

COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S MERIT BOARD

Sheriff of Cook County)
)
vs.)
)
Sonjia L. Dennis-Brown)
Correctional Officer)

Docket # 1783

DECISION

THIS MATTER COMING ON to be heard before Merit Board Member John J. Dalicandro pursuant to notice, the Cook County Sheriff's Merit Board finds as follows

Jurisdiction: The Respondent, Sonjia L. Dennis-Brown, hereinafter "Respondent". Respondent's position as a Correctional Officer involves duties and responsibilities to the public; and
Each member of the Cook County Sheriff's Merit Board, hereinafter "Board," has been duly appointed to serve as a member of the Board pursuant to confirmation by the Cook County Board of Commissioners, State of Illinois, to sit for a stated term; and
The Board has jurisdiction of the subject matter of the parties in accordance with Chapter 55 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes; and
The Respondent was personally served with a copy of the Complaint and Notice of Hearing and did not appear before the Board to contest the charges contained in the complaint; and
The Board has heard the evidence presented by the Sheriff and the Respondent, and evaluated the credibility of the witnesses and supporting evidence. After considering the evidence, the Board finds as follows:

Background

By complaint dated September 30, 2014, (Amended Complaint dated January 15, 2015) Sheriff Thomas J. Dart, sought the termination of Correctional Officer Sonjia L. Dennis-Brown.

1. The complaint states that on November 18, 2002, the Respondent was appointed a Correctional Officer.
2. That on November 21, 2006, the Respondent was assigned to Division IX of the Cook County Department of Corrections ("CCDOC"), 2834 W. 31st Street, Chicago, Illinois 60608.
3. That between 2011 and 2014, Respondent associated with CCDOC detainee [REDACTED] a person she knew or should have known was a convicted felon and street gang member.
4. That between 2011 and 2014, Respondent failed to report to the Cook County Sheriff's Office ("CCSO") that she associated with detainee [REDACTED], a person she knew or should have known was a convicted felon and street gang member.

5. That between 2011 and 2014, Respondent failed to report to the CCSO that the fathers of her children, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] also known as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], were in the custody of the CCDOC.
6. That between 2011 and 2014, Respondent's personal cellular telephone number was and is [REDACTED].
7. That in 2011, Respondent was contacted via telephone by the following CCDOC detainees while incarcerated within the CCDOC: [REDACTED] two (2) times; [REDACTED], one (1) time; and [REDACTED] ten (10) times.
8. That in 2012, Respondent was contacted via telephone by the following CCDOC detainees while incarcerated within the CCDOC: [REDACTED] five (5) times and [REDACTED] four (4) times.
9. That in 2013, Respondent was contacted via telephone by the following CCDOC detainees while incarcerated within the CCDOC: [REDACTED] four (4) times and [REDACTED] one (1) time.
10. That in 2014, Respondent was contacted via telephone by the following CCDOC detainees while incarcerated within the CCDOC: [REDACTED] seventeen (17) times.
11. That between 2011 and 2014, Respondent failed to report to the CCSO that current and former CCDOC detainees contacted her on her personal cellular telephone a total of forty-five (45) times.
12. That between June 25, 2011 and June 24, 2014, Respondent utilized the CCDOC Incarceration Management and Cost Recovery System ("IMACS") for personal use and not in the performance of her official duties by conducting inquiries of CCDOC detainee [REDACTED] a total of twenty-eight (28) times during dates when detainee [REDACTED] was either not in the custody of the CCDOC and/or housed in Division IX.
13. That on December 24, 2013, Respondent completed and submitted the Known Criminal Organization/Gang Membership Disclosure form and failed to disclose her association with known street gang members.
14. That on May 20, 2014, detainee [REDACTED] [REDACTED] while in the custody of the CCDOC, placed a telephone call to [REDACTED], a telephone number registered and verified to [REDACTED]. A recording of a telephone conversation from the Securus System on May 20, 2014 reveals detainee [REDACTED] telling an unknown male who identifies himself as being "[REDACTED]" to call his "Baby Momma." The unknown male asks, "Who is your baby momma?" and detainee [REDACTED] responds, "Sonjia [REDACTED]." The unknown male places a telephone call to Respondent on another telephone while remaining on the phone with detainee [REDACTED]. In that telephone call, Respondent agrees to contribute \$200-300 towards detainee [REDACTED] bond money. Respondent failed to report this telephone call to the CCSO.
15. That on June 2, 2014, Respondent was interviewed and provided a signed statement to investigators from the Cook County Sheriff's Office of Professional Review ("OPR"). Respondent stated that she has reviewed the CCSO Rules and Regulations and General Orders.
16. That on June 2, 2014, Respondent admitted to investigators from the OPR that her cellular telephone number is [REDACTED].
17. That on June 2, 2014, Respondent was shown and acknowledged her signature on the CCSO Known Criminal Organization/Gang Membership Disclosure. Respondent acknowledged that the form was completed to the best of her knowledge on December 24, 2013.

