



city of san luis obispo
police department
1042 walnut
san luis obispo, ca 93401
(805) 781-7317

“Service, Pride, Integrity”

citizen complaint form

COMPLAINTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AGAINST POLICE PERSONNEL

As public safety professionals, we strive to perform our duties fairly and with the utmost competence and compassion. Police officers are tasked with serving our community and enforcing our laws in an increasingly complex and dangerous environment. Officers are highly trained to handle a wide variety of situations, from finding lost children to investigating homicides. In all situations, our goal is the same: to provide effective, quality service to our community. In order to do this, we must earn the trust of those we serve so they partner with us to keep our community safe. Having a sound process for dealing with citizen complaints is an important step toward building this trust.

Sometimes, a member of our community may have a complaint about one of our police employees. Much of the time, the issue arises from a misunderstanding about the law or policy the officer is obligated to follow, or about the circumstances of the event. These issues can often be resolved by discussing your concerns with a supervisor. There may be some cases in which the complaint is about an employee’s conduct, or alleges a violation of department policy or law. These situations may warrant more in-depth investigation. Either way, we take your concerns seriously and will work to resolve them.

This pamphlet contains useful information to assist in resolving your concerns. We encourage you to discuss the situation with one of our supervisors. This is often the most expedient and effective way of resolving a complaint. If this does not bring you satisfaction, or if you do not wish to discuss your concerns with a supervisor, a complaint form is attached to this brochure. It is important that you be detailed and truthful in the information you provide.

Our goal is to effectively resolve your complaint. We will be diligent in our investigation and if any of our employees acted inappropriately, we will take action accordingly.

DEANNA CANTRELL
CHIEF OF POLICE

WHAT SHOULD I DO FIRST?

We encourage you to speak with a supervisor about your concerns/complaint. They will listen to you and may be able to gather additional information that could resolve your concerns. You may request to speak with a supervisor by contacting the Police Department by phone or in person. If you do not wish to speak with a supervisor, you may complete the attached complaint form and return it to the Police Department in person or by mail.

WHO WILL INVESTIGATE MY COMPLAINT?

If the complaint involves allegations of serious misconduct, it will be assigned to a trained investigator of supervisory or management rank for investigation. If the complaint involves minor policy violations, it may be handled by the employee's supervisor.

DO I HAVE TO COMPLAIN IN PERSON?

No. We prefer to talk to you in person but we will accept a complaint by telephone or letter if necessary.

I'M UNDER 18, DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO COMPLAIN?

Yes, however, you will need to bring one of your parents or guardian with you to make the complaint.

DO I HAVE TO WRITE OUT MY COMPLAINT?

We much prefer starting with a written account of your complaint. If there are valid reasons why this can't be done, we'll make other arrangements.

HOW THOROUGHLY WILL YOU INVESTIGATE MY COMPLAINT?

Very thoroughly. If one of our employees has engaged in any misconduct, we want to know about it so we may take appropriate corrective action. If it is determined an employees acted properly, it is equally important that you be made aware of this finding.

WHAT COULD HAPPEN TO THE OFFICER?

That will depend on the situation. If the officer is found to have violated the law, there could be legal sanctions as with any other citizen. If the officer is found to have violated a department policy, he/she could be subject to discipline as determined by the Chief of Police. This could range from a simple reprimand to termination, depending on the seriousness of the conduct. The officer could also be sent to additional training to improve his/her work performance.

WILL I BE TOLD THE OUTCOME OF THE COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION?

Yes. You will receive a letter telling you the disposition of our investigation. However, we cannot legally disclose the nature of any discipline imposed against an officer.

WILL I BE ASKED TO TAKE A LIE DETECTOR TEST (POLYGRAPH EXAMINATION)?

In certain cases, if the investigator is unable to determine what occurred even after a thorough investigation, you may be asked to take a polygraph examination. This does not happen very often. You have the right to refuse this request.

WHAT IF I'M NOT SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF THIS INVESTIGATION?

We sincerely hope that doesn't happen. But if it does, we encourage you to contact the Chief of Police to discuss the outcome of the investigation. We may be able to provide you with additional information and explanation that would be helpful to you. If this does not bring you satisfaction, you may contact the City Manager.

