



OPA's Community Engagement Specialists

OPA hired three full-time Community Engagement Specialists in late 2018. These employees help OPA build relationships with community members through dialogue and information sharing. The Community Engagement Specialists also work to increase public awareness of OPA and the accountability system. To be clear, *these individuals were not hired to solicit OPA complaints*. OPA hopes the role played by the Community Engagement Specialists will eventually translate into greater trust and understanding of the Department. Here are a few examples of things the Community Engagement Specialists have been doing so far:

- Learning about OPA's responsibilities and functions
- Conducting a baseline assessment (via interviews and surveys) of the public's awareness, perception, and knowledge of OPA
- Researching mediation best practices and comparing those to OPA's current mediation program
- Learning about SPD by going on ride-alongs, visiting the 911 call center, and attending trainings
- Attending SPD Demographic and Precinct Advisory Council meetings
- Meeting with youth from Cleveland High School and the Seattle Youth Commission
- Listening to complainants who are unsatisfied with the outcomes of their case
- Maintaining a social media presence with updates on OPA developments
- Attending community events and activities

"Swatting" Call

In case [2018OPA-0772](#), officers responded to a call of an armed male in a library. When they entered the library, they saw only one male who was not library staff. They detained him and handcuffed him for safety reasons. He had a physical disability and was later determined to also be developmentally delayed. The officers soon established that it had been a false report and the male was not a suspect. The male's mother alleged that the officers detained him because he was African-American, discriminated against him due to his disability, and subjected him to excessive force.

While recognizing the impact that being a victim of a "swatting" incident had on the male, OPA concluded that the officers did not violate policy. They detained the male because he was the only individual who came close to matching the description. Moreover, the detention was meant to determine whether the male was armed and dangerous. The handcuffing was necessary to conduct the investigation safely and was consistent with the officers' training and policy.

During its investigation, OPA found that "swatting" calls are becoming more and more common. OPA determined that the caller who made the fake report here had made approximately 50 other calls from three different untraceable phones. OPA also learned that the Department receives around 1,000 fake calls per month. As such, OPA issued a [Management Action](#) and recommended that SPD research best practices for dealing with swatting calls.

Driving on Lightrail Tracks

In case [2018OPA-0141](#), a King County Sheriff's Office Deputy reported that he observed an SPD officer driving on the light rail tracks in what was perceived to be an unsafe manner. OPA's investigation revealed that the officer was responding to a 911 call from a school where there was arguing and loud noises in the background. Given prior gun violence in that area, the officer was concerned about the safety of the students and therefore engaged in emergency driving, including driving on the light rail tracks to avoid heavy traffic. Through review of the officer's ICV, OPA determined that his driving was justified, calculated, and reasonable under the circumstances.

If you have questions, feedback, content requests, or to add/remove your name from this distribution list, please email andrew.myerberg-OPA@seattle.gov or anne.bettesworth@seattle.gov.



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