18. That on June 2, 2014, Respondent falsely reported to investigators from the OPR that to the best of her knowledge detainee [REDACTED] was not a gang member. Respondent was shown photographs of detainee [REDACTED] posing while displaying hand gang signs and Respondent again stated that she did not have any knowledge about detainee [REDACTED] being a member of a gang.

19. That on June 2, 2014, Respondent admitted to investigators from the OPR that she never reported or documented that detainee [REDACTED] was the father of her two daughters.

20. That on June 25, 2014, Respondent was interviewed and provided a signed statement for the second time to investigators from the OPR. OPR investigators played a recorded conversation from May 20, 2014 and Respondent stated that she recognized the voices in the recorded conversation to be that of detainee [REDACTED] and an individual known as "[REDACTED]" and also "[REDACTED]." Respondent also stated that she recognized the female voice on the recorded conversation as being her voice. Respondent falsely reported that she did not state to "[REDACTED]" during that recorded conversation that she would contribute \$200-300 towards detainee [REDACTED] bond.

21. That on June 25, 2014, Respondent stated to investigators from the OPR that she between June 2011 and June 2014 she looked up detainee [REDACTED] on IMACS to see if he had been locked up for the following reasons: "for smoking a blunt, kicking in her door, when her television units came up missing and when her friend's car windows were busted out." Respondent also stated that she was checking to see if detainee [REDACTED] was in custody each of the times she used IMACS to look him up.

22. That Respondent and detainee [REDACTED] were photographed together and this photograph was posted on the social media website Facebook while detainee [REDACTED] was on parole status from the Illinois Department of Corrections.

23. That on or about October 4, 2014, detainee [REDACTED] while in the custody of the CCDOC, placed a telephone call to [REDACTED]. A recording of a telephone conversation from the Securus System on October 4, 2014 reveals [REDACTED] talking to Respondent for approximately 7 minutes. Respondent failed to report this telephone call to the CCSO.

24. That on or about October 13, 2014, detainee [REDACTED] while in the custody of the CCDOC, placed a telephone call to [REDACTED]. A recording of a telephone conversation from the Securus System on October 13, 2014 reveals [REDACTED] talking to Respondent for approximately 10 minutes. Respondent failed to report this telephone call to the CCSO.

25. That on or about December 8, 2014, detainee [REDACTED], while in the custody of the CCDOC, placed a telephone call to [REDACTED]. Respondent failed to report this telephone call to the CCSO.

That by her actions, Respondent violated the Rules and Regulations and General Orders of the Cook County Department of Corrections, specifically:

GENERAL ORDER 3.8 (effective date: 10-01-98)

RULES OF CONDUCT, in its entirety, including but not limited to, the following subparts:

I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cook County Department of Corrections (CCDOC) that employees will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner, both on and off duty. Employees will

not engage in activities unbecoming of county employees, or conduct that reflects unfavorably to the Office of the Sheriff of Cook County.

II. PROCEDURE

A. Purpose

The purpose of this General Order is to establish written policy and guidelines that describes personnel ethics and standards for sworn and civilian employees while employed by the Office of the Sheriff of Cook County.

B. Applicability

This General Order is applicable to all divisions and operational units within the CCDOC. All key manual holders will familiarize themselves with the contents of this directive, review the contents of this order with all employees under their supervision as appropriate, and ensure the provisions as outlined are strictly adhered to.

III. REQUIREMENTS

The CCDOC Code of Ethics requires the highest level of conduct from all employees. It is the expectation that sworn and civilian employees conduct themselves with high standards of professional conduct and behavior. Employees that fail to maintain high standards of conduct and ethics, will be subject to corrective or disciplinary action, and may include recommendation for termination.

A. Compliance with Laws and Regulations

4. Employees will comply with lawful departmental rules, written directives, bulletins, and verbal orders issued by the proper authorities.

