

## What is the process once a complaint is made?

A complaint may be submitted to either the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) or the Office of Police Complaints (OPC). The following flowcharts detail the complaint review processes.

### MPD Complaint Process

**STEP 1** The complaint is filed with the MPD.

**STEP 2** The MPD official responsible for investigating the complaint contacts you to let you know he or she is investigating it. If necessary, the official will obtain additional information.

**STEP 3** The complaint is investigated—witnesses and the officer against whom the complaint is filed are interviewed. The officer is entitled to know the complainant's name, if it is known, and the nature of the complaint. However, the MPD will not reveal the complainant's name if the complainant requests to remain anonymous.

**STEP 4** Investigation is completed and one of the following conclusions is made:

**Sustained** — where the person's allegation is supported by sufficient evidence to determine that the incident occurred and the actions of the officer were improper.

**Insufficient Facts** — where there are insufficient facts to decide whether the alleged misconduct occurred.

**Exonerated** — where a preponderance of the evidence shows that the alleged conduct did occur but did not violate MPD policies, procedures, or training.

**Unfounded** — where the investigation determined no facts to support that the incident complained of actually occurred.

**STEP 5** You are notified of the outcome of the investigation. If you do not agree with it, you may appeal the decision in writing by sending a letter to the Chief of Police at:

Chief of Police  
Metropolitan Police Department  
300 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5080  
Washington, DC 20001

### OPC Complaint Process

**STEP 1** Once a completed, signed complaint form is received, OPC reviews the complaint to confirm that it falls within the agency's jurisdiction.

**STEP 2** If the complaint is within OPC's jurisdiction, most complaints are assigned to one of OPC's investigators. OPC also may refer the complaint to mediation, which involves a confidential, face-to-face meeting between the complainant and the subject officer. This meeting is guided by a neutral third party who is trained to conduct mediation and who assists the parties to work together to reach a mutually-agreeable resolution of the complaint.

If a complaint involving an MPD officer is not within OPC's jurisdiction, OPC will forward the complaint to MPD to investigate.

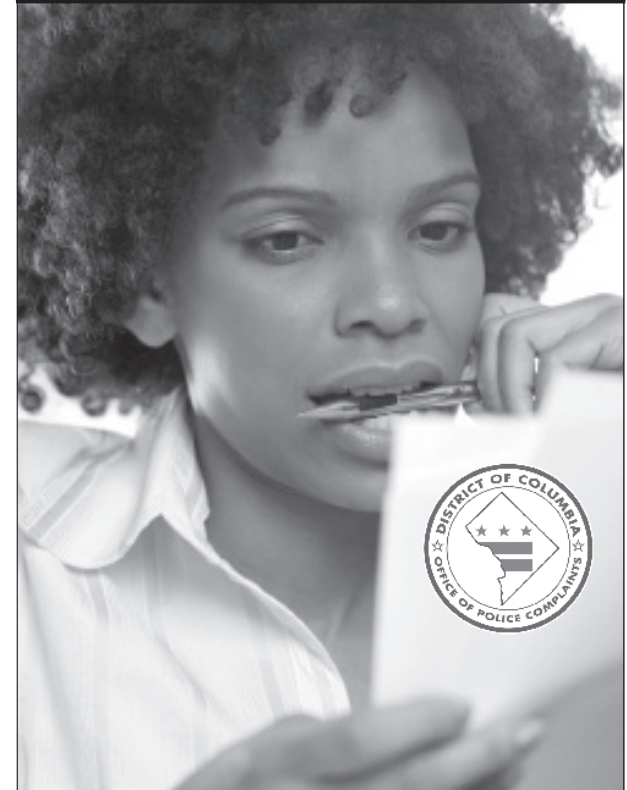
**STEP 3** Based on the outcome of the investigation, OPC may dismiss the complaint, or, if the investigation reveals reasonable cause to believe that police misconduct occurred, the complaint will be referred to an independent complaint examiner who will issue a written decision.

**STEP 4** OPC notifies the complainant and subject officer of the decision regarding the complaint, and if the complaint is sustained, it is forwarded to the Chief of Police for imposition of discipline. You will be notified of the discipline and may respond to it in writing to the Chief of Police.

