

**Suffolk County**  
**Human Rights Commission**  
*Administration of Justice Subcommittee*



**Civilian Police Oversight**  
**Annual Report**  
**2024-2025**

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## ***Message from Suffolk County Human Rights Commission Chair***

Dear Colleagues, Advocates and Neighbors:

Over the past year, the Administration of Justice (AOJ) has enhanced its oversight efforts with the support of the Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD) and the Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB). While our collaboration has strengthened, we are dedicated to preserving our independence and transparency, particularly when addressing challenges that require sincere attention. In the *"Identified Areas of Concern"* section of the full report, we outline these challenges and provide targeted recommendations for systemic improvements.

Our second year brought many changes: starting with new leadership in the Suffolk County Police Department and the IAB, shifts within the Human Rights Commission and the Administration of Justice Committee, and fresh perspectives from recently appointed Commission members. Despite these changes, our commitment to fairness, transparency, and accountability remains strong. While we are volunteers, we are also your neighbors and fellow residents who care deeply about justice in our County.

We are expanding our role to include stronger outreach and clearer communication with the public. We intend to ensure that Suffolk County residents know how to report concerns, understand the process, and feel heard. We are honored by the trust placed in us and will keep working toward a more accountable and equitable system for all.

This work would not be possible without the dedication of the Human Rights Commission staff, who examine every detail with precision and diligence. We also benefit immensely from the leadership of Suffolk County HRC Executive Director Dawn Lott and the AOJ Committee, whose passion and professionalism continue to guide and inspire us.

With respect,

Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, LMSW, CLC  
Chair, Suffolk County Human Rights Commission

## ***Message from Administration of Justice Subcommittee Chair***

Our second year of providing civilian oversight for investigations conducted by the Suffolk County Police Internal Affairs Bureau has been a year of intense work and continuing efforts to increase our efficiency. It has also been a year of change; we have had several changes in the IAB leadership, new Suffolk County leadership, new members of the HRC, and thus on the Administration of Justice Committee (AOJ), along with HRC Investigator turnover. What has not changed, however, is the deep commitment of old and new members of the AOJ and HRC to ensuring that IAB investigations are conducted fairly and thoroughly. Similar to last year's report, here, we review our activities, observations, data and recommendations as well as areas that we intend to expand in the coming year.

I am honored to serve with remarkable members of AOJ who are enormously dedicated to our mission and generous in the extensive amount of time each month that they engage in meetings with HRC Investigators and in biweekly AOJ committee meetings. We meet with HRC Investigators to review ongoing and completed investigations. During these meetings, the investigators share the detail of the allegations, evidence updates including going over reports, statements and body-worn-camera footage and any concerns that they have about the process or progress of these investigations. During this process, the AOJ members discuss any observations or concerns about the investigative process as well as patterns of police behavior when it unnecessarily escalates an encounter with the public or when it reflects police behavior that is exemplary in de-escalating encounters with the public. The AOJ members pay particular attention to policies and procedures on the part of the police or IAB that may require recommendations for revisions. In addition to the hard work of the AOJ committee members, Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, the HRC Chair, is extremely engaged, supportive and provides critical advocacy for the work of the AOJ.

My fellow AOJ Commissioners and I are also honored to work with the extraordinary HRC staff. While we are volunteers who work diligently, they are critical players who work day in and day out viewing thousands of hours of BWC footage (some of which can be difficult to view), reviewing the thousands of pieces of evidence, charting and documenting important elements and identifying cases that need follow-up or special attention. They also help us in our efforts to identify trends and possible areas in need of policy or procedural change. Their work is invaluable to the critical work of civilian oversight. In addition, this entire endeavor would not be possible or as well coordinated without the amazing leadership and diligence of the HRC Executive Director, Dawn Lott. Her support of our work, expertise in directing the staff, and willingness to take on this enormous task in addition to her other responsibilities are a testament to her incredible professionalism, dedication to serving the people of Suffolk County and to human rights.

