



Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

**Seattle Police Department**  
R. Gil Kerlikowske, Chief of Police

May 3, 2004

Honorable Mayor Greg Nickels  
Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council  
Citizens of Seattle

In 2003, OPA launched an aggressive campaign to improve internal communications with the members of the Seattle Police Department. The most critical and visible component of this outreach effort were presentations by OPA-IS Commander Captain Mark Evenson and OPA Associate Director John Fowler to roll-calls at every precinct and watch in the City.

This report describes this important internal outreach effort that complements the OPA's ongoing external outreach program. It is submitted as one of the 2004 semiannual reports.

I welcome your comments and observations regarding this report as well as any other issues pertaining to the direction and work of the Office of Professional Accountability.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Gil Kerlikowske  
Chief of Police

Sam Pailca, Director  
Office of Professional Accountability

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT



OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY

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# OPA's Internal Outreach Efforts

May, 2004

Prepared by:  
John Fowler, Associate Director  
*Office of Professional Accountability*

# SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY INTERNAL OUTREACH INITIATIVE

### **BACKGROUND**

A fundamental responsibility of the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) is to actively communicate both externally and internally. Open and transparent communication is vital to maintaining public trust and building credibility within the organization. OPA has successfully conducted a number of external outreach programs, which have included a variety of public forums throughout the City, enhanced Web-based communications and the development of multi-lingual brochures that assist our diverse population in understanding the complaint process.

In addition, OPA recognizes the importance of ongoing, internal communication. The relationship between civilian oversight and police officers is adversarial by nature. However, the success of OPA relies not only on the public's confidence, but also the organizational confidence that each and every police officer will receive a fair investigation. OPA believes enhanced internal communication will improve understanding, reduce citizen complaints, eliminate false information, identify and reduce systemic problems and foster a better relationship between OPA and the men and women of the Seattle Police Department.

### **ACTION**

OPA launched an aggressive campaign in 2003 to improve internal communications. OPA identified two internal communication needs. The first need was to communicate statistics, complaint trends, training needs and department-wide policy issues to the department's command staff. The second need was to communicate directly with the police officers about the OPA function, the investigation and discipline process, and the types and outcomes of complaints received. Such direct communication is necessary to ensure officers have information about when and how officers are investigated, and to correct misinformation and rumors.

In response to the first communication need, OPA established command staff briefings that enable OPA to communicate directly with the precinct and section commanders. OPA staff conducted a thorough examination and analysis of complaint statistics. In addition, the information was broken down by precinct and section in order to give each commander specific information and feedback regarding complaint trends and potential training needs. The first briefing was conducted during the first quarter of 2003 with very positive results. The briefing was refined and presented again with updated information during the first quarter of 2004. The 2004 presentation also included extensive discussion concerning the appropriate resolution of complaints received at the precinct

location. The OPA provided all attendees with complaint forms, additional OPA brochures, and written guidelines for handling complaints received at the precinct. In addition, the importance of timely and high-quality administrative reviews of officers with multiple complaints was emphasized, and written guidelines and checklists were provided. Finally, to ensure open communication and reinforce the importance of active participation by supervisors in complaint reduction, the OPA-IS commander is meeting one-on-one with all precinct and section commanders to review specific and general trend information. The meetings will provide-for the first time- a comprehensive overview of information related to their precincts and their personnel, such as complaint data and trends, EEO issues, and accident data.

To address the second internal communication need, OPA embarked on a plan to conduct roll-call presentations at every precinct and watch and to other operational units around the department. OPA developed a detailed presentation that addressed several important issues, such as the types of complaints received by OPA, and strategies officers could use to reduce those complaints. Presentations began in October of 2003 and over a two-month period, OPA conducted a total of 42 presentations with 409 sworn police officers attending. In addition to Patrol, presentations were conducted for the Traffic, Training, Narcotics and Vice Sections and a number of investigative units.

The roll call presentation format allowed senior OPA staff the opportunity to meet with officers on their “turf”, with their peers present, in an environment that felt secure. Though a number of officers displayed a general sense of frustration with the OPA process, the presentations were generally well received. Many questions were answered and misunderstandings clarified.

## **FEEDBACK**

Both outreach initiatives received very positive feedback. The command staff was very receptive to the briefing format. Feedback OPA received stated that the commanders would use this information to help them identify complaint trends and train their staff accordingly.

