

Civilian Oversight of the Seattle Police Department

Effective civilian oversight of police is essential to ensure that the police department uses its powers and authority in a manner reflecting respect for law and individual rights and freedoms. Transparency and accountability to the public are the key ingredients for an effective program. Civilian oversight in Seattle has three parts. A civilian director oversees the experienced detective sergeants who investigate complaints of misconduct and related issues of police practices. The OPA Auditor has independent authority to review all cases. The seven-member civilian OPA Review Board conducts community outreach regarding accountability issues and reviews the operation of the accountability system. Each part is independent, but all three work together to meet the goals of the system.

A note from the Interim Chief:

The Seattle Police Department is committed to thorough and objective investigation of complaints against its members. Only by strictly adhering to this commitment can we maintain the trust and confidence of those we serve. We hold ourselves to the highest expectations of fair and professional law enforcement services.


John Diaz
Interim Chief of Police

A note from the OPA Director:

We work hard to ensure that every complaint receives full and fair consideration. We are committed to seeing that complaints brought to the OPA are investigated as quickly as possible while ensuring fairness and thoroughness for everyone involved in the process. If you have questions about your case or concerns about the OPA process, please contact me directly at the OPA address or number provided.


Kathryn Olson
Director, Office of
Professional Accountability

Office of Professional Accountability (OPA)

The OPA is the office within the Seattle Police Department that receives and investigates complaints about police misconduct. A civilian Director heads the office.

OPA's mission is to provide civilian oversight of the complaint process; to promote public awareness of and full access to that process; and to advance training and reforms that improve police performance and increase police accountability.

The Investigation Section of the OPA investigates complaints of police conduct. The civilian Director oversees the intake, classification, and investigation of complaints, certifies investigative findings, and makes recommendations on disposition and discipline to the Chief of Police.

The OPA Director regularly reports to the Mayor and the City Council on OPA activity and issues concerning the professional standards of the Department. She also makes recommendations on strategies and policies to improve complaint gathering and investigative procedures.

OPA Auditor

The Auditor is an independent outside reviewer of the work of the OPA, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The Auditor reviews every case to see if it is properly classified as to seriousness. Each week the Auditor reviews all investigations completed that week and has the discretion to order further investigation. Finally, the Auditor reports regularly and makes policy recommendations to the City, the public and the Department based on these reviews. The Auditor's reports are available to the public on the OPA website.

OPA Review Board

The OPA Review Board strengthens the system of police accountability by soliciting community input about police accountability and police practices, conducting an independent review of the quality of the OPA complaint process, and reviewing police policies and procedures. The OPA Review Board was established in 2002 and now consists of seven citizens appointed by the City Council. The Review Board holds public meetings twice a month at City Hall, where it invites interested citizens to observe and to present their views. The Review Board reports regularly to the City Council and advises the City on police accountability and professional conduct generally. Review Board members are available to meet with citizens and community groups who have questions or concerns about the OPA process and police policies and procedures.

Joint Responsibilities of OPA Director, Auditor and Review Board

All are members of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement. All work together to:

- conduct community outreach to promote and explain the citizen complaint process and to receive feedback about the process and police practices;
- study and report to the public on accountability issues;
- identify issues for the OPA Auditor to emphasize in the Auditor's review of OPA's work; and
- research national trends and best practices on police accountability and practices.

FILING A COMPLAINT

If you believe that an officer or other Department employee has committed misconduct you may file a complaint in person, by telephone, by mail, by email at OPA-IS@seattle.gov, or on our online form at www.seattle.gov/police/opa. We also investigate complaints referred to us by the Mayor's office, City Council members, and referral agencies, and take third party complaints, or those filed anonymously.

You may file at any SPD precinct or the following locations:

OPA - Investigation Section

Seattle Municipal Tower
700 5th Avenue, Suite 1640
P.O. Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

(206) 684-8797

Monday through Friday, 9 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)

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.

Seattle Office for Civil Rights -

Central Building
810 Third Ave, Suite 750
Seattle WA 98104-1627

(206)684-4500 or (TTY) (206) 684-4503

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.

SAYING "THANKS" FOR GOOD POLICE WORK

Police work is often a difficult and thankless task. We happily accept commendations through all of the options detailed above. Your words of encouragement and appreciation will be forwarded to the employees and their supervisors.

CONTACT US:

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Police Headquarters
P.O. Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986
(206) 615-1566 | FAX: (206) 615-0763
E-Mail: OPA@seattle.gov
www.seattle.gov/police/opa

Information about filing a complaint is available on the OPA website in other languages:
<http://www.seattle.gov/police/OPA/Publications.htm>

OPA AUDITOR

To reach the Auditor, please contact either the OPA Main Office or the Review Board who will forward your concerns directly to the Auditor

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD

P.O. Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025
(206) 684-8888 | FAX: (206) 684-8587
E-Mail: OPAReviewBoard@seattle.gov
www.seattle.gov/council/oparb/

GENERAL MEETINGS AND OUTREACH

The OPA Review Board meets

On the first Wednesday of the month at
11:30 a.m. and

On the Third Thursday at 5:30 p.m.
at Seattle City Hall, 600 Fourth Avenue.

For meeting location & agendas
please call (206) 684-8146

To listen to a meeting live, call
(206) 684-4718



CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT of SEATTLE POLICE



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Office of Professional Accountability

OPA Auditor

OPA Review Board