How Can Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement Help You?

National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement
NACOLE

Protects Civil Rights

Civilian oversight is a developing area of civil rights protection. Oversight practitioners are at the forefront of investigating, reviewing, and auditing individual cases or patterns of potential civil rights violations in areas such as racial profiling, biased policing, the use of deadly force, illegal searches, excessive force, and unlawful arrests.

Supports Effective Policing

Mutual trust and respect between police and communities are critical to effective law enforcement. Civilian oversight increases public trust in police by assuring the public that investigations have been done fairly, thoroughly, and objectively. This improved trust leads to greater public cooperation with law enforcement, and in turn, improves public safety.

Ensures Greater Accountability

One of the primary goals of civilian oversight is to advance fair and professional law enforcement that is responsive to community needs. This is accomplished, in large part, by promoting constitutional policing. Oversight focuses on assessing officer and departmental compliance with local policies as well as state and federal law, and institutionalizing and preserving important reforms. It also aids in evaluating the integrity and effectiveness of internal police accountability systems.

Builds Bridges

Effective policing must be responsive to community standards, values, and needs. Civilian oversight builds bridges between communities and the police forces that serve them by: communicating and cooperating with community and civic leaders before and after major incidents; by assuring the public that investigations of police misconduct have been completed fairly, thoroughly, and objectively; and by conducting independent investigations and reviews to ensure constitutional policing practices. Civilian oversight further acts as a bridge by conveying the concerns and needs of the community to the police, and reporting to the community how the police are performing, which allows the public to trust the police department and its officers and to view them as honest, reliable, and trustworthy. Civilian oversight practitioners are generally not currently-serving police officers, but trained and educated lawyers, investigators, researchers, analysts, and volunteers in your community.

Helps Manage Risk

Civilian oversight is critical to managing a municipality's exposure to risk from lawsuits claiming unlawful actions by individual officers or departmental failures to supervise or train officers. Oversight accomplishes this by ensuring that individual officers who engage in misconduct are effectively investigated and disciplined; by evaluating and proposing improvements to police management and supervision and training; and by reporting publicly on a department's progress in implementing such improvements.

Increases Confidence in Police

Civilian oversight works to increase public trust and confidence in the police. By conducting independent reviews and audits of police policies and practices, and by ensuring that investigations of police misconduct or uses of force are handled fairly and objectively, oversight helps a community to trust that issues are resolved in a way that maximizes the public interest. This trust translates to higher confidence in a police force, and greater cooperation in a department's efforts to prevent and solve crimes.

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