

WHAT ABOUT MY COMPLAINT AGAINST A POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE?

Presented as a public service by the Sidney Police Department

The police officer in every community is an unmistakable symbol, not only of the law, but of the entire community. Because of this, they are the obvious target for grievances against any shortcomings of our system of government.

The police officer can work toward solving the complex problems of a community only when working in concert with the entire community. Police officers can and must, however, recognize their responsibility to serve all members of the public to the best of their ability. Fair and impartial law enforcement, which respects the individual dignity and rights of all is essential, and must be accomplished with tact and diplomacy, whenever possible.

As police officers, we must professionally and objectively investigate all citizen complaints as expeditiously and thoroughly as possible. This enables us to arrive at all the facts which will either quickly substantiate the complaint or clear the officer's name, whichever is appropriate. The following information addresses some common questions regarding the Sidney Police Department's policy related to the employee complaint process.

1. **What about the lie detector?**

In certain cases, where we can't determine the truth any other way, you may be asked to take a polygraph examination. The same is true of our officers.

2. **What if I'm not satisfied with the results of this investigation?**

We sincerely hope that would never happen. If it does, you can contact the City Manager, or in some cases, the City Attorney.

3. **Will I have to write out my complaint?**

Yes. Normally, for a complaint to be investigated, the complaint must be in writing, signed, and dated by the complaining person. Anonymous complaints will be taken but the lack of a known complainant or uncooperative complainant may hinder the investigation.

4. **Will I be told how the complaint is resolved?**

Yes. You will receive a letter from the Chief of Police telling you the disposition of our investigation.

5. **Could I get in trouble for complaining?**

Not if what you are telling us is the truth. We would not (and could not) bring charges against a person who has acted in good faith. Deliberately filing a false police report is a criminal offense.

6. **Does that mean the police department wants complaints?**

Of course not. A complaint means that someone may not have done their job correctly. We do want to know when our service needs to be improved or corrected.

7. **Will you listen to my complaint?**

Yes. Either an investigator assigned from the Internal Affairs Unit or the employee's supervisor will investigate your complaint.

8. **Who should I go to first?**

You should take a complaint about an employee to his/her Section Supervisor. If he or she is not available, ask for the on-duty shift supervisor. If the complaint is against a supervisor, contact the Deputy Police Chief or Chief of Police.

9. **I want to take this all the way to the top. Will the chief of police know?**

They will. The Chief of Police gets copies of all complaints against employees. Each employee is notified as well.

10. **Do I have to complain in person?**

No, but normally a more thorough investigation can be completed if the complainant is able to be interviewed in person.

11. **I'm under 18. Do I have a right to complain?**

Yes. Just bring one of your parents or guardians in with you.

12. **What will happen to the employee?**

That will depend on what they did. If the employee's actions were criminal, they would be dealt with like any other citizen. If the actions were improper, but not criminal, they will be disciplined.

13. **How thoroughly will you really investigate?**

Very thoroughly. We want to find out why you didn't receive the services you requested. If the conduct was lawful and proper, then we want to explain that to the citizen. Additionally, if a person intentionally makes a **false** complaint, we want to find out why and take the appropriate legal action.