


Issued Date: February 3, 2026

From: Director Bonnie J. Glenn
Office of Police Accountability



Case Number: 2025OPA-0433

Allegations of Misconduct & Director's Findings

Named Employee #1

1. **Allegation #1:** 6.180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies
Finding: Not Sustained - Lawful and Proper
-

Named Employee #2

1. **Allegation #1:** 180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies
Finding: Not Sustained - Lawful and Proper
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Named Employee #3

1. **Allegation #1:** 6.180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies
Finding: Not Sustained - Lawful and Proper
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Named Employee #4

1. **Allegation #1:** 6.180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies
Finding: Not Sustained - Lawful and Proper
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This Closed Case Summary (CCS) represents the opinion of the OPA Director regarding the misconduct alleged and therefore sections may be written in the first person.

Executive Summary:

During a Force Investigation Team (FIT) investigation, the FIT Lieutenant identified that the named employees may have searched lockers and suitcases inside a public, post-secondary workforce education and training center (Trade School) without authority.

Administrative Note:

On January 13, 2026, OIG certified OPA's investigation as thorough, timely, and objective.

Summary of the Investigation:

On August 15, 2026, SPD officers—including the four named employees—participated in an operation to arrest an armed robbery suspect (Suspect #1) who attended the Trade School. SPD officers coordinated the operation with Trade School security staff and had permission to be on campus that day. Officers believed Suspect #1 possessed a firearm that had been used in the robbery. When Suspect #1 exited the Trade School, officers attempted to arrest him. Suspect #1 fled on foot, dropping a backpack. While officers pursued Suspect #1, another individual (Suspect #2) picked up the backpack and ran back inside the Trade School. Suspect #1 was arrested, but officers did not recover a firearm on him.

Believing the firearm was inside the backpack, officers began searching inside the Trade School for Suspect #2. Two officers located Suspect #2 and another person (Suspect #3) in an upstairs woodshop classroom. Neither suspect had the backpack, nor was the backpack immediately visible around the classroom. Officers frisked both suspects and felt a firearm inside a satchel Suspect #3 had on his shoulder. Suspect #3 fled, but an officer kept control of the satchel. An officer used force to apprehend Suspect #3. This force was the subject of a FIT investigation.

Suspect #2 remained in the woodshop and told officers he put the backpack in an adjoining storage room. The four named employees searched the storage room, including cabinets, shelves, lockers, and bags that were inside.



Body-worn video (BWV) image showing officers searching the storage room.

None of the cabinets or lockers appeared to be locked. The cabinets, shelves, and lockers appeared to contain various organized supplies.

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BWV image showing NE#2 locating the backpack.

During the FIT investigation, the FIT Lieutenant referred the above search to OPA for review, questioning whether there was an expectation of privacy or constitutional protection for the items the officers searched in the storage room.

OPA investigated by reviewing the OPA complaint, incident reports and supplements, FIT case, and BWV. These were summarized above. OPA also interviewed the four named employees and emailed the Trade School's security manager.

1. OPA Interviews

a. Named Employee #1

OPA interviewed NE#1 would stated he participated in an arrest operation for an armed robbery suspect. NE#1 said he saw the target of the arrest operation drop a backpack before fleeing on foot. Based on the crime alleged, and because he dropped the backpack prior to running, and because another suspect then picked up the abandoned backpack and fled with it, NE#1 believed the bag likely contained a firearm.

After entering the woodshop, NE#1 recalled being told that the bag had been concealed in the storage area. He did not consider seeking a warrant because the storage room did not appear to be a private place because it was open to everyone in the school. He said he did not know how officers initially accessed the school as that occurred prior to his involvement.

NE#1 searched the storage area with other officers. They stopped searching after an officer found the bag. NE#1 stated he did not know if the bag contained a firearm.

b. Named Employee #2

In his OPA interview, NE#2 stated he assisted the Robbery Unit with arresting an armed robbery suspect who was suspected in shootings in King County. During the arrest, he was told someone picked up the suspect's backpack and ran with it into the school. He said he was later told that officers were let into the school by security officers. The suspect who picked up the backpack was arrested. An officer requested more units to the woodshop. NE#2 heard that the backpack had been hidden, and a suspect in the woodshop said he had hidden it in the storage area, so he searched there.

NE#2 said he did not consider that area a private space, because it was open to the public within the public school, and the door was open. He said it did not cross his mind to seek a search warrant because of where the backpack was, and because he thought there was a gun inside it, and classes were in active session. NE#2 said he found the backpack, and it was given to Robbery detectives.

c. Named Employee #3

In his OPA interview, NE#3 described assisting the Robbery Unit with arresting an armed and dangerous serial robbery suspect. Robbery detectives were in direct contact with security for the school district, who was fully cooperative with police, telling officers what room the suspect was in, when classes ended, and when the suspect was going to come out. Police waited for the suspect to come out of the school.

NE#3 said the suspect exited when expected, and officers went to arrest him. The suspect dropped his backpack and ran, and another suspect picked the backpack up and ran into the school with it. Detectives advised via radio that the backpack likely contained key evidence and possibly a gun. Officers pursued that suspect into the school. NE#3 said he considered this "hot pursuit." He

described a teacher briefly blocking officers from entering one of the doors, but they were allowed in after about 30 seconds.

