

Office of Police Accountability

Overview of Mediation Process

What is mediation?

Mediation is an alternative to traditional complaint resolution. It offers an opportunity for a community member and a Seattle Police Department (SPD) employee to discuss a disagreement with the guidance of a neutral third party.

The goals of the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) mediation program are for participants to:

- ✓ Feel empowered to own the complaint-resolution process
- ✓ Build understanding and gain new perspectives by engaging in dialogue
- ✓ Identify root causes of conflict
- ✓ Learn how to avoid similar misunderstandings in the future



Is my complaint right for mediation?

OPA selects complaints for mediation based on criteria consistent with national best practices. This includes an assessment of the type and severity of the allegation, as well as the likelihood for a successful resolution. If OPA offers you mediation, it is your choice to accept it or pursue a traditional course of action. Many people who agree to mediation find it to be a satisfying way to resolve their complaint.

What can I expect at a mediation session?

1 Mediator meets separately with participants



4 Mediator reframes issues and asks questions



2 Mediator gathers participants, explains process, sets ground rules



5 Participants conclude discussion



3 Participants share perspectives about conflict



What is expected of participants during a mediation?

- ✓ Sign a legally-binding confidentiality agreement
- ✓ Listen and engage in the discussion
- ✓ Seek an outcome of mutual understanding
- ✓ Accept that no investigation or discipline will follow



If you need an interpreter or other accommodations for your mediation session, OPA will make those arrangements for you.



Who will mediate my complaint?

OPA's mediators come from a range of professional backgrounds, including public service, law, racial justice, and human resources. Mediators are selected, in part, because of their restorative justice lens and ability to balance the difference in power between participants. They are contracted through the King County Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution.

"SPD employee" means everyone who works for the Department, including sworn law enforcement personnel and civilians.

What is OPA?

The Office of Police Accountability is responsible for processing allegations of misconduct involving Seattle Police Department employees. We also engage with the community about police oversight, recommend revisions to SPD policy, and monitor serious uses of police force. We operate outside of SPD and have civilian leadership. The rest of our staff is a mix of civilians and SPD sergeants.

Learn more
about OPA

Visit our website
seattle.gov/opa

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Seattle Office of
Police Accountability