As you will see laid out in more detail in the *"Overview and Assessment of the Evolving Process"* section, while we are pleased with the work we have done, and the responsiveness of the IAB, there have continued to be challenges. Overall, we have found the SCPD and SCPD IAB leadership to be committed to cooperating and helping to make this critically important initiative work. In order for us to be effective, we must have a working relationship with both the IAB leadership and its investigators while being absolutely clear about the importance of maintaining independence and objectivity in our relationship as it is fundamental to our mission. Based on the challenges we faced this year, as well as patterns of some police behavior that we have observed, like last year, we will share the specifics of those challenges and patterns as well as recommendations we have about changes in police and IAB procedures and policies in the

*“Identified Areas Of Concern, IAB Response and AOJ Concerns Status”* section towards the end of the document.

In addition, going forward, the AOJ has begun reviewing our processes to make sure we capture critical data that can help us to monitor trends and better be able to report these trends to the public. Our commitment to the work of civilian oversight has been largely focused on the oversight. Our intention in the coming year is to expand our outreach to the community to ensure that the public in Suffolk County is fully aware of the process of reporting complaints and compliments, as well as to gather feedback from those who have used the complaint process to assess their experience of it.

Again, the entire team and I are dedicated to working to ensure the integrity of investigations into complaints against Suffolk County police officers, and are honored by the trust invested in us.

With respect,

Carolyn G. Peabody, PhD, LCSW  
Chair, Administration of Justice Committee  
Suffolk County Human Rights Commission

## HISTORY OF POLICE OVERSIGHT

*As described by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) at <https://www.nacole.org/>*

Early forms of civilian oversight of law enforcement emerged during the Progressive Era (1897-1920) amid calls for eliminating municipal corruption and disentangling the police from such corruption. In some cities, volunteer civilian police commissions were appointed by the mayor or city council to act as the board of directors for the police department, often with the authority to hire and fire the police chief and set department policy.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, however, these early police commissions proved ineffective due the political entrenchment of the appointed commissioners<sup>2</sup> and their frequent deference to the police chief.<sup>3</sup>

A more formalized concept of civilian oversight emerged amid tensions between police and minority communities in the late 1920s. In 1928, the Los Angeles Bar Association established a Committee on Constitutional Rights to record complaints of police misconduct.<sup>4</sup> As a nongovernmental body, the commission had no authority to act on complaints received.<sup>5</sup>

From the 1930s to 1950s, riots over race relations and police violence in urban areas gave way to strengthened movements for police accountability and improved civilian complaint processes.<sup>6</sup> A breakthrough came about in Washington, D.C., in 1948, when the nation's first civilian review board (CRB) was established in response to community concerns over police using excessive force against African Americans and to lobbying efforts by the Urban League and National Conference of Christians and Jews.<sup>7</sup> This first CRB had limited visibility and effectiveness, reviewing just 54 cases in its first 16 years.<sup>8</sup> The board was eventually abolished in 1995 amid a fiscal crisis and an unmanageable backlog of cases.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> De Angelis, Rosenthal, and Buchner, *Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement: Assessing the Evidence*, 18; Police Assessment Resource Center, "Review of National Police Oversight Models for the Eugene Police Commission," 7.

<sup>2</sup> Attard and Olson, *Overview of Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement in the United States*, 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Police Assessment Resource Center, "Review of National Police Oversight Models for the Eugene Police Commission," 8.

<sup>4</sup> Alpert et al., "Citizen Oversight in the United States and Canada," 181.

<sup>5</sup> Walker, "Chapter 1. The History of Citizen Oversight," 3.

<sup>6</sup> Walker, "Chapter 1. The History of Citizen Oversight," 3; Walker, *Police Accountability: The Role of Citizen Oversight*, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, *Civilian Oversight of Policing: Lessons from the Literature*, 36; De Angelis, Rosenthal, and Buchner, *Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement: Assessing the Evidence*, 19.

<sup>8</sup> De Angelis, Rosenthal, and Buchner, *Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement: Assessing the Evidence*, 19; Miller, *Civilian Oversight of Policing: Lessons from the Literature*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> The Office of Police Complaints (OPC) now provides civilian oversight in Washington, D.C. For more on the history and evolution of civilian oversight in Washington, D.C., see NACOLE's case study on the Office of Police Complaints.