B. General Standards of Conduct

7. Employees will utilize department equipment, property, and services only as authorized for their job assignments and in the performance of their official duties.

18. No employee will frequent any establishment or knowingly associate with persons having known criminal records that would bring discredit to the department, except when properly authorized to do so.

D. Professional Conduct

6. Employees will maintain professional demeanor while on duty and will refrain from engaging in off-duty behavior that would reflect negatively on the department.

F. Confidential Information

Employees will preserve the integrity of confidential information, and will not seek data on individuals beyond that needed to perform their official responsibilities, nor reveal non-public data unless expressly authorized to do so.

1. No employee will use confidential information obtained in the course of official duty for actual or anticipated gain.

2. An employee found guilty of dispensing confidential information may be prosecuted in accordance with agency rules and state or federal statutes, as well as subject to departmental disciplinary action.

G. Reporting Code Violations

It shall be the responsibility of every employee to immediately report to their divisional Superintendent/Unit Head and the department Internal Investigations unit verbally and in writing, any fact or situation which may give rise to or be construed as corrupt, illegal or unethical behavior and/or a possible conflict of interest. This shall include, but not be limited to,

reporting anything which could impair the employee's performance of their duties in a fair and impartial manner.

SHERIFF'S ORDER 11.2.20.0 (effective date: January 25, 2013)

RULES OF CONDUCT, in its entirety, including, but not limited to, the following subparts:

I. PURPOSE

This order establishes basic rules of conduct to be followed by all employees of the Cook County Sheriff's Office (CCSO).

II. POLICY

The CCSO serves the citizens of Cook County by performing law enforcement functions in a professional manner, and it is to these citizens that the CCSO is ultimately responsible. Employees of the CCSO shall conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner both on and off duty. Employees shall not engage in activities that reflect unfavorably on the CCSO but shall instead serve to further the mission of service.

III. APPLICABILITY

This order is applicable to all employees of the CCSO and is for strict compliance. Any violations of this Sheriff's Office may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Any conflicts with existing directives shall be resolved in favor of this order.

VI. RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR ALL SWORN AND CIVILIAN CCSO EMPLOYEES

A. Compliance with Laws, Ordinances, and Regulations

2. Employees shall comply with lawful rules, Sheriff's Office written directives, verbal orders, SEAM articles, and political prohibitions issued by the proper authorities.

4. Employees shall disclose any and all current or past memberships and/or Associations with any Known Criminal Organization or street gangs as defined by the Illinois Street gang Terrorism Omnibus Prevention Act by following the procedures outlined in the CCSO directive regarding Known Criminal Organization Affiliation Disclosure.

B. Conduct on and off duty.

CCSO employees shall:

1. Maintain a professional demeanor while on duty and will not engage in off-duty behavior that would reflect negatively on the CCSO.

2. Conduct themselves on and off-duty in such a manner to reflect favorably on the CCSO. Employees, whether on or off-duty, will not engage in conduct which discredits the integrity of the CCSO, its employees, the employee him/herself, or which impairs the operations of the CCSO. Such actions shall constitute conduct unbecoming of an officer or employee of the CCSO.

D. Prohibited associations, establishments, and activities.

CCSO employees shall not:

1. Engage in known criminal activities; or join or continue to be a member of a known criminal organization that shares a common purpose in furtherance of illegal activity.

9. Except in the performance of official duties or where unavoidable because of Family Relationship, engage in regular or continuous associations or dealings with persons whom they know, or should know, are persons who are:

- a. Under criminal investigation or indictment; and/or
 - b. Who have a reputation in the community or the department for present or past involvement in felonious or criminal behavior.
23. Commit acts that jeopardize security of CCSO facilities or the health, safety and welfare of subjects, employees, visitors, or the public.
25. Fail to cooperate or fail to be truthful with external and/or internal agencies in an investigation of a criminal or civil matter.

G. Confidential information.
CCSO employees shall:

- 3. Not seek data or utilize CCSO databases for information specific to individuals beyond that needed to perform their official responsibilities, nor reveal non-public data unless expressly authorized to do so by the appropriate department head.
- 4. Not use confidential information obtained in the course of official duty for actual or anticipated personal gain.
- 5. Not use their position with the CCSO to obtain otherwise confidential reports, files, etc. for personal use.