**OPC has the authority to receive, investigate, and resolve police misconduct complaints filed by the public against MPD officers. Complaint forms can be submitted in person, by mail, by fax to (202) 727-9182, or by dropping forms off at any MPD district station.**

# Filing Complaints Against Metropolitan Police Officers

## Complaint Review Process



» To learn more, visit [mpdc.dc.gov](http://mpdc.dc.gov)

The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is committed to providing professional, high-quality services to all; the MPD does not tolerate misconduct or wrongdoing on the part of its members. If you believe you have been subjected to, or witnessed, police misconduct of any type, the MPD encourages you to report the incident to either the MPD or the Office of Police Complaints (OPC). There are many convenient ways for you to file complaints, including in-person, over the telephone, or via mail, email or fax. There are two distinct processes for reviewing and investigating complaints:

#### Office of Police Complaints:

- » Is a District of Columbia Government agency that is independent of the MPD and has its own investigative staff.
- » Gives individuals a choice to have police misconduct complaints investigated by an agency other than the MPD.
- » Has authority to investigate complaints filed within 90 days of the underlying incident, and that allege harassment; use of unnecessary or excessive force; use of language or conduct that is insulting, demeaning, or humiliating; discriminatory treatment; retaliation for filing a complaint with OPC; or failure to wear required identification or refusal to provide name and badge number when requested to do so by a member of the public.

#### Metropolitan Police Department:

- » Investigates complaints against its members through the MPD Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB) and chain-of-command officials.
- » Investigates complaints filed at anytime alleging any type of misconduct, including misconduct that can be investigated by OPC.
- » Investigates anonymous complaints.



## Office of Police Complaints

The Office of Police Complaints was established by the District of Columbia Government to provide the public with an independent and impartial forum for the review and resolution of police misconduct complaints filed by the public against MPD officers. The purpose of OPC is to promote the highest attainable standards of integrity, professionalism, and accountability in the District's police department. Public confidence is strengthened by ensuring that police misconduct complaints are taken seriously, carefully investigated, and reviewed by an experienced staff. OPC is overseen by the Police Complaints Board (PCB), appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the District of Columbia Council.

OPC handles the following types of complaints against MPD officers:

- » Harassment
- » Use of unnecessary or excessive force
- » Use of language or conduct that is insulting, demeaning, or humiliating
- » Discriminatory treatment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, physical disability, matriculation, political affiliation, source of income, or place of residence or business
- » Retaliation for filing a complaint with OPC
- » Failure to wear required identification or refusal to provide name and badge number when requested to do so by a member of the public

Complaint forms and information sheets can be obtained by:

- » Visiting OPC at:  
Office of Police Complaints  
1400 I Street, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20005
- » Calling OPC at **(202) 727-3838**
- » Calling the OPC 24-hour, toll-free hotline at **(866) 588-0569**
- » Visiting OPC's website, **policecomplaints.dc.gov**
- » Visiting any MPD district station

Complaint forms can be submitted:

- » In person or by mail to the address above
- » By fax to **(202) 727-9182**
- » By dropping forms off at any MPD district station

## MPD Internal Affairs Bureau

The Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB) is the internal MPD unit responsible for ensuring that all complaints of officer misconduct are handled properly.

IAB investigates complaints filed at anytime alleging any type of misconduct, including misconduct that can be investigated by OPC and anonymous complaints. You may file a complaint in a number of ways:

- » In person at the IAB or any MPD facility.
- » Mail a letter detailing your complaint to the IAB or any police facility.
- » Report your complaint over the telephone

#### Internal Affairs Bureau:

(202) 727-4385, TTY: (202) 898-1454

**24-hour hotline:** 1-800-298-4006

- » Fax your complaint to the IAB at **(202) 727-5116** or **(202) 727-4858**
- » Email your complaint to **citizen.complaints@dc.gov**  
Internal Affairs Division  
#6 DC Village Lane, SW, Building 1-A  
Washington, DC 20032  
(202) 727-4385

## Things to Remember When Making a Complaint

Whether filing a complaint with the MPD or OPC, the following information is very important when describing the event:

- » The day, date, time, and location of the incident.
- » The officer's name, badge number, and description.
- » Witnesses' names, addresses, and phone numbers.
- » License numbers for any vehicles involved in the incident.
- » Any other evidence you feel may be important, such as copies of traffic tickets, police reports, photographs, and medical records. If you have injuries, include their nature and extent.
- » It is vitally important that you file your complaint as soon as possible so that photographs can be taken and medical records can be obtained quickly

Please note that every person who wants to file a complaint with OPC must submit a completed, signed complaint form within 90 days of the underlying incident. You can file a report with the MPD anytime.