images of Spent Bullets and Cartridge Cases that were found at crime scenes or test-fired from confiscated weapons. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) manages the system and provides the equipment to crime labs around the country.
- **Offense:** A violation of the criminal law of a state or local jurisdiction

- **Probable Cause:** Where known facts and circumstances, of a reasonably trustworthy nature, are sufficient to justify a man of reasonable caution or prudence in the belief that a certain person has committed, is committing, or is about to commit a criminal act.
- **SRD:** School Resource Deputy

28) Statement of Approval:

This Standard Operating Procedure has been approved by the following undersigned Hamilton County Sheriff's Office Command Staff and legal personnel and is hereby updated on September 22, 2021.

[OFFICIAL SIGNED COPY ON FILE WITH CALEA OFFICE]

Austin Garrett
Sheriff

Date