In 1973, a group of community organizations in Berkeley, California, mounted a successful campaign prompting the city council to pass an ordinance establishing the Police Review Commission—the first civilian oversight agency specifically authorized to independently investigate police complaints.<sup>10</sup> That same year, voters in Detroit approved a city charter amendment creating the all-civilian Detroit Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC), authorized to set department policy and independently investigate and resolve complaints.<sup>11</sup>

Less than a decade later, the San Francisco Office of Citizen Complaints (OCC), now known as the Department of Police Accountability, was incorporated into the city's charter in 1982. The OCC signaled a unique development, in that the agency replaced the civilian complaint investigation functions of the San Francisco Police Department.<sup>12</sup>

The 1990s brought about significant changes to American policing, reform efforts, and civilian oversight of law enforcement. This decade experienced sharp increases in police recruitment and resources,<sup>13</sup> as well as a 41 percent spike in drug-related arrests,<sup>14</sup> and a focus on quality-of-life policing that contributed to the dramatic expansion of practices such as stop-and-frisk.<sup>15</sup> Racial disparities in such enforcement,<sup>16</sup> as well as national media coverage of police misconduct and corruption, markedly increased unfavorable public perceptions of police, particularly within minority communities.<sup>17</sup> Concurrently, a new wave of civilian oversight agencies with expanded powers emerged, as did new efforts by the DOJ to reform police departments engaging in patterns of unconstitutional policing.

During this period, a new model of civilian oversight focused on systemic issues in law enforcement policies and procedures began to take shape. In 1991, the Seattle city council passed an ordinance establishing an independent civilian auditor to audit and review civilian complaint

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<sup>10</sup> Andi, "Berkeley's Establishment of a Police Review Commission;" Walker, "Chapter 1. The History of Citizen Oversight," 4.

<sup>11</sup> City of Detroit, "Police Commissioners History;" Walker, Police Accountability: The Role of Citizen Oversight, 34.

<sup>12</sup> De Angelis, Rosenthal, and Buchner, Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement: Assessing the Evidence, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Koper, Moore, and Roth, Putting 100,000 Officers on the Street: A Survey-Based Assessment of the Federal COPS Program.

<sup>14</sup> King and Mauer, "The War on Marijuana: The Transformation of the War on Drugs in the 1990s," 3.

<sup>15</sup> Fagan and Davies, "Street Stops and Broken Windows;" Fagan et al., "Street Stops and Broken Windows Revisited: The Demography and Logic of Proactive Policing in a Safe and Changing City."

<sup>16</sup> King and Mauer, "The War on Marijuana: The Transformation of the War on Drugs in the 1990s," 3; Fagan et al., "Street Stops and Broken Windows Revisited: The Demography and Logic of Proactive Policing in a Safe and Changing City," 2–3; Mitchell and Caudy, "Examining Racial Disparities in Drug Arrests."

<sup>17</sup> Lasley, "The Impact of the Rodney King Incident on Citizen Attitudes toward Police;" Tuch and Weitzer, "Trends: Racial Differences in Attitudes Toward the Police;" Weitzer, "Incidents of Police Misconduct and Public Opinion;" Tyler and Fagan, "The Impact of Stop and Frisk Policies."

investigations completed by the Seattle Police Department's Internal Investigations Section.<sup>18</sup> Two years later, city councilmembers in San Jose, California, proactively approved an ordinance creating an Independent Police Auditor (IPA). While modeled after Seattle's civilian auditor,<sup>19</sup> the San Jose IPA was given a broader mandate and was authorized to review the complaint investigations completed by the San Jose Police Department (SJPd), analyze complaint trends and statistics, and review and recommend improvements to SJPd policies and procedures.<sup>20</sup>

The turn of the century has brought renewed attention to issues surrounding law enforcement misconduct. Several violent and sometimes fatal encounters captured on video and widely circulated through social media have yielded coalitions of community groups and campaigns organizing for police accountability and racial justice nationwide.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the growing sophistication of data-based, investigative journalism has brought attention to these issues in many local contexts.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ACLU of Washington, "Seattle: A Call for an Independent Office for Police Accountability."

<sup>19</sup> ACLU of Washington, "Seattle: A Call for an Independent Office for Police Accountability."