H. Reporting violations.

2. It shall be the responsibility of every employee to immediately report to OPR and his/her immediate supervisor (or a supervisor of his/her choice within his/her Chain of Command) verbally and in writing, any fact or situation which may give rise to or be construed as corrupt, illegal, or unethical behavior, and/or a possible conflict of interest.

4. Employees are prohibited from making a false report, written or oral.

I. Cooperation within the CCSO and with other agencies.

CCSO employees shall:

- 1. Truthfully answer all questions, provide proper materials, and provide truthful and relevant statements when the employee is involved in an investigation, either as the subject or not, as long as the employee's rights are preserved.
- 2. Not interfere with or obstruct any investigation by destroying, altering, concealing, or disguising real evidence, or by planting false evidence or furnishing false information to lawful authority.

Furthermore, the Respondent's actions violated the Rules and Regulations of the County Sheriff's Merit Board, specifically:

COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT MERIT BOARD RULES AND REGULATIONS, in its entirety, including, but not limited to, the following subparts:

Article X, Paragraph B

No Police Officer of the Cook County Sheriff's Police Department, Correctional Officer of the Cook County Department of Corrections or Deputy Sheriff of the Cook County Sheriff's Court Services Department will:

- 3. violate any of the general orders, special orders, directives, or rules and regulations of the Cook County Sheriff's Office;

Issues Presented: Whether the actions of the Respondent violated any of the General Orders and Rules and Regulations set forth above and what if any discipline is appropriate if a violation occurred.

Findings of Fact: Evidentiary hearing on this matter was held on May 1, 2015, July 1, 2015 and August 11, 2015. Present were Assistant State's Attorney [REDACTED] on behalf of the Sheriff. [REDACTED] appeared on behalf of respondent.

Witnesses testified for the Sheriff,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Witnesses for the Respondent,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified, He is currently assigned to Division 1 at the Cook County Department of Corrections he is a Sergeant on the 3:00 to 11:00 shift. In 2014 he was an OPR investigator and he did investigate Sonjia Dennis Brown's case, regarding her associations with detainees. He recovered 84 photographs from Officer Dennis-Brown Facebook profile as well as photographs off of detainee [REDACTED] Facebook and Myspace accounts. (Joint Exhibit 1).

The office of Professional Review had not received any written or verbal reports from Sonjia Dennis-Brown regarding any contact or associations with detainees prior to OPR giving her a notice of their investigation.

IMAC is the computer system used by the jail for managing inmates, housing assignments, disciplinary reports, incident reports. IMAC is considered CCDOC equipment and the information that's contained in IMAC is considered confidential and privileged.

It is a violation of the Sheriff's rules to use IMAC for non-work-related purposes.

CROSS EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified he was not sure if all of the officers were given any training on appropriate use of the IMAC system. He was given training, he doesn't know if Sonjia Dennis-Brown underwent IMAC training.

In review of the Facebook photographs he testified that they were pictures of Sonjia Dennis-Brown and [REDACTED]. These photographs were taken from her facebook account as well as [REDACTED] and others. He testified that on Facebook, you can post a photograph, or any other item for that matter, and you can actually pull somebody else into it as far as linking their account to the photograph.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified; He is employed with the Inspector General's Office. He is assigned to the telephone and video monitoring unit. The Cook County Department of Corrections record calls made by detainees. He reviewed the call detail report from phone number [REDACTED] of Sonjia Dennis-Brown, from the dates of January 1, 2007, through April 13, 2012. Inmate [REDACTED] called respondent on August 4, 2011, at 08:08 a.m. and it lasted for 834 seconds. The second call was also on August 4, 2011, at 18:08 hours and it lasted for 740 seconds. He also reviewed the call detail report from inmate [REDACTED]. In all 45 calls were made to Sonjia Dennis-Brown's telephone number. (Sheriff's Exhibit 2)

