



CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRAINING COMMISSION POLICY MANUAL



	Chapter 6 Policy 01 Canine Certification Requirements	Revised: 01/31/2020
Authorizing Source: WAC 139-05-915		Applies to: All Staff

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to set the requirements of certification for law enforcement and corrections canine teams pursuant to WAC 139-05-915. To include certification, expiration of certification, recertification of teams, record keeping, and maintenance training. These rules are intended to set minimum standards of performance for the certification of canine teams, in their assigned disciplines, which are used for law enforcement or corrections purposes.

This process is not related to nor does it have any effect upon the requirements for peace officer certification. Nothing in these rules is intended to limit the use of canine teams employed by other state or federal agencies for law enforcement purposes, or the use of volunteer canine teams where the handler is not a Washington peace officer, Washington tribal officer, or corrections officer.

II. DEFINITIONS:

Alert - A change of behavior or indication, recognized by the handler, when the canine encounters a trained odor.

Canine team - A specific dog handler and a specific canine controlled by that officer in the capacity of handler, formally assigned by the employing agency to work together in the performance of law enforcement or corrections duties. The handler and the canine will be considered as a team and it will be the team that is certified; if one member of the team changes, a new team exists, and the new team will need to be certified.

Decoy – The actor portraying a suspect for training purposes. Given the possibility of injuries, it shall be the responsibility of the actor to obtain permission/consent from their employer prior to participating as a decoy.

Dog handler - Any fully commissioned Washington state certified peace officer, Washington state certified tribal police officer, or corrections officer of a state, county, city, municipality, or combination thereof, agency who is responsible for the routine care, control, and utilization of a police canine within a law enforcement or corrections assignment.

Evaluator - A full time Washington state certified peace officer, certified tribal police officer, or corrections officer who has a minimum of four years of experience as a dog handler and who has been recognized as a trainer of canines by a professional organization of police and/or corrections dog handlers/trainers and subsequently approved, by the commission, as an evaluator with expertise in canine training of a specific police canine subject for the purpose of evaluating and certifying dog handlers and canines to work as a canine team.

Experienced Handler – A handler who has previously received the minimum training hours as specified in the current CJTC canine certification requirements in the discipline in which they are certifying in.

False response / alert – A final response by the dog that the handler believes is an alert and/or the handler calls it as a find and/or attempts to reward when there is no target odor present.

Inexperienced Handler – Does not meet the definition of experienced canine/handler as listed above.

Training - Any structured classroom or practical learning exercise conducted, evaluated, and documented by an experienced dog handler or trainer, certified as an instructor with recognized expertise on canine subjects associated with the development of the trainee's competency in the care, control, and utilization of a police canine.

Walk - The dog has a change of behavior, works to source, pinpoints, and moves on without giving a final response.

III. POLICY:

- A. Expiration of canine team certification – Each certification issued pursuant to these rules will remain valid for twenty-four (24) months, as long as the composition and responsibility of the canine team does not change.
 - 1. A canine team certification shall automatically expire if the specific handler and canine, originally paired at the time of certification, cease to perform canine team functions together or if the function for which the team was certified changes. Using an approved form within 60 days of the team ceasing to function, the agency must notify the commission that the team has disbanded.
- B. Expiration of certification – Each certification issued pursuant to these rules will remain valid for sixty (60) months, with exception to the evaluator separating from employment as a state certified peace officer, Washington State certified tribal police officer, or corrections officer of a state, county, city, or municipality.
- C. Initial Certification – The canine handler shall submit an application, as prescribed by the Commission, certifying the team has successfully completed the evaluation as prescribed. Upon receipt of the application, the Commission shall certify the canine team.
- D. Maintenance training – Best practice dictates the canine team should conduct regular objective-oriented training sufficient to maintain operational proficiency. Maintenance training is meant to sustain and enhance the performance of the handler, canine, and the canine team.
 - 1. The canine team should spend an average of four hours per week in routine training to maintain the proficiency level of the team.

2. Routine maintenance training, conducted by the handler to maintain the canine's proficiency and to reinforce odor recognition is an acceptable form of training but may be combined with supervised training on a regular basis. Supervised training is conducted by a qualified trainer other than the handler, in order to improve performance, identify and correct training deficiencies. Performing proficiency assessments is considered a best practice.
- E. Recertification – A canine team shall be evaluated prior to their certification expiration date to maintain their certification.
1. The canine handler shall submit an application, as prescribed by the Commission, certifying the team has successfully completed the phases of this evaluation. A separate application is required for each discipline. Upon receipt of application, the Commission shall certify the canine team.
- F. Recordkeeping – Each agency is required to keep training, performance, and identification records on canines. The records must stay with the agency responsible for the canine team. The records will be made available for review in the event that the canine is sold or transferred to another agency.
1. The records will include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Microchip number (if applicable);
 - b. Canine's name;
 - c. Breed;
 - d. Training records;
 - e. Certification date;
 - f. Date acquired or purchased;
 - g. Source from which the canine was acquired;
 - h. Purpose, use, or assignment of canine;
 - i. Handler's name;
 - j. The date and reason the canine was released from service; and
 - k. Copies of all incident reports in which use of the canine resulted in the use of force.
 2. These records must be retained for a period of one year from the date the canine is removed from active service unless a longer retention is required by statute or local ordinance.
 3. It is the responsibility of the handler to advise their employing agency of the fact that they have met the standards for canine certification. The proof of certification with the evaluator's signature along with a request for canine certification must be submitted to the commission by the employing agency. This will be considered as a request for certification. Upon verification that the minimum requirements have been met, the commission will issue certification to the canine team.

4. It is recommended that a canine intended for use by a law enforcement or corrections agency, be positively identified by having a microchip medically inserted in the canine. Any canine that is sold by a vendor to a Washington state governmental agency for use as law enforcement or corrections canine should be able to be identified by microchip placed in the canine at the vendor's expense prior to the canine being sold to the law enforcement or corrections agency. Once the microchip has been inserted, it is recommended that it not be removed except for medical necessity. If it becomes necessary to remove the microchip, the reason for the removal must be documented and entered into the canine's training records and a new microchip inserted, if medically appropriate.
- G. Reevaluation – A detection team who fails to locate/indicate on one aid during the certification may be tested again the same day, if the Evaluator rules that the miss is the handler's error and requires no additional training of the canine. All other certification failures require the team reschedule another certification on a later date. All decisions made by the Evaluators are final.