

Filing a Complaint... Or Giving a Compliment



What is the Professional Standards Office?

It is CPD's goal to provide the highest level of quality law enforcement service to all citizens. CPD promotes close working relationships with the community, and we are committed to ensuring that our employees perform their duties with professional competence and discipline. Policing is a very difficult and complex job in today's society, and we realize that mistakes can be made, and you may feel that the actions of our personnel fell short of your expectations.

The Professional Standards Office is responsible for maintaining and, where possible, increasing the integrity of the Charleston Police Department by either monitoring or conducting full, fair, and objective investigations of all complaints against the

Department, or allegations of misconduct on the part of members and employees of the Department.

GOOD TO KNOW...

What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as an expression of discontent, dissatisfaction or accusation made in a written or verbal form that alleges illegal activity, misconduct, or a violation of rules or regulations of the police department or of the City of Charleston.

Why should I bother to file a complaint?

Your complaint is important to us. We pride ourselves on maintaining an open line of communication with the public and citizens we are sworn to protect. We are committed to receiving and accepting

complaints about the actions and performance of all personnel.

How can I file a complaint?

• US Mail:

Charleston Police Department
Professional Standards Office
180 Lockwood Blvd.,
Charleston, SC 29403

• By Telephone:

Professional Standards Office
843.720.2447

• Online:

[http://www.charleston-sc.gov/
FormCenter/Police-3/Officer-
Comment-Card-48](http://www.charleston-sc.gov/FormCenter/Police-3/Officer-Comment-Card-48)

• In Person:

Visit headquarters, any team office, or request to speak with the employee's supervisor at the time of the event.

• Email:

mixonl@charleston-sc.gov

How is my complaint investigated?

A complaint is assigned to either the commander of the involved employee, or to an investigator in the Professional Standards Office. The nature of the complaint determines the investigating entity; however, all cases are centrally recorded, tracked and managed by the Professional Standards Office to ensure timely completion and consistency.

Why was I referred to someone else when I initially contacted the Professional Standards Office about my complaint?

Some complaints do not rise to the level of violations of our policies and procedures, and therefore do not qualify as misconduct allegations. These instances may be documented and handled in ways other than a formal investigation. These complaints offer an opportunity for a supervisor to intervene to help resolve the citizen concern. For example, if a complaint is about a communication problem with an employee that does not qualify as discourtesy, the officer's immediate supervisor will make every effort to resolve the issue with the employee and you. Other complaints can be handled in different ways ranging from educating you about police policies, procedures or training,

to supervisor counseling with an employee about how to better handle a situation. The primary goal in this situation is to seek an appropriate resolution to the complainant's concerns.

What determines whether the Professional Standards Office or the employee's immediate supervisor investigates my complaint?

While all allegations of misconduct are considered important to the department, the Professional Standards Office investigates allegations of misconduct that generally carry more serious consequences for the employee, the department, or community confidence in the police, while supervisors investigate those with less serious consequences. For example, PSO would investigate complaints of excessive force or unbecoming conduct, while an employee's unit supervisor would investigate allegations of rudeness.

It should be noted that the Professional Standards Office is a fact finding/investigating body only and is not responsible for determining outcomes of matters that it has investigated. Once the investigation is complete, the case file will be submitted to the appropriate command for review and recommendations.

How long does the investigative process take?

The timeframe of 30 days has been established as a target for the investigative process, from the initial receipt of the complaint to the full conclusion. Citizens and employees should know that we are responsive and will act swiftly to address all complaints. It should be noted that some investigations are more complex and may take longer than the prescribed 30 days. These instances should be the exception rather than the rule, but may occur due to certain circumstances, i.e., location of witnesses, evidence, or employees being on leave. When the investigative process goes beyond the 30 days, the complainant will be notified with a letter, via US Mail or email, depending upon your preference.

What are the possible dispositions that can result from an investigation?

Each allegation requires one of the below listed conclusion recommendations:

- **SUSTAINED:** Sufficient evidence to prove allegation;
- **NOT SUSTAINED:** Insufficient evidence to prove or disprove allegation;

And, if you have occasion to see one of our employees doing outstanding work, please tell us about it!



- **EXONERATED:** Incident occurred, but employee's actions were reasonable, lawful, and proper;
- **UNFOUNDED:** Allegation is proven to be false;
- **POLICY REVIEW:** Employees' actions were within policy, but consequences of policy need to be addressed.

Will I be notified of the disposition of my complaint?

YES. You will receive an initial letter of acknowledgement, via US Mail or email, depending upon your preference, confirming that your complaint was received, and at the conclusion of an investigation, you will be notified of the disposition. In matters where a violation was deemed sustained, you will be notified that appropriate action has been taken by the Department. Information regarding any related discipline will not be provided due to Human Resource privacy rules.

Are there measures of Mediation available to settle disputes between officers and citizens?

YES. The Charleston Police Department Mediation program is designed to resolve disputes and concerns between parties by mutually searching for a resolution through facilitated communication by a certified mediator. All parties must be agreeable to participate in mediation. Complaints that can be considered for mediation include, but are not limited to, courtesy and unsatisfactory performance.

In addition to investigating citizen concerns regarding officer performance, Chief Reynolds is dedicated to commending the officers and reinforcing good police work and positive public interaction. Commendations are placed in the officer's file and may even result in an award from the Chief.

You can compliment an officer through the following:

- **Online:**

<http://www.charleston-sc.gov/FormCenter/Police-3/Officer-Comment-Card-48>

- **US Mail:**

Charleston Police Department,
Professional Standards Office
180 Lockwood Blvd.,
Charleston, SC 29403

- **By Telephone:**

Professional Standards Office, 843.720.2447

- **In Person:**

Visit headquarters, any team office, or request to speak with the employee's supervisor at the time of the event.

- **Email:**

mixon1@charleston-sc.gov