CROSS EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified; by providing detail on the information on the call log. The left-hand column site "Cook County, IL" means the call was generated from the Cook County Department of Corrections. "[REDACTED]," designates a particular telephone on the DOC compound from which the call is made. Duration is the time the inmate picks up the cradle and is dialing as well as time speaking. The account number is the inmate's I.D. number. In 2008, the prompt would have been approximately 45 seconds long. It would say, "This is a call from...", and then the inmate would be given a 3-second window to speak his or her name. "This is a call from an inmate at the Cook County Department of Corrections. Be aware of unlawful activity. The call is subject to monitoring/recording." There is 45 seconds from the time that the inmate picks up the cradle until the time the inmate puts the cradle back on the receiver. None of the phone calls were 45 seconds or longer on page 2 of the call log. "Dialed Number Restriction." means the number's blocked. "Phone company block." is someone called their phone company and requested that number to not receive calls from the jail, and the recipient's phone company forwards those lists to Securus, the vendor. Call logs do reflect that the recipient Sonjia Dennis-Brown requested from her phone company that calls from this phone be blocked from calls from inmates. The calls from inmate [REDACTED] indicate that the recipient either did not accept the call or never picked up the calls.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] called as a witness and testified. He is a lieutenant with the Sheriff's Office. He is currently assigned to the Sheriff's Bureau of Information and Technology. The IMAC system was our previous jail management system. In IMAC an officer could get general housing, current location, case information, bond information, next court date; his general identifiers like his CID numbers, FBI, IR number, date of birth. It also contains case disposition. An officer can look up an inmate on IMAC, they can see that that inmate was sent to IDOC. IMAC tracks all the searches that are run on inmates.

It's a regular practice of the Sheriff's Office to maintain an audit history. Sonjia Dennis-Brown from January 1, 2011, to September 12, 2014, conducted searches for inmate [REDACTED]. From May 1, 2014, to June 4, 2014, Sonjia Dennis-Brown conducted searches for [REDACTED] while he was an inmate.

CROSS EXAMINATION

Lieutenant [REDACTED] testified, in the IMAC system an officer would have to run an Inmate Housing History report to get information on an inmate. An officer accesses the IMAC system through a log into the Sheriff's domain, each officer is credentialed through an active directory to every application that has been assigned to that officer. In searching for an inmate the first screen indicates booking number, inmate number and name. A summary of criminal history does not appear on the IMAC system.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED], testified he works for the Cook County Sheriff's Office, Office of Professional Review as an Investigator. He was assigned the investigation of Sonjia Dennis-Brown. He interviewed Sonjia Dennis-Brown on June 2, 2014. She did admit in the interview that [REDACTED] an inmate and the father of her two daughters had contacted her via telephone calls. She also admitted that she knew [REDACTED] also a detainee at the CCDOC. He worked at shoe store by her house in [REDACTED]. She also identified a photograph of a detainee, [REDACTED]. She identified him as being [REDACTED] " he kept calling her cell phone, talking about not getting medical attention, and shoes. She told him to stop calling her. She also identified a photograph of detainee [REDACTED]. He was the cousin of coworker, Officer [REDACTED], he called several times. She did not document any of these calls in writing, she just verbally told Superintendent [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] testified that Sonjia Dennis-Brown told him she did not have any contact with [REDACTED]. She knew he was involved with criminal activity. She did not know [REDACTED] was a gang member or had gang affiliation.

As part of his investigation he reviewed the Facebook page of Sonjia Dennis-Brown. There were numerous photographs of [REDACTED] on her Facebook page. He reviewed the photographs with Sonjia Dennis-Brown during the interview process. One of the photographs she viewed and acknowledged was a photograph of her posing while displaying two peace signs and not gang signs. She did know how to portray the hand gang sign of the pitchfork for the [REDACTED].

The respondent and her union representative reviewed the statement and signed the last page of the statement and initialed each page.

He conducted a second interview June 25, 2014 with Sonjia Dennis-Brown. At this interview they discussed the relationship she had with [REDACTED]. She said had last spoke with him approximately three days after he was released from jail and went on electronic monitoring. She stopped talking to him because she was afraid of him.

An audio recording of a telephone call to Sonjia Dennis-Brown was played back for her review. She recognized the voices to be that of [REDACTED] and an individual she knew as "[REDACTED]" also known as "[REDACTED]." She stated this recorded phone conversation was the three-way call that she referred to during her initial statement on June 2nd of 2014. She stated that she told "[REDACTED]" that she did not have anything to give towards what was left of [REDACTED]'s

bond money, and she denied stating that she would contribute \$200 to \$300 towards [REDACTED]'s bond. She did not know [REDACTED] was on parole or probation in 2011 and 2013. It was made clear to Investigator [REDACTED] that she never submitted any written or verbal reports about [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] being the father of her children. Only after she was investigated by OPR did she submit emails or written notice about her association with inmates. After the second interview was completed about an hour after did Officer [REDACTED] and Officer [REDACTED] returned to OPR and produced a handwritten incident report dated November 27th of 2013 concerning association with inmates.

