

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



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FIRE CHIEF

June 5, 2023

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 23-059

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: *KC* Kristin M. Crowley, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION COMPLAINT PROCESS

FINAL ACTION: Approved Approved w/Corrections Withdrawn
 Denied Received & Filed Other

SUMMARY

As directed by the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) is providing a response to its request to provide an overview of the Professional Standards Division (PSD) complaint process. The report includes the steps taken when processing a complaint made by either a member of the Department or the public against an LAFD employee.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file.

DISCUSSION

A complaint can be defined as:

1. An allegation from any source of a specific act or omission by an employee/member that if proven true would constitute employee misconduct.
2. An expression of dissatisfaction from an external source with the behavior of an employee/member, or policy, practice, or service provided by the Department (Varone, C, 2023).

The PSD complaint process begins when a complaint against a member of the LAFD is submitted to PSD in one of multiple ways: US Mail, e-mail, phone, fax, or via the Complaint Tracking System (CTS) form on the LAFD intranet (available to LAFD members only). Every effort is made to ensure the process is convenient, professional, and prompt.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the PSD Moderator enters it into CTS. If the complaint originates from a member of the public (non-LAFD member), a PSD investigator is assigned to contact the complainant within 48 hours to schedule an intake interview.

The purpose of the intake interview is to clarify the complaint and obtain additional details including: involved parties, pertinent contact information, relevant evidence, etc. The information obtained from the intake interview is recorded and then uploaded into CTS. An intake interview will also be conducted with LAFD members who initiate a complaint if additional information is needed.

On a weekly basis, new complaints are reviewed by the PSD Command staff for evaluation, and disposition during a case assignment meeting. If the PSD Command staff determines that the complaint requires an investigation, they will, depending on the nature of the allegations, and potential policy violation, assign the case as either a PSD-level investigation or as a field-level investigation.

PSD Command staff can also evaluate a complaint, and determine that, based on the nature of the allegations, the complaint is not a violation of policy or an act of misconduct, and the matter can be closed as non-disciplinary.

On occasion, certain violations are entered into CTS by LAFD supervisors for documentation purposes only, with the recommendation of no further action. In these instances, PSD Command staff will review the incident, and decide if the case should be further investigated for disciplinary purposes, or closed non-punitive or non-disciplinary.

Upon completion of the weekly case assignment meeting, the PSD Moderator ensures that the cases are sent for investigation via CTS. The investigator(s) are then given access to that complaint in CTS in order to upload all comments and relevant documents.

Referrals

Depending on the nature of the allegation/complaint, it may be necessary for the PSD Moderator to refer the complaint to other LAFD sections or to outside agencies to conduct their own investigation. Referrals can also be made for the purpose of requesting a review by a subject matter expert (i.e. Medical Director, EEO Coordinator). The following are referrals made by PSD:

- Law Enforcement – Criminal activity
- Los Angeles County Department of Health Services - Reference 214 “Base Hospital and Provider Agency Reporting Responsibilities”
- MyVoiceLA - Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints
- Personnel Services Section – Reviews by EEO Coordinator
- EMS Bureau – Reviews by Medical Director
- LAFD Risk Management – Workplace Violence/Threat Assessments

CONCLUSION

PSD accepts complaints in a courteous and objective manner while maintaining the integrity of the Department. All complaints are taken seriously while protecting the rights of both the complainant and the subjects. Additionally, the complaint process can provide valuable feedback to improve service while maintaining public trust.

Board report prepared by Kristina Kepner, Commander, Professional Standards Division and Nancie Arbogast, Acting Chief Special Investigator, Professional Standards Division.

Attachment

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