<sup>20</sup> Walker, "Chapter 1. The History of Citizen Oversight," 5; Ferdik, Rojek, and Alpert, "Citizen Oversight in the United States and Canada," 112–13.

<sup>21</sup> For an overview of some of the organizing work sparked by these events, see Lowery, *They Can't Kill Us All*.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Kelly, Lower, and Rich, "Fired/Rehired: Police Chiefs Are Often Forced to Put Officers Fired for Misconduct Back on the Streets;" NJ Advance Media, "The Force Report;" Taggart, Hayes, and Pham, "Here are the Secret Records on Thousands of New York Police Misconduct Cases."



## **POLICE OVERSIGHT IN SUFFOLK COUNTY**

Suffolk County's approach to civilian police oversight emerged from the state-mandated reform process prompted by Executive Order 203, issued by then-Governor Andrew Cuomo in June 2020. The order required local governments to review and reform policing practices to improve transparency, accountability, and public trust.

In response, Suffolk County convened a diverse 37-member Police Reform and Reinvention Task Force, led by then-Deputy County Executives Vanessa Baird-Streeter and Jon Kaiman. Over seven months, the Task Force engaged with residents and community leaders to develop a comprehensive reform plan. This plan was approved by the Suffolk County Legislature on March 30, 2021, and submitted to New York State on April 1, 2021.

A key component of the plan was expanding the role of the Human Rights Commission to include the civilian review of police misconduct investigations. In December 2021, the Legislature codified this expanded authority. The implementation of HRC's new role commenced in January 2022. The County Executive's Office supported implementation by hiring four additional investigators and investing in office renovations to accommodate the growing team.

To improve public access, the HRC adopted the "Oversight by Sivil" (Sivil) online platform, providing a user-friendly portal for submitting complaints or compliments about police conduct. The HRC now accepts complaints and compliments via the portal, by mail or phone. By March 2023, the Sivil platform and oversight review process was launched. Complaints may also be filed at the local precincts.

From the outset, all HRC Investigators and members of the Administration of Justice Committee received extensive training to prepare for their responsibilities under the new oversight framework.

### **HRC Investigator and AOJ Training (2024-2025)**

The Human Rights Commission members and the Administration of Justice Committee continued to build on the strong training foundation established in 2023, recognizing that effective civilian oversight requires consistent, advanced, and evolving education. While last year's training focused on core systems like the Axon Evidence.com-sharing portal, case law, and foundational body-worn camera use, this year's program expanded both in depth and scope, reflecting the dynamic nature of police oversight and our commitment to accountability.

In April 2025, HRC Investigators, Commission Members and AOJ members—both newly appointed and returning—participated in a two-day Civilian Oversight Training led by nationally recognized experts Chief Jason Armstrong and Executive Director Nicolle Barton. Known for their

leadership roles in reforming the Ferguson Police Department following the 2014 civil unrest, Armstrong and Barton have since led transformative efforts in departments across the country and now serve as subject matter experts with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). Their training covered:

- **Core Oversight Fundamentals:** Oversight 101, legal standards, case dispositions, and evidence analysis
- **Advanced Components:** Practical investigative techniques, data collection and analysis, police practices and procedures, and effective community engagement strategies

This immersive experience provided participants with the tools to navigate complex oversight investigations and strengthened our ability to evaluate police conduct through a lens of objectivity, legality, and community impact.

In addition to this in-person training, AOJ members are slated to participate in the Suffolk County Police Department's Civilian Academy in the Winter/Spring 2025-26. This training will offer first-hand exposure to police operations, including scheduled visits to SCPD's IAB headquarters and ride-alongs. These opportunities allow oversight representatives to observe law enforcement in practice and develop a clearer understanding of departmental procedures.