In the interview Sonjia Dennis-Brown stated that between June 2011 and June 2014, she looked up [REDACTED] 23 times on the IMAC system to see if he was gone, no longer in the CCDOC. During his investigation he reviewed two recorded phone calls between Sonjia Dennis-Brown and [REDACTED] made in October 2014. These call were made four months after she was interviewed by OPR. October 4, 2014, 6 minutes, 54 seconds long; and on October 13, 2014, 10 minutes, 36 seconds long.

CROSS EXAMINATION

[REDACTED], testified that between June and October of 2014, he conducted a search of [REDACTED] Securus records. He did not locate any other Securus recordings between [REDACTED] and Sonjia Dennis-Brown between June 2014 and October 4, 2014. Sonjia Dennis-Brown was on administrative leave in October 2014. Sonjia Dennis-Brown was not interviewed again after June 25, 2014. The audio recordings were not the best quality and it was difficult for him to understand every word.

He stated Officers who work in housing units within the Department of Corrections under Sheriff's policy are not supposed to work on the same tier as a relative. Sonjia Dennis-Brown was obligated to make sure she was not working in [REDACTED]'s area. If an officer found out that a family member or close personal friend was in the housing unit in which they were working, they would be obligated to report that.

He did contact the Dolton Police Department to determine that Sonjia Dennis-Brown had filed a police report in 2013 with respect to [REDACTED].

The audio recording had a male voice detainee [REDACTED] female voice Officer Dennis-Brown and a third voice a child's voice it was on October 4, 2014.

The Facebook photos he reviewed were photos of [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] with other people but not with Sonjia Dennis-Brown.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

Rule 3.8 "Employees will utilize department equipment, property, and services only as authorized for their job assignments and in the performance of their official duties.

Sonjia Dennis-Brown did not provide any verbal or written reports regarding inmates that she knew outside of the jail.

Sonjia Dennis-Brown and [REDACTED] were Facebook friends. If you are a Facebook friend with someone you can have access to their pictures. During his investigation, he determined that Sonjia Dennis-Brown had a romantic relationship with [REDACTED]

RE-CROSS EXAMINATION

Investigator [REDACTED], believes that Miss Dennis-Brown created the incident report between the time she left the OPR interview and came back that hour later with Officer [REDACTED]. At no time he did locate any photographs on Facebook of Sonia Dennis-Brown and [REDACTED] together.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified, he is a Superintendent with the Cook County Sheriff's Department. A correctional officer is required to report in writing any association with a detainee. Sonjia Dennis-Brown did not report verbally or in writing regarding any association with detainees to him.

CROSS EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified that there is another individual with the last name "[REDACTED]" who worked in a command rank within Division 9 between 2010 and 2014. His name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] he was a commander. He acted at times as superintendent of Division 9. He testified at one time he counseled Sonjia Dennis-Brown concerning an incident at her home. It is an officer's responsibility to ensure they are not working in a division where a close personal friend or family member's housed.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

Sonjia Dennis-Brown did not mention any names to him about possible people who could have broken into her house. Sonjia Dennis-Brown did not report to him regarding knowing any inmates in Division 9 or anywhere at the jail.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED], an inspector with the Cook County Sheriff's Office. Called as an expert on gangs. The [REDACTED] is a gang that while they have various locations, one of the most recognized, based on the fact that there's been several rappers associated with them known as [REDACTED], which is the street name "[REDACTED]" spelled backwards, they originated from 63rd and King Drive, particularly the [REDACTED] building. He has seen pictures of [REDACTED]. The hand gestures that he is making in the picture are associated with the hand gestures associated to the [REDACTED] faction of the [REDACTED] gang.

In his review of one of the Facebook photos of Sonjia Dennis-Brown her left hand sign is associated to the [REDACTED]. In the other photo he was unsure if it was her making a peace sign or a gang sign.

In review of the other Facebook Photographs, he recognized [REDACTED] as a known gang member.

CROSS EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified he did not personally interview Sonjia Dennis-Brown. Nor did he review transcripts of any interviews that were conducted of her as part of the investigation. The gang

intelligence unit felt that there was some gang involvement in this particular case and gave him a copy of the photos, to run the information of [REDACTED]. He has used social media network sites in his investigations.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

Sonjia Dennis-Brown testified, she did receive the "Conditions of Employment" which she signed on November 18, 2002. Miss Dennis-Brown, did receive an 8-day suspension for an earlier incident.

She never submitted any reports to OPR, or OPR while it was called Internal Investigation Unit, about any inmates before her first interview with OPR. During her interview with OPR she did admit that [REDACTED] is the father of one of her daughters, and he has been in the custody of Cook County Department of Corrections. She admitted to Investigator [REDACTED] that she never reported or documented that [REDACTED] was the father of her two daughters. She had two telephone calls with [REDACTED] while he was in the jail on August 4, 2011. The calls were two months before she gave birth to their baby.

Sonjia Dennis-Brown told Investigator [REDACTED] that she didn't know that [REDACTED] was associated with a gang. She had no knowledge of his criminal history she only knew he had a suspended license from Traffic.

It was not a romantic relationship even though she had two children with him. They did not live in the same house.

She did admit to the three way call from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on May 20th of '14. This call was while [REDACTED] was in the jail and she worked at the jail as a correctional officer. She did not report this call before the OPR interview.

Sonjia Dennis-Brown testified that in the Facebook photos of her hand gesture it is a peace sign and not a gang sign.

She stated that [REDACTED] continuously kept calling her cellular telephone number. She stated that he would complain to her about not receiving medical attention or shoes, and that she told him to stop calling. These calls were not documented or reported to her supervisor.

During that first interview, she told Investigator [REDACTED] that she documented incidents involving [REDACTED] in a memo. However the document was not submitted. After the second interview June 25, 2014 was over and after she left the OPR office is when she came back with the report. Claiming it was completed in November of 2013.

CROSS EXAMINATION

Sonjia Dennis-Brown testified in hearing the audiotape of the phone call with [REDACTED] she did explain that she had 2 to \$300 to her name and why would she give that to somebody to bond them out of jail and then hung up the phone.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

Sonjia Dennis-Brown testified, she works for the Cook County Department of Corrections hired on November 18, 2002.

██████████ is the father of her 7 year old child. the relationship with him ended in 2007. ██████████ was housed in the Cook County Department of Corrections after her personal relationship with him ended. She reported to her superintendent and told him that her daughter's father was housed on my tier and she wouldn't be able to work that assignment. She was moved over to across the hall to 2-A. At no point in time was she told to put that in writing.

██████████ used to work at a shoe store around her house in ██████████. She did not know he was calling her cell phone from the jail.

██████████ his grandmother lived across the street from her she lived at ██████████. She did not speak with ██████████ on her personal telephone at a time when he was housed in the Cook County Department of Corrections.

██████████ she grew up with him in the same neighborhood.

Only through the OPR investigation did she know that ██████████, ██████████ and ██████████ called her cell phone.

██████████ she met him in 2009-2010. They have two children together. She did not know anything about him having any criminal background or gang affiliations. She didn't observe ██████████ to have any gang tattoos. She didn't see him associate with gang members. At some point in the relationship he became violent and she had to contact the Dalton police.

She was given training on the IMAC System. The training did not specify what type of uses were not allowed. She used it for personal use to check on ██████████. She didn't want to work on the same tier with him because they had children together.

Sonjia Dennis-Brown testified that in the call from ██████████ she was clear in not wanting to give ██████████ any bond money.

She never submitted written notification about this relationship to the Sheriff's Office. She talked to Superintendent ██████████ after her door was kicked in and she had to leave work.

In review of the Facebook photographs, she testified. She was making some symbols with your hands, they were peace signs not gang signs..

Concerning Facebook there is a difference between you yourself posting something on Facebook and then someone else posting on their Facebook page. When someone else posts something on their Facebook page, it can appear your Facebook page. Some of the photographs on Sonjia Dennis-Brown's Facebook page were not taken by her.

She completed an incident report on November 27, 2013. It was not turned in to anyone in your chain of command on or about November 27, 2013. She did not turn it in, she talked to her superintendent verbally, and at that time she would put it into the computer which everyone can read, and she was very embarrassed about the situation. She kept it until she gave it to OPR after the interview.

She first became aware of ██████████ having a criminal background during the OPR investigation. She did run searches on him in IMAC after becoming aware of his background.

On the recorded telephone conversations she testified that she admitted to the phone conversation with ██████████. She told them her "kids' father" had his friend call her on a three-way call with him. It was her daughter's birthday. They were at a party and she instructed him to call back. The second phone call with ██████████ was for him more or less to speak with his daughter and they talked for a few seconds.

