

## **APRIL ROLL CALL TRAINING**

### **Jail High-Risk Critical Task- Inmate Grievances**

One of the most important tools for any jail is the grievance process provided to inmates in order to file complaints regarding conditions as well as events in the jail where the prisoner believes their rights are violated. By providing prisoners with a proper grievance process, jail administrators can resolve issues within the jail environment before the conditions or events lead to a full-blown lawsuit. Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) no action shall be brought with respect to prison conditions under section 1983 of this title, or any other Federal law, by a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted. Thus, a proper grievance procedure may greatly diminish the number of lawsuits brought by inmates. In fact, the PLRA was enacted to reduce frivolous lawsuits and to enhance the quality of those suits that are brought. The policy of the jail is to accept, investigate fairly, and respond in a timely manner to all prisoner grievances. In doing so the jail will respect the due process rights of all prisoners incarcerated in the jail.

All prisoners admitted to the jail shall be made aware of the grievance procedure during their initial orientation as well as in the jail's handbook. Prisoners shall be able to file their grievances in a secure and confidential manner, including remaining anonymous, and without a threat of retaliation. All prisoners shall have equal access to the grievance system. Grievance forms shall be readily available to all inmates. The Sheriff shall appoint a grievance officer who shall be responsible for the collection and investigation of all grievances. Inmate grievances must be filed in a timely manner in accordance with the inmate handbook rules and include a description of the event or condition giving rise to the grievance. In no case shall response to a grievance be delayed beyond five (5) days unless the prisoner has been notified and waived their right to a timely response.

**Scenario:** An inmate wishes to file a grievance about abusive conduct by a correctional officer. The inmate has experienced the abuse, as well as witnessed the officer abuse other inmates. The inmate wishes to file the grievance anonymously.

**Question:** Is the inmate allowed to file an anonymous grievance?

**Answer:** Yes. Prisoners shall be allowed under the grievance procedure to file the grievance in a secure and confidential manner. Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), an inmate must first exhaust the grievance process, to include the appeal process, before filing a federal lawsuit. The entire process should be explained in the prisoner handbook.