

June 18, 2019

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

May 14, 2019

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 19-066

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION REPORT ON THE
COMMUNITY MEDIATION PARTNERSHIP PILOT PROGRAM

FINAL ACTION: ☐ Approved
☐ Denied

☐ Approved w/Corrections
☐ Received & Filed

☐ Withdrawn
☐ Other

SUMMARY

Currently, the Professional Standards Division (PSD) investigates a significant number of complaints on an annual basis from citizens stemming from service complaints and/or misunderstandings of medical protocols by LAFD members during a service call. In these cases, after a thorough investigation has been completed, there may be insufficient evidence to prove violations of LAFD rules and regulations and/or policies and procedures or if proven, the nature of the misconduct may only warrant low-level discipline. The amount of resources allocated to these investigations is substantial and the outcome does not always leave the constituent satisfied with the process. In an effort to be in alignment with the Fire Chief's strategic plan 2.0, Goal 1, Strategy 9 "*provide exceptional customer service*", a better and more effective solution is available and has already been piloted and implemented by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

The Community Mediation Partnership (CMP) is a proposed 12-month mediation pilot program designed to address this large volume of citizen vs. LAFD member complaints using the existing mediation program created and managed by the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office - Dispute Resolution Program (DRP).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and approve this report.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the Department's budget from implementing the CMP pilot program. In fact, the implementation of the CMP pilot program may potentially result in a positive fiscal impact to the Department's budget by reducing investigative hours and

conserving limited resources. Specific data has not yet been collected and/or calculated.

DISCUSSION

The CMP is modeled after LAPD's Community Policing Unification program (CPU), which was successfully piloted and established by the LAPD in 2014. The proposed CMP program will be an informal, confidential process in which the complainant(s) and accused LAFD employee(s) meet face-to-face, with the assistance of a trained neutral mediator from the DRP, to discuss the alleged misconduct and/or complaint with the goal of arriving at a mutually agreeable resolution.

This may result in an agreement or an agreement to disagree. The participants are not required to reach a formal resolution.

Under the CMP, the following complaints may be considered for mediation:

- Service call complaints
- EMS protocol-related complaints
- Discourtesy complaints
- Other low acuity citizen complaints against Department member(s)

The CMP program will be monitored by PSD under the supervision of the LAFD Mediation Coordinator; the Battalion Commander of Internal Affairs. Internal protocols have been established to identify suitable cases, formalize a vetting and monitoring process through the CMP.

The pilot program will be regularly evaluated by PSD using formal and informal evaluations from the participants. As part of the evaluation process, PSD will also identify any future complaints similar in nature against a member who has already gone through the CMP process in order to assess the success and effectiveness of the program.

The proposed CMP pilot program does not replace the administrative/disciplinary process. Department members who are subjects maintain their right to the full investigative process. They also maintain rights afforded to them under statutory authority and their respective MOUs, if they elect not to participate in the CMP program.

CONCLUSION

The proposed CMP pilot program is intended as an alternative to the traditional administrative and disciplinary process and has the potential to save the Department costs, and conserve time and limited resources. Above all, the CMP as shown by the LAPD's current CPU program will have a positive impact with the community and allow for meaningful resolutions to occur between the citizen(s) and the Department member(s).

Board report prepared by Amir Caspian, Battalion Chief, Professional Standards Division.