CROSS EXAMINATION

Sonjia Dennis-Brown testified that she thought notifying her supervisor verbally would be enough. Superintendent [REDACTED] stated that she never gave him any reports. She was not aware that [REDACTED] had a criminal record. She was aware he was in jail in 2011, because at the time she was seven months pregnant with his child. [REDACTED] was there shortly after she gave birth. She also had a second child with him in January 2013.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

Sonjia Dennis-Brown testified she was aware that [REDACTED] was housed in the Department of Corrections while she was seven months pregnant in 2011. She knew he was arrested for Traffic violation his license was suspended. She did not report the contact with him when he was housed in the Department of Corrections for the traffic matter. She didn't know she had to report it, it was only a traffic offense.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED] testified, she is a Correctional Officer for the Cook County Sheriff's Office. She previously worked with Sonjia Dennis-Brown. She was interviewed at OPR in connection with the Sonjia Dennis-Brown. Occasionally she would call downstairs to the security office when she worked advise them that she wasn't taking any phone calls today. There were certain instances where someone would call and you'd try to relay the call up to her and she'd decline it.

CROSS EXAMINATION

Sojia Dennis-Brown never told her about any of the fathers of her children. She never told her about her association with any inmates.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED], Cook County correctional officer. She worked with Sonjia Dennis-Brown in Division 9. She recalls that Sojia Dennis-Brown received phone calls while she was working in security. She also recalled that Sojia Dennis-Brown, would request that calls not be forwarded to her.

CROSS EXAMINATION

Officer [REDACTED] testified, Sojia Dennis-Brown never told her about any of the fathers of her children. She never told her about her association with any inmates.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

[REDACTED], currently employed by the Cook County Sheriff Department, in receiving as a corrections officer. Worked with Sonjia Dennis-Brown in Division 9. He attended both OPR interviews with her. He was representing her as a union steward. During the second interview they went to the Division 9 parking lot to retrieve some papers and came back. Approximately 20 minutes later they returned and she handed over the paper to OPR.

CROSS EXAMINATION

Officer [REDACTED] testified, he did not think a conflict of interest exists if a correctional officer is pregnant with an inmate who's at the jail where she's working as a correctional officer.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

██████████, a correctional officer at the Cook County Sheriff's Department, Division 8. He worked with Sonjia Dennis-Brown in Division 9. He remembered when he overheard her having a phone conversation about ██████████. She sounded pretty upset she was talking about a detainee that she wanted to have moved. He did not know who she was talking to.

CROSS EXAMINATION

Officer ██████████ never heard any conversations between Sojia Dennis-Brown and ██████████ about any inmates.

Conclusions of Law: Based on the evidence presented, and after assessing the credibility of witnesses and the weight given by the evidence in the record, the Merit Board finds that the Respondent did violate the Cook County Sheriff's Police Department Rules and Regulations General Order 3.8, Section I.,

General Order 3.8, Section II subsections A , B 7, 18, D 6. F 1,2, G

Sheriff's Order 11.2.20.0 RULES OF CONDUCT Section I,II, III, VI A 2, 4. B 1,2 D 1,9, 23, 25, G 3,4,5 H 2, 4 I 1,2

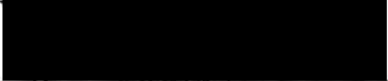
Cook County Sheriff's Merit Board Rules and Regulations, Article X., Paragraph B

Order: Wherefore, based on the foregoing, it is hereby ordered that the Sonjia L. Dennis-Brown be removed from office September 30, 2014.

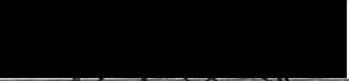
Sonjia L. Dennis-Brown CO #1783



James P. Nally, Chairman



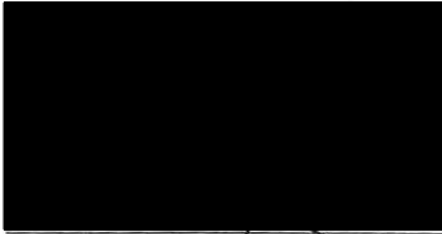
Vincent T. Winters, Board Member



Patrick Brady, Board Member



Brian J. Riordan, Board Member



Kim R. Widup, Board Member



Byron T. Brazier, Board Member



Jennifer E. Bae, Board Member



John J. D'Alcandro, Board Member

Dated: October 13, 2015