HRC Investigators have also continued their professional development through their membership in the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE). Through NACOLE's monthly forums and specialized webinars, staff engaged with oversight practitioners nationwide on pressing topics such as:

- *The New World of Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities for Civilian Oversight* (June 2025)
- *Understanding Civilian Oversight's Fast-Changing Legal Landscape* (April 2025)
- *Digital Video Evidence: Identifying Technical Challenges and Limitations* (February 2025)
- *The Importance of a Discipline Matrix in Policing and Oversight* (November 2024)
- *Subcultures in Policing: Features and Implications* (August 2024)
- *Constitutional Police-Community Encounters* (June 2024)
- *Investigating Police Surveillance Techniques* (May 2024)

Notably, in May 2025, HRC’s Executive Director and staff attended NACOLE’s Regional Meeting in New York City. This convening featured workshops and panels addressing legislative threats to oversight, sustainable resource models, strategies for community engagement, and the evolving legal landscape impacting oversight entities. Key sessions included:

- *The State(s) of Civilian Oversight*
- *Building Community Trust and Resilience*
- *Resource Allocation and Sustainability*
- *Part of the Solution: Advocates and Changemakers in Oversight*

Collectively, these trainings demonstrate that civilian oversight in Suffolk County is not static—it is informed, responsive, and continually evolving. Our participation in national networks, local partnerships, and specialized instruction ensures that those of us charged with upholding accountability in policing remain well-equipped, deeply informed, and community-centered.

## MEET THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE SUBCOMMITTEE

Since its creation, the HRC has had several standing committees, including the Administration of Justice Subcommittee. The AOJ was originally comprised of five independent members who have actively worked with all Suffolk County Law Enforcement entities on matters of concern to the Commission, such as:

- The tracking of complaints against the SCPD,
- Incidents involving the use of undue force,
- The Internal Affairs Bureau complaint process,
- Policies and procedures regarding designation of a "hate crime" to bias-involved incidents,
- The recording of racial data on stops and searches, and
- Increasing minority representation in the police service.

While we have lost two of our original members (discussed later in the document), because of the growing responsibilities of civilian oversight, the number of AOJ members has expanded with the addition of newly appointed HRC Commissioners. During this reporting period, the AOJ Civilian Police Oversight Subcommittee Members included:

- Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, LMSW CLC - HRC Chair
- Carolyn G. Peabody, Ph.D. LCSW - AOJ Chair
- Ijaz Bokhari
- Lisa Calla, JD
- Curtis E. Highsmith, Jr.
- MaryAnn Pfeiffer
- Charles Ross
- Elizabeth Bojsza, MFA (CE)\* (No longer serving on AOJ)
- Gary R. Mar, Ph.D. (CE)\* (No longer serving on HRC)
- Rabbi Lina Zerbarini, AOJ Vice Chair (CE)\*

\*Commissioners Emeriti

## AOJ CIVILIAN POLICE OVERSIGHT MISSION STATEMENT

In 2021, the Suffolk County Executive's office authored the Police Reform and Reinvention Plan, which was subsequently approved by the Suffolk County Legislature. This plan designated the Administration of Justice Committee of HRC to provide real-time, independent oversight of investigations into alleged misconduct by Suffolk County Police Department officers. As an independent civilian oversight body, AOJ's mission is to monitor the HRC Investigators' review of IAB investigations into complaints of police misconduct, thereby supporting greater transparency in policing for the community.

## AOJ CIVILIAN REVIEW PROCESS GOALS

To effectively administer civilian oversight duties, the Administration of Justice Subcommittee conceived and focuses on three primary process goals:

1. *Providing an independent, third-party review of the investigation of complaints brought against the SCPD to ensure that civil and human rights have been protected;*
2. *Identifying gaps in current SCPD and SCPD Internal Affairs Bureau practices, procedures and policies and making relevant recommendations; and*
3. *Communicating with the community about how to engage in the complaint process, detailing the work of the AOJ, our progress, system challenges and soliciting feedback from those who have made complaints and their outcomes.*

See below for detailed objectives comprising each of the three process goals:

1. **Providing an independent, third-party review of the investigation of complaints brought against the SCPD to ensure that civil and human rights have been protected.**
  - Ensuring that HRC Investigators and AOJ Commission members are trained by independent experts in civilian oversight;
  - Ensuring that HRC Investigators and AOJ Commission members are trained in the use of the online application that is used to document ongoing investigations as well as to receive the training that officers receive for use of body-worn cameras;
  - Ensuring that HRC Investigators and AOJ Commission members are fully informed about the policies and procedures of the SCPD and IAB to provide effective oversight;
  - Reviewing evidence associated with alleged incidents;

- Requesting IAB Investigators to explore specific additional steps in a given investigation, such as witness queries, investigative areas, etc., should HRC Investigators and/or HRC-AOJ Commissioners consider such actions as necessary to fully inform the decisions made in given investigations of alleged police misconduct; and
- Assessing IAB complaint investigations and recommended dispositions of outcome (substantiated, unsubstantiated, exonerated, unfounded) in order to agree or disagree with the IAB Investigator's recommended disposition.

