

The mission of the Professional Standards Division is really quite simple - to protect the public trust. The men and women of the department understand that our greatest resource and asset is the support and assistance given by the community we serve. Naturally, this relationship, or "partnership" as we think of it, with the citizens of Warwick is something we must constantly strive to protect. This is a responsibility shared by every member of the department and it is the primary task of the Professional Standards Division.

Below are some of the most common questions and concerns expressed by the public about the complaint process and the Professional Standards Division.

### **WHAT DOES THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION DO?**

- The Professional Standards Division has the responsibility of investigating:
- Allegations of unnecessary force used by a member of the department in the performance of duty.
- Any allegation of criminal conduct by a member of the department.
- Allegations of false arrest.
- Allegations of bias based policing.

### **DOES THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION DO ANYTHING ELSE?**

- The division coordinates the receiving, processing, and conducting of internal investigations arising from citizen and internal complaints.
- The division reviews all use of force by department members and makes recommendation to the Chief of Police when necessary.
- The division responds to the scene when there is a discharge of a firearm by on-duty personnel and conducts a separate investigation to determine if this action falls within departmental guidelines.
- The division reviews and coordinates all proposed disciplinary action against employees.
- The division maintains a comprehensive central index of all complaints received within the unit as well as those received by line supervisors.
- The division maintains a statistical analysis of complaints to identify trends and patterns within the department or individual officers and makes recommendations to correct these problems.

### **TO WHOM DOES THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION REPORT?**

- The Professional Standards Division reports directly to the Chief of Police.

## **WHAT ABOUT OTHER COMPLAINTS SUCH AS DISCOURTESY OR POOR SERVICE?**

- These complaints are investigated by the employee's immediate supervisor and then forwarded to the Professional Standards Division for indexing, review and filing.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I MAKE A COMPLAINT?**

- If the complaint is for unnecessary or excessive use of force, false arrest, or violation of a specific criminal statute, the Professional Standards Division will investigate the complaint, and based on the results, make a recommendation to the Chief of Police that the complaint be either sustained or not sustained. The Chief will then send the investigation to staff officers for their review and recommendations. The staff officers then forward the complaint back to the Chief's Office where he will make the final recommendation on each case. All decisions involving disciplinary action will be made in conjunction with the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights.

## **IS SOMETHING DONE ON ALL COMPLAINTS?**

- Yes, all complaints are thoroughly examined and investigations are either documented on a complaint control form or become formal inquiries through the Professional Standards Division consistent with the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights.

## **HOW DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT?**

- Complaints will be accepted from any source and may be made anonymously, in person, or by telephone, but preferably they should be made in person by the individual concerned in the allegation against the police employee. Any supervisor may take a complaint, and upon receiving the complaint will forward it to the accused employee's immediate supervisor or to the Professional Standards Division. A complaint may also be received by the Professional Standards Division who will either investigate it or forward it to the appropriate line supervisor for investigation. As part of the investigation, you may be asked to give a sworn statement to an Professional Standards Division Investigator. An appointment will be made at a time convenient to you any you may bring with you anyone of your choosing. You will be treated courteously and need not fear any type of intimidation or other improper behavior. When making a complaint, simply relate the facts as you know them; don't attempt to add to or embellish your complaint, and be mindful that you will be asked specific questions regarding factual

information.

## **BIAS BASED PROFILING COMPLAINTS**

- The Warwick Police Department has established a policy, General Order 320.17, concerning the prohibition of Bias based profiling as set out in state and federal laws concerning racial profiling and discriminatory practices in general. Discrimination in any form, including racial profiling, is strictly prohibited and the department will take immediate and appropriate action to investigate allegations of discrimination. This policy applies to all members of the Warwick Police Department.

### **What is Bias based Profiling?**

Racial profiling is any law enforcement-initiated action based on an individual's race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than on the individual's behavior or information identifying the individual as having engaged in criminal activity.

Examples of racial profiling include but are not limited to the following:

- Initiating a traffic stop on a particular vehicle because of the race, ethnicity, or national origin of the driver of a vehicle
- Stopping or detaining the driver of a vehicle based on the determination that a person of that race, ethnicity, or national origin is unlikely to own or possess that specific make or model of vehicle
- Stopping or detaining an individual based on the determination that a person of that race, ethnicity, or national origin does not belong in a specific part of town or a specific place

Brochures describing the departments Internal Complaint procedure and statement forms are available for the public at police headquarters and the Warwick City Hall personnel office. Complaints shall be accepted in person, by mail, by telephone, or by facsimile.

### **Complaint Investigation.**

The department shall accept complaints from any person who believes he/she has been stopped or searched based on racial, ethnic, or gender-based profiling factors, and no person shall be discouraged, intimidated, or coerced from filing such a complaint.

Allegations of Bias based profiling will be investigated according to procedures described in the

provided Complaint brochure.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETED?**

After your complaint has been investigated you will be notified of the results by the investigations officer. If you are dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, or the specific finding, you may ask that another agency review the investigation. Depending on the type of allegation, you will be informed by the Professional Standards Division of the most appropriate agency for you to contact. You should also know that making a complaint in no way limits your ability or right to pursue any other complaint forums if you feel you have been wronged. Every complaint that involves a possible violation of a law is automatically forwarded to the Attorney General's Department for review.

### **WHAT RIGHTS DO POLICE OFFICERS HAVE WHEN A COMPLAINT IS MADE AGAINST THEM?**

Officers are protected under the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights and their labor agreement which provides that they shall not be subjected to harassment, intimidation, threats from supervisors, or unreasonable periods of interrogation. They have a right to counsel or union representation during the investigation.

### **IS THERE ANY RISK TO ME WHEN I MAKE A COMPLAINT AGAINST A POLICE EMPLOYEE?**

No, only if you deliberately make a false complaint against an officer, and in that case, you may be prosecuted criminally and/or held civilly liable.

### **WILL THE POLICE REALLY BE IMPARTIAL WHEN THEY INVESTIGATE THEIR OWN OFFICERS OR EMPLOYEES?**

Yes, the question goes right to the heart of what professional policing is all about. We strive to ensure quality performance from all our officers who represent our police department and the City, and want the public to know that we will not tolerate misconduct. We are acutely aware that any tolerance or perceived tolerance of officer misconduct will lead to a breakdown of the public trust which would adversely effect the ability of the police department to function effectively.

### **DOES WARWICK GET MANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT ITS POLICE OFFICERS?**

No, our police officers respond to about 75,000 calls for service each year. Less than one-half of one percent result in complaints regarding the employee's conduct or performance.

The Warwick Police Department is committed to providing the best possible system for the objective and thorough examination of all complaints, and have taken the extra steps necessary to assure the public of the integrity of our investigations and an open approach to the review of our system.

The task of policing today's society is demanding and challenging. The Warwick Police Department will continue to demand the highest standards from its employees. Realizing that it is not possible to enforce the rules of society without incurring some animosity, we will endeavor to protect our employees from unwarranted and false complaints. Through this entire process, we will work to maintain your trust and support and develop a real working partnership with our community.

Click here to download a complaint form in PDF Format: [Letter of Complaint](#)