NE#3 said other officers located the suspect who grabbed the backpack in the woodshop classroom. That room adjoined a supply closet. NE#3 stated that after officers detained the suspect who grabbed the backpack, they found a gun on him, and he ran and was captured. Another suspect was detained too, who told them the backpack was in the supply closet. Officers searched for the backpack, which they believed potentially contained a firearm, which was an exigent circumstance due to children in the school. NE#3 stated they could not knowingly leave a firearm in the school, and no warrant was required. NE#3 stated school security gave them permission to be in the school. The search was limited to where the suspect was detained and the door was open.

After receiving this complaint, NE#3 described considering what it would have taken to obtain a search warrant and that, in the meantime, they would have had to cancel all active classes and lock down the entire school for hours.

d. Named Employee #4

In his OPA interview, NE#4 described assisting the Robbery Unit in the apprehension of a robbery suspect they believed to be armed. During the arrest outside the school, the suspect dropped the backpack and ran. NE#4 said he was informed that someone else picked up the backpack and ran into the school. The school was large and there were not that many officers available after the first arrest. Officers pursued the suspect who grabbed the backpack into the school and searched for him, and found him in the woodshop. NE#4 said it was broadcast he had a gun and was running again. NE#4 said he saw the suspect running through the school, so he entered the school to assist. After that arrest, NE#4 said another officer called for more units to the woodshop because the backpack, which they believed contained a firearm, was no longer with the suspects. A suspect said the gun was in a locker in the storage room. This was a public school with children around, so to avoid leaving a gun in a school with children, NE#4 said they began looking in the room. None of the lockers were locked. NE#4 said other officers found the backpack and took it outside to the detectives.

NE#4 described the storage room as looking like a closet. It was mostly taken up by an HVAC system. The closet seemed to be for storage, with stacked open boxes. NE#4 said it seemed to be for storing school equipment rather than personal belongings.

NE#4 stated he did not think this was a private area or a place where anyone had an expectation of privacy. For exigency and community caretaking, officers did not want to leave a firearm in the school. At the time of the supply closet search, NE#4 said he did not consider getting a warrant. He did think about getting a warrant to search the entire school, but detectives did not do that.

2. Email Correspondence

OPA sought clarification from the Trade School security supervisor as to his understanding of the authority he gave the officers to be inside of the school. He responded by email that he was in communication with SPD on the incident date and gave the SPD officers permission to be on campus. He denied being specifically aware at the time that officers were searching inside the school, but his view was that SPD had control of the scene and were permitted to do whatever they needed to do to complete their investigation.

Analysis and Conclusions:

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #1

6.180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies

The Complainant alleged that the named employees may have conducted a warrantless search without a specific exception.

SPD Policy forbids officers from making warrantless searches unless a specific exception applies. See SPD Policy 6.180(1).

OPA finds that, more likely than not, the named employees' actions in this case were lawful and proper. The Trade School is a public school and the officers were given permission to be on campus for the purpose of their operation from the school security supervisor. Considering the totality of the evidence, OPA finds that it was reasonable for officers at the time—and ultimately factually accurate—to believe the storage room, lockers, and baggage was a public space used for storing school supplies. OPA finds that, more likely than not, the named employees did not need a warrant to search the storage room because—under both federal Fourth Amendment and Washington State Article I, section 7 standards—no one had a reasonable expectation of privacy in the storage room, nor did the officers invade the suspects' "private affairs" by searching a public room and unlocked storage containers inside a public school in which the officers had explicit permission to operate. *Cf. State v. Carter*, 151 Wash.2d 118, 85 P.3d 887 (2004) (explaining state and federal standards).

OPA notes that the circumstances in this case were unique and complicated given the unusual nature of the space, location of the backpack in a locker, and transfer of the backpack from Suspect #1 to Suspect #2. It may be that the Suspects could possibly challenge the backpack's recovery if they were later charged with a possessory crime for any contraband found in the backpack under Washington State's expansive "automatic standing" rule. *See State v. Evans*, 159 Wn.2d 402, 407, 150 P.3d 105 (2007) (Washington Constitution confers automatic standing upon anyone charged with a possessory crime regardless of whether the defendant had a legitimate expectation of privacy). Under that rule, a criminal defendant could still challenge the legality of a search—even in an item or area they do not own—so long as (1) possession was an essential

element of a charged offense, and (2) the defendant was *in possession* of the contraband at the time of the contested search or seizure. See *id.* But, even if such a challenge were viable—which OPA is not deciding—the theoretical exclusion of a narrow category of potential evidence would not amount to misconduct by the named employees.

Accordingly, OPA recommends this allegation be Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper.

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper**

Named Employee #2 – Allegation #1

6.180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies

For the reasons articulate at Named Employee #1, Allegation #1, OPA recommends this allegation be Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper.

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper**

Named Employee #3 – Allegation #1

6.180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies

For the reasons articulate at Named Employee #1, Allegation #1, OPA recommends this allegation be Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper.

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper**

Named Employee #4 – Allegation #1

6.180- Searches-General 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies

For the reasons articulate at Named Employee #1, Allegation #1, OPA recommends this allegation be Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper.

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper**