

Frequently Asked Questions about the Complaint Process

How do I file a complaint?

If you believe that an officer or other Department employee has engaged in misconduct you may file a complaint in person, by telephone, by mail, by E-mail, or via the on-line Complaint form.

While we encourage those who make complaints to provide their names and other identifying information, we do accept anonymous complaints. We also accept complaints from outside agencies and from witnesses or other third parties reporting on behalf of others.

Complaints of misconduct are taken very seriously. You will be asked to certify that the information you provide is true to the best of your knowledge.

We ask that complaints be filed as soon after the event as practical. Filing a complaint does not affect other civil or criminal proceedings.

Who oversees the complaint process?

The Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) Director (a civilian appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council) is responsible for the management and oversight of the investigative process and ensures the highest standards for documentation, investigation, reporting, and resolution of complaints.

The OPA Auditor, who is a respected member of the community and appointed by the Mayor and City Council, reviews every complaint and investigation to ensure that each receives a thorough and objective investigation. In addition, the OPA Review Board, composed of seven civilians appointed by the City Council,

reviews the fairness and efficacy of the OPA process and solicits input from the community on improving the oversight system.

What type of complaint may I file?

OPA handles all complaints involving SPD employees. OPA considers whether the type of misconduct alleged, if true, would violate Department policies and procedures, or may constitute a violation of law. OPA will document your complaint and either investigate it or share it with the appropriate unit within the Department for follow up.

What if I want to commend a Police Department employee?

We happily accept commendations and will forward them to the employee with our sincere appreciation. OPA will ensure the commendation is included in the employee's personnel file.

The Seattle Police Department is in partnership with the community to make Seattle a safe and enjoyable place to live and work. We strive to provide excellent service to our community. In that regard, your complaints and commendations are important to us as they allow us to improve the job we do for you.

Will my complaint be investigated?

Depending on the seriousness of the allegation, your complaint may be investigated or resolved with a referral to the officer's supervisor for review. You will be notified about how your complaint will be resolved.

What happens if my complaint is assigned for further investigation?

You will receive a notice that includes the case number assigned to your complaint. **It is very important that you continue to participate in the complaint process.** You may be asked to give a more complete, tape-recorded statement. You may also be asked for documentation that relates to your complaint and, if appropriate, you may be asked to allow photographs of any injury or property damage, and to consent to the release of medical records associated with your complaint.

Who will investigate my complaint?

Every complaint is documented and reviewed by the Director and Auditor. Complaints requiring investigation will be investigated by OPA investigators.

Completed investigations are reviewed by the OPA Director and Auditor to determine if the investigation is complete, thorough and objective. The Director and Auditor may direct additional investigation. The Director will then recommend the finding(s) to the Chief of Police.

Depending on the circumstances of your complaint, it may also be referred for review/investigation to the commander of the employee named on your complaint.

How long will it take to investigate my complaint?

Some allegations can be resolved by discussion with the OPA investigator or by a supervisor. These are usually resolved within 60 days. If further investigation is required, it will likely take longer.

Every effort is made to complete investigations as quickly as possible. Our goal is to complete all investigations within 180 days. **If you have any questions during the process of your complaint or have not heard from our office about the status of your case, you are encouraged to call and check on the status of your investigation.**

Will I be notified of the outcome of my complaint?

Yes. You will receive a closing letter describing what steps were taken to resolve the issue. If your complaint is assigned for investigation, you will be advised of the steps that were taken to investigate, the outcome of the investigation, and an explanation of the finding reached.

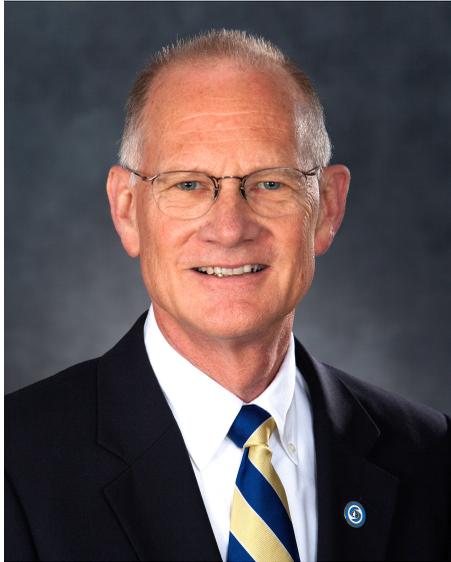
What can I do if I am unhappy with the outcome of my complaint?

If you do not agree with the classification or results of the investigation of your complaint, you may submit a letter to the OPA Director requesting reconsideration. The OPA Director will review the investigation, determine if it was handled properly, and notify you of the review findings in writing.

Note: Department policies prohibit retaliation against citizens for making a complaint.

Understanding Mediation A Different Approach to Resolution

The mediation program represents a great opportunity for citizens and police to gain a better understanding of differing perspectives, as well as to bring prompt, non-judgmental resolution to the complaint. Certain complaints will be selected by the OPA Director for third party mediation, where both the party making the complaint and the officer(s) involved agree to participate in this confidential process.



A note from the OPA Director:

Nothing is more important to me as OPA Director than building trust. My goal is to gain your trust by giving your complaint or feedback full, fair and complete consideration. Please contact me directly if you have any questions or concerns.

*Pierce Murphy Director,
Office of Professional
Accountability*

Where can I file a complaint?

You may submit your complaint via email:
OPA@seattle.gov
or
via online form on the OPA website:
www.seattle.gov/opa

or you may file at any of these locations:

Office of Professional Accountability

Pacific Building
720 3rd Avenue, 18th Floor
P.O. Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986
(206) 684-8797

OPA is open Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM. Voice messaging will record your message when the office is closed, and you will be called as soon as possible.

Customer Service Bureau

City Hall
600 4th Avenue, 1st Floor, P.O. Box 94726
Seattle WA 98124-4726
(206) 684-CITY (2489)

We also investigate complaints referred to us by the Mayor's office, City Council members, and referral agencies.

All Seattle Police Department Precincts

Any SPD employee can receive and document your complaint; however, you will usually be referred to a supervisor.

The precincts are located at the following addresses:	Southwest Precinct 2300 SW Webster St Seattle, WA 98106
West Precinct (206) 684-8917 810 Virginia St Seattle, WA 98101	East Precinct (206) 684-4300 1519 12th Ave Seattle, WA 98122
South Precinct (206) 386-1850 3001 S Myrtle St Seattle, WA 98108	North Precinct (206) 684-0850 10049 College Way N Seattle, WA 98133

**Office of Professional Accountability
Pierce Murphy, Director**

To contact the OPA Director with questions about the OPA or if you would like to schedule a meeting:

Contact the Director's
Administrative Assistant:

(206) 615-1566

To make a complaint in person:

Office of Professional Accountability

Pacific Building
720 3rd Avenue, 18th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 684-8797
E-Mail: OPA@seattle.gov

www.seattle.gov/opa

**OFFICE OF
PROFESSIONAL
ACCOUNTABILITY**

Seattle Police Department

- Accessible
- Transparent
- Trusted