**2. Identifying gaps in current SCPD and SCPD Internal Affairs Bureau practices, procedures and policies and making relevant recommendations to SCPD and IAB leadership.**

- Based on monitoring complaint investigations, the AOJ in collaboration with the HRC Investigators, document concerning patterns of police behavior that demonstrate violations of police policies or procedures or indicate gaps in policies, procedures and/or training and communicate our findings to SCPD leadership with recommendations for policy/procedure changes; and
- Based on monitoring complaint investigations, AOJ in collaboration with the HRC Investigators, document actions by IAB Investigators that demonstrate violations of IAB policies or procedures or indicate gaps in policies, procedures and/or training that limit our ability to fulfill our civilian oversight responsibilities or fail to thoroughly or fairly conduct investigations and communicate our findings to IAB leadership with recommendations for policy/procedure changes.

**3. Communicating with the community about how to engage in the complaint process, detailing the work of the AOJ, our progress, system challenges, and soliciting feedback from those who have made complaints and their outcomes.**

- Conducting community meetings, detailing the work of the County's current efforts towards civilian police oversight of IAB investigations;
- Developing and undertaking information-sharing initiatives (e.g., social media; downloadable brochures; printed brochures) to bring visibility; and ensure transparency in both the process and outcomes of IAB investigations; and surveying people who have been notified that their investigations have been complete about their experience of the process.

# CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT COMPLAINT AND REVIEW PROCESS

## Filing Complaints or Compliments with the HRC

A police complaint or compliment<sup>23</sup> can be filed directly with the HRC using the Sivil online platform. This platform offers 24-hour access for filing from a mobile device, computer or laptop, allowing evidence to be uploaded in real-time. Once the HRC receives the complaint or compliment, it is transferred to IAB. Then IAB uploads the complaint to Evidence.com.

## Filing Complaints with SCPD

Alternatively, a complaint can be filed with the SCPD IAB via phone, mail, or in-person. The SCPD uses the Evidence.com platform to share the complainant's file with the HRC, allowing HRC Investigators and AOJ Members to review the evidence (e.g., body-worn camera video, witness statements) obtained during an IAB investigation.

### 1. Complaint Submission to the Human Rights Commission (HRC)

Complaints of police misconduct may be filed with HRC through:

- **Online Submission via Sivil:** Complainants receive a tracking number to monitor updates. Submissions in other languages prompt a follow-up call from an HRC investigator to confirm details.

Benefits of creating an online account include:

- Access to case details and status updates
- Email notifications as the case progresses

Portal status stages:

- "Received"- Complaint submitted
  - "In Progress" - Transferred to Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB)
  - "Complete"- IAB investigation and HRC review concluded
- **Phone Intake\*:** HRC investigators collect all necessary details to complete a police misconduct complaint form.

*\*Under limited circumstances (determined on case-by-case basis).*

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<sup>23</sup> HRC received 8 compliments during the 2024-2025 review period.

## **2. Transfer and Monitoring**

Complaints received by the HRC, whether by phone or via Sivil, are forwarded to IAB, where they are uploaded to the Evidence.com platform. HRC investigators monitor the case through this portal until completion.

## **3. HRC Review and Oversight**

- **Case Assignment:**

Each complaint is assigned to an HRC Investigator and an Administration of Justice (AOJ) Committee member for oversight. Investigators are given the IAB case number and review materials via the shared Evidence.com platform. Reviews occur daily.

- **Monthly Briefings:**

The HRC Executive Director provides AOJ with monthly updates, including:

- Total complaints received
- Status of open investigations
- Possible trends and/or policy concerns

AOJ members also receive case-specific briefings from their assigned HRC Investigator and can review relevant documents or video as needed.

- **Requests for Further Action:**

If an HRC Investigator and AOJ member agree that additional investigative steps are needed, they submit a formal request to the Chief of IAB. If denied without legal justification, HRC may escalate the matter to the County Executive's Police Accountability Liaison.

## **4. Investigation Conclusion and Final Determination**

- **Final Review:**

When IAB completes its investigation, it shares a recommended disposition (e.g., substantiated, unsubstantiated, exonerated, unfounded) with HRC.

- If the AOJ member and HRC Investigator agree with the outcome, the case is closed.
- If the AOJ member and HRC Investigator disagree with the outcome, they submit a written rationale for the disagreement to IAB.
- If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the matter may be referred to the Deputy Police Commissioner or the Police Accountability Liaison.



- **Complainant Notification:**

Once a final determination is made, the complainant is informed of the outcome and any resulting actions, either by the HRC or the police department.

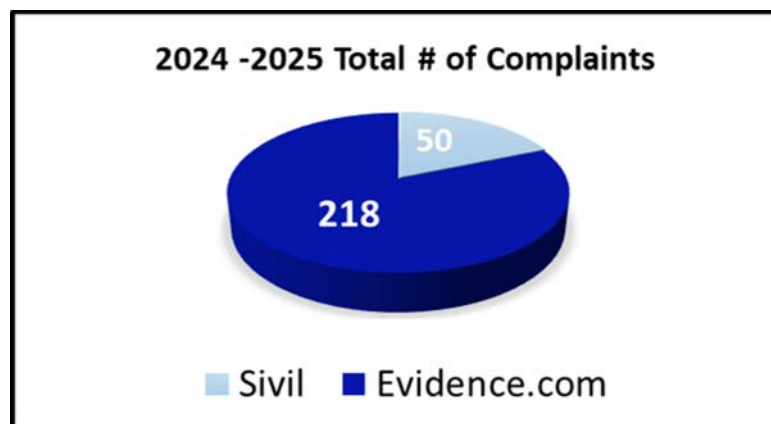
## 2024 - 2025 OVERSIGHT INVESTIGATIONS

### Review of 2024-2025 Complaints

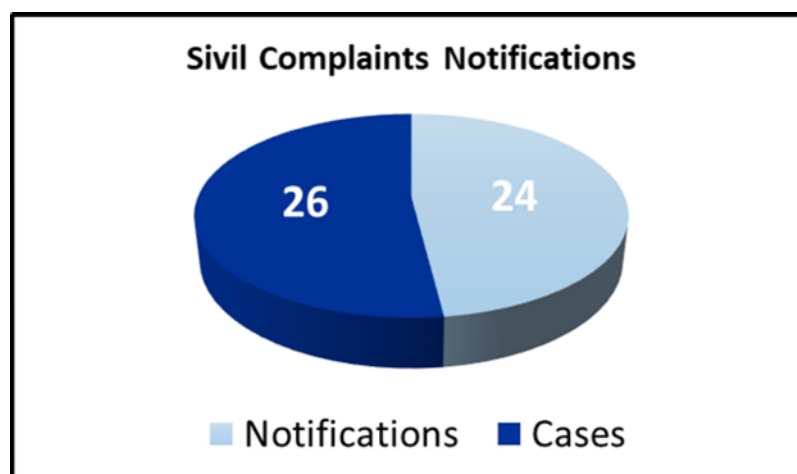
The data below is derived from the Sivil and Evidence.com platforms and will be delineated accordingly. The review period is **June 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025**.

#### TOTAL SUM OF COMPLAINTS

The HRC and AOJ Members reviewed 268 complaints in the 2024-2025 review period. 50 of the 268 complaints were filed with the HRC in Sivil and 218 were filed with the SCPD IAB, as reflected below:



Of the 50 Sivil complaints, 24 were classified as a *Notification*, which the IAB defines as allegations outside of their jurisdiction.



**Note:** This graph does not reflect the number of complaints filed with IAB that were classified as a *Notification*.

## Review of 2024-2025 Complaints cont'd