The roll call presentations were also received favorably. On numerous occasions, officers thanked the presenters for attending the roll calls and commented that they appreciated the effort of making the information available during their shifts at their work locations.

## **FOLLOW UP**

Several recommendations and concerns were identified during the roll call presentations. OPA maintained a record of all comments and suggestions, and reviewed all for consideration of changes in policies and procedures. This information and proposed response was subsequently presented to the command staff. OPA then shared this summary with the entire department. A copy of the list and follow-up measures is attached to this report.

OPA has determined that face-to-face communication with police officers is critical and will continue to conduct roll call presentations and identify other means to meet with officers on a regular basis.

The command staff briefings are now formalized. OPA will conduct these briefings during the first quarter of each calendar year, or more frequently as needed.

## **CONCLUSION**

These internal outreach initiatives have had a positive impact on the department and the Office of Professional Accountability. The OPA recognizes the need to continue to communicate effectively with the men and women of the Seattle Police Department. Through these efforts, OPA can improve the complaint process for the officers as well as the public.



# Seattle Police Department

OPA  
Fall 2003



## Complaint Process

- Received
- Classification
- Notification
- Decision Making



# Seattle Police Department

Contact Log

Preliminary Investigation Report

Supervisor Review

Line Investigation

OPA-IS Investigation





## Notification Process

5 Day

10 Day



# Seattle Police Department

**Criminal**

**v.**

**Administrative**

**Time Requirements**



# Seattle Police Department

## Possible Findings

Sustained

Not sustained

Unfounded

Exonerated

**Referred for Supervisory Resolution**

**Training or Policy Recommendation**

**Administratively Unfounded/Exonerated**

Administratively Inactivated



# Seattle Police Department

## Process for Sustained Findings

Process

Discipline Meeting

Decision Making

Notification

Loudermill



# Seattle Police Department

## Misperceptions of OPA

- Everything is investigated
- Pressure to sustain
- Role of the IS Commander
- Authority on sustained findings and discipline
- Criminal history checks
- Media
- Anonymous Complaints



## Important Information

### Did you know

- In 2002, 66% of complaints received by OPA were not investigated....
- Rudeness is the most frequent complaint...
- In 2002, 85% of the SPD Sworn staff had zero complaints



# Seattle Police Department

## Dispositions of Allegations in Completed Investigations 2002 Cases

Unfounded:	33%
Exonerated:	26%
Sustained:	14%
Not Sustained:	11%
Admin Unfounded:	11%
Admin Inactivated:	5%
Admin Exonerated:	1%



# Seattle Police Department

## UNIT STATISTICS

**2002**

• Contact Logs	573	(66%)
• SR's	97	(11%)
• LI's	38	(4%)
• OPA-IS Investigations	158	(18%)





# Seattle Police Department

## UNIT STATISTICS

**2003 (as of 12-16-03)**

- Contact Logs 153 (19%)
- PIR's (7-1-03) 408 (50%)
- SR's 77 (10%)
- LI's 35 (4%)
- OPA-IS Investigations 140 (17%)



# Seattle Police Department

## **Frequent Complaints**

- Rudeness Complaints
- Unnecessary/Excessive Force
- Complaints arising from demonstrations



# Seattle Police Department

## Role of the OPA Auditor and the OPA Board

- The OPA Auditor
- The OPA Board



# Seattle Police Department Significant Changes

PIR's v. Contact Log

SR Philosophy

Use of Force Policy (impact to IS)

False complaint policy



# Seattle Police Department

Questions?

# SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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## FOLLOW UP TO OPA ROLL CALL PRESENTATIONS

In an effort to provide better communication about the OPA process and to clarify misunderstandings, OPA conducted a total of 42 roll call presentations and were able to communicate directly with 409 sworn officers throughout the department. A lot of frustration exists regarding the OPA and our hope was that the roll call presentations would help allay some of those frustrations and concerns.

During the presentations, officers identified a variety of concerns and offered a number of suggestions regarding the OPA process. This information was shared with the department's command staff. Listed below are the concerns and suggestions and the follow up measures taken.

### ***There is a perception that every complaint is investigated no matter how minor***

Though many officers may feel this way, not every complaint is fully investigated by the OPA. Every complaint is documented and the OPA investigator will conduct some preliminary investigation to determine what, if any, follow up investigation is required. In 2003, 68% of all "complaints" filed were classified as Contact Logs or Preliminary Investigation Reports.

### ***OPA investigations are taking too long***

The department recognizes the need to streamline the investigation process. We did see a decrease in the investigation time for most cases last year; however, significant delays in closing the cases can be attributed to the extensive review process. The OPA Investigations Section is working on ways to streamline both the investigation and review process in order to get the cases closed and officers notified within a reasonable amount of time.

### ***Recommendation to allow officers to access OPA status reports by computer to determine where the investigation is in the process***

This is a great idea, however, SPD does not currently have the technology to install this type of system. This is a system that will be discussed as SPD enhances its information technology capabilities. To help address this issue, OPA has established a procedure to contact the named officer(s) by email to let them know when the investigation is completed and submitted for review. This direct contact between the investigator and the officer will enhance communication with the employee.

***Recommendation that named officers in all complaints, including violation of law complaints, be notified of the complaint when it is filed***

OPA is required by SPOG contract to notify named officers within 5 days of receiving a complaint. This does not apply when the complaint is determined to be criminal in nature. Once the investigation is no longer criminal, it is reclassified as an administrative investigation and the named employees are given notification. Named employees will usually not receive a formal notification when a complaint is classified as a Preliminary Investigation Report (PIR). A complaint that has been classified as a PIR means there is no officer misconduct involved and the complaint will not receive any further investigation. A copy of the PIR is forwarded to the named officer(s) chain of command for their information and the chain of command has been encouraged to share the information with the involved officer as a means of feedback.

***Recommendation that OPA investigators attend all training involving new technology e.g. Tasers***

OPA will work to ensure OPA investigators and command staff attend new technology training as well as yearly street skills training.

***Recommendation that OPA assume the function of background investigations***

Though it is critical that SPD hire only the best candidates possible, it is not practical that OPA assume this function at this time.

***Will OPA conduct “fishing expeditions” of in-car cameras when the program is fully implemented?***

No. That is not the purpose of the program. However, if a complaint is filed where the camera footage may be helpful in determining what took place, OPA will retrieve and review that portion of the tape that applies to the complaint.

***Once a complaint is sustained, the named employee is notified by certified mail to the employee’s home address. Recommendation that the notification be given in the workplace***

This issue was communicated to Human Resources. They advise that whenever possible, the procedure is to notify the employee at their place of work. Only when circumstances dictate otherwise will an employee receive notification at a home address.

***Concern expressed over the department’s practice to terminate employees who have been charged with a felony***

This concern has been shared with the Chief and the command staff.

***Concern expressed over the requirement that department employees who are victims in a domestic violence situation must report the incident to the department***

This issue has been resolved with changes to policy to reflect that victims will be encouraged, but not required, to report.

***Recommendation that since patrol officers have a greater exposure to potential complaints, they should be paid a higher rate of compensation***

This recommendation has been shared with the Chief and command staff.

***Recommendation that Lieutenants and above need to attend more roll calls***

This recommendation has been shared with the Chief and command staff.

***Recommendation that SPD needs to make a better effort to get the “good news” police stories out to the media***

This recommendation was shared with the Chief, command staff and Media Response Unit. The Chief noted that he emphasized this as a priority for the Media Response Unit and the department as a whole. The Media Response Unit provided examples of their efforts to obtain more positive coverage of police stories:

- **Sharing news stories** - Each week the Media Unit forecasts upcoming and current events and shares these stories with small and special interest papers, as well as the larger media outlets.
- **Media Forum** - Twice a year the Media Unit hosts a **media forum** during which suggestions for positive stories are discussed.
- **Editorial boards and News Directors** -The Chief of police and media unit **meet with the editorial boards** of both the "Times" and "PI" and with local news directors to discuss various issues and promote positive coverage.
- **Press releases/conferences** - The department sends **press releases** regarding all significant events and hosts **press conferences** for high profile/critical incidents to ensure the media has accurate information at the earliest possible time. Press releases and conferences are posted on the web.
- **Media Weekly** - A weekly report details the noteworthy media contacts, interviews, good news stories, web information and projects handled by the Media Unit that week.