

Section 5: Security
Subject: Personal Observation Checks
Minimum Standard: 5120:1-8-03(B)(7)
Revised: 02/2016, 02/2017, 10/2019

Authorized: _____ **Effective date:** _____
Sheriff Paul A. Sigsworth

POLICY

Personal observation checks (POC) of inmates are the most important task routinely conducted by agency employees assigned to the jail. Shift supervisors will ensure that POC's are conducted in all areas of the jail where prisoners are housed at least every sixty (60) minutes on an irregular schedule. The time of completion of each POC check shall be properly documented on the jail activity log by the officer performing the check. The log entry will also indicate what specific area of the jail was checked, i.e.: A-Control, B-Control, E-Control, along with the last name of the officer(s) conducting the check and the condition of the area, i.e.: all secure.

DEFINITION

Officer—includes the Sheriff, any Deputy Sheriff, and any Corrections Officer whose primary job duty and/or assignment at any given time is to provide for the safety and security of the Erie County Jail.

PROCEDURE

All inmates shall be personally observed within all housing units at least once every sixty (60) minutes. Officer(s) assigned to perform POC's will personally verify, while performing this task, that each inmate being checked is present and is safe and secure. This verification will be confirmed by observing actual physical movement on the part of the inmate and/or other noticeable and documentable signs of life. POC's are conducted at irregular intervals so that inmates cannot anticipate the appearance of an officer, so that potential physical attacks on an officer and/or other illegal behavior cannot be planned in detail by inmates. Video and/or any other type of electronic monitoring, and observation(s) of an inmate/s by anyone other than an officer, will not suffice as a substitute for POC's. While POC's are generally conducted by Booking Rovers, shift supervisors will utilize any and all personnel at their disposal—including themselves—to ensure that POC's are conducted as mandated by this policy. If a POC is conducted late, the shift supervisor will note on the log the circumstances that resulted in the late POC.

- A. Personal Observation Checks, along with checking on each inmate, will include a brief physical inspection of each individual cell, pod, or dorm. The officer conducting the check shall check:
 1. Doors, locks, and windows for signs of tampering; locked cell doors will be physically pulled by the officer conducting the POC to ensure that they are latched and secured; and

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2. Cell walls, ceilings and vents for any signs of tampering or damage; and
 3. Plumbing fixtures and/or plumbing access doors; and
 4. Desk trays, clothes hooks, and cement stools (to ensure they are soundly attached to the wall or floor).
- B. During the cell inspection, officers will ensure that inmates have not covered any exterior window, door window, and/or light fixture with any object. Any officer locating any window or light fixture covering will treat that situation as a direct security violation and that officer is personally responsible to provide for the immediate removal of such item(s) and the institution of disciplinary action against the inmate responsible for covering the window/light fixture. In addition, no items will be stored on cell window sills.
- C. Along with the required POC's, during non-sleep hours the jail shift supervisor will ensure that officers regularly, but on a random basis, enter individual cells to provide a close inspection for any potential security and/or sanitation violations.
- D. Officers conducting POC's during sleep hours (generally 1900 hrs. to 0700 hrs.), after cell lights have been turned off, will use a flashlight to assist in verifying the inmate's presence and condition within the cell.
- E. Unusual inmate behavior or observations will be immediately reported to the shift supervisor, and the unusual behavior or observation will be properly documented in the inmate's record. Examples include:
1. Evidence of an otherwise undocumented assault, i.e.: recent cuts or bruises; and/or
 2. Signs of hostility or depression; and/or
 3. Refusing or failing to eat; hoarding food; and/or
 4. Signs of anxiety or other potential mental health issues; and/or
 5. Any other unusual inmate behavior.
- F. Any issue(s) with the structure of the facility and/or mechanical failure(s) that are discovered during a POC will be immediately brought to the attention of the shift supervisor and will be recorded in the daily log as well as in the form of a Discrepancy Report or Maintenance Request. A copy of any Discrepancy Report or Maintenance Request will be forwarded to the Jail Administrator for review. The following types of situations will be addressed in such fashion:
1. Doors and/or locks not working properly; and/or
 2. Plumbing or light fixtures not working; and/or
 3. Any evidence of tampering of locks, doors, windows, lights, bars, walls, etc.
- Regardless of the time of day, if any of the issues listed above are deemed to pose a direct threat to the safety and/or security of the jail or the inmates, immediate steps will be taken to have the issue addressed through appropriate repairs.
- G. Special Personal Observation Checks are instituted when additional surveillance of an inmate is required due to:
1. The inmate engaging in assaultive or combative behavior; and/or
 2. The inmate being deemed an escape risk; and/or
 3. The inmate exhibiting signs of mental health or emotional issues; and/or

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4. The inmate engaging in violent or disruptive behavior due to an intoxicated or drug induced state; and/or
5. Any condition that may warrant observation checks be conducted more frequently than the mandatory 30 minute Personal Observation Check.

When a Special Personal Observation Check is instituted, the following will apply:

1. Such check will be approved by the Shift Supervisor and the reason for the institution of the check will be documented in a jail narrative specific to that inmate; and
2. Such checks shall be conducted at least every 10 minutes at irregular intervals. These checks will be documented on a hand written Special Personal Observation Check Log that will be placed immediately adjacent to and outside of the cell where the inmate is confined; and
3. Except for the time frame, the procedures to be followed in conducting Special Personal Observation Checks are identical to those listed above when conducting Personal Observation Checks; and
4. When it is determined that an inmate is no longer required to be observed through Special Personal Observation Checks, a jail narrative specific to that inmate will be generated and the hand written log sheet(s) will be placed in the inmate's file.

END OF POLICY

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