SPECIAL ORDER

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Title
Community Outreach Program for Filing Citizens Complaints

Topic/Number
SO-04-01

Effective Date
January 16, 2004

Distribution
B

Related to:
General Order PER-120.25 (Citizens Complaints)
General Order PER-120.26 (Office of Citizen Complaint Review)
General Order OPS-204.10 (Policing for Prevention: Monthly PSA Meetings)

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I. BACKGROUND

Citizen complaints can be frustrating to all the parties involved. Citizens can become frustrated believing their complaints are not taken seriously or are not seriously or objectively investigated. Officers can become frustrated feeling that citizens do not understand the responsibilities and pressures of police work. City officials can become frustrated because they feel uncertain about how best to hold the police accountable for officer misconduct. These factors have combined to hamper the Department's ability to form partnerships with citizens, to build safe and healthy communities throughout the District of Columbia. The Department is committed to taking actions conducive to fostering trust within our communities.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of Justice, the District of Columbia, and the Metropolitan Police Department, signed June 13, 2001, addresses some of the issues surrounding citizen complaints. One of the mandates of the MOA is that the Department must carry out a community outreach program to ensure that the public is informed of the various avenues for filing complaints against MPD members.

This Special Order is intended to implement the Department's community outreach program for informing the public of the various methods for filing complaints/commendations. Direct contact with citizens occurs with every member of the Department in the course of his/her regular duties. Special efforts to inform members of the public of various avenues to file complaints are required from those MPD units, such as Policing for Prevention, Victim Services, and Youth Violence. Citizens may file complaints against a member of the MPD with the Office of Citizen Complaint Review (OCCR) at 730 11th Street, NW Suite 500, in person with MPD, by telephone (including TTY), through the mail, or electronically through email, or by accessing the MPD website at http://mpdc.dc.org. The Department also accepts and investigates third party and anonymous complaints.

The Department actively participated in the development of the MOA. By signing the MOA, the Chief of Police has committed the Department to comply with its mandates.

II. POLICY

The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department is to inform the public of the avenues for filing complaints against or writing commendations for members of the MPD.

III. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

A. General Responsibilities of Members

1. Members shall inform citizens who object to an officer's conduct that they can file a complaint with the OCCR or the Department.

2. Members shall carry informational brochures, "Filing Citizen Complaints Against Metropolitan Police Officers and the Complaint Review Process," while on duty and assigned to a vehicle, and give a copy of the brochure to a citizen when requested, or when a citizen has a question about filing citizen complaints against/commendations for officers.

3. Members or employees of the Department who come in contact with citizens who wish to file a complaint against a member, including himself/herself, shall immediately notify an official.

4. Members shall comply with requests from citizens to provide their badge number for purposes of identifying the officer in a complaint.

B. Schedule of Quarterly Meetings

Every PSA shall devote time to inform the public of the contents of the MOA and the various methods of filing citizen complaints, during one PSA Community Meeting per quarter beginning January 1, 2004 through December 31, 2004. At such meetings, brochures will be distributed to the public at the sign-in tables. Individuals receiving the brochures will indicate the receipt in a special column on the sign-in sheet, as documentation of the public dissemination of the MOA requirements.

C. Schedule of Semi-Annual Meetings

For the remaining term of the MOA, every PSA shall devote time to inform the public of the contents of the MOA and the various methods of filing citizen complaints semi-annually during one of the PSA Community Meetings.

- Meeting to be held between 1/1/05 and 6/30/05
- Meeting to be held between 7/1/05 and 12/31/05
- Meeting to be held between 1/1/06 and 6/30/06
- Meeting to be held between 7/1/06 and 12/31/06

D. Arrangement of Meetings

1. At least one week before the meeting, the time and location of the meeting shall be published on the MPD website, and in the following public locations within the respective PSA: libraries, schools, grocery stores, and community centers, etc.

2. Taking into account the diversity of the community within the respective PSA, the notice shall be in English and in the primary languages spoken in the community.

3. The meetings shall include presentations and information on MPD and MPD operations, in order to enhance interaction between officers and community members in daily policing activities.

E. Availability of Posters, Brochures and Information

District and Unit Commanders shall be responsible for ensuring the following:

1. An adequate supply of the informational brochure, "Filing Citizen Complaints Against Metropolitan Police Officers and the Complaint Review Process" is available at the District or Unit for dissemination to the public and to officers.

2. An adequate supply of OCCR Complaint Forms and Fact Sheets are available at the District or Unit for dissemination to the public and to officers.

3. The informational poster, "Citizen Complaints Against Metropolitan Police Officers," is posted at the District or Unit in an area accessible and frequented by the public. The poster must be clearly visible, as to make it easy to read. Replacement posters shall be requested as soon as possible after discovering that a poster is missing or damaged, rendering it incomplete, unreadable, or not presentable. Posters are available through the Office of Citizen Complaint Review Liaison Unit, Office of Professional Responsibility.

4. Provide a copy of the MOA to all Captains and PSA Lieutenants under their command.

F. Reporting Responsibilities

Each Assistant Chief, Regional Operations Command, shall ensure that a quarterly report is submitted by each district, reflecting compliance with the requirements contained in this order for the first year of this order (through 2004), and semiannually for the next two years of the term of the MOA (2004-2006), to the Office of Professional Responsibility through channels.

Charles H. Ramsey
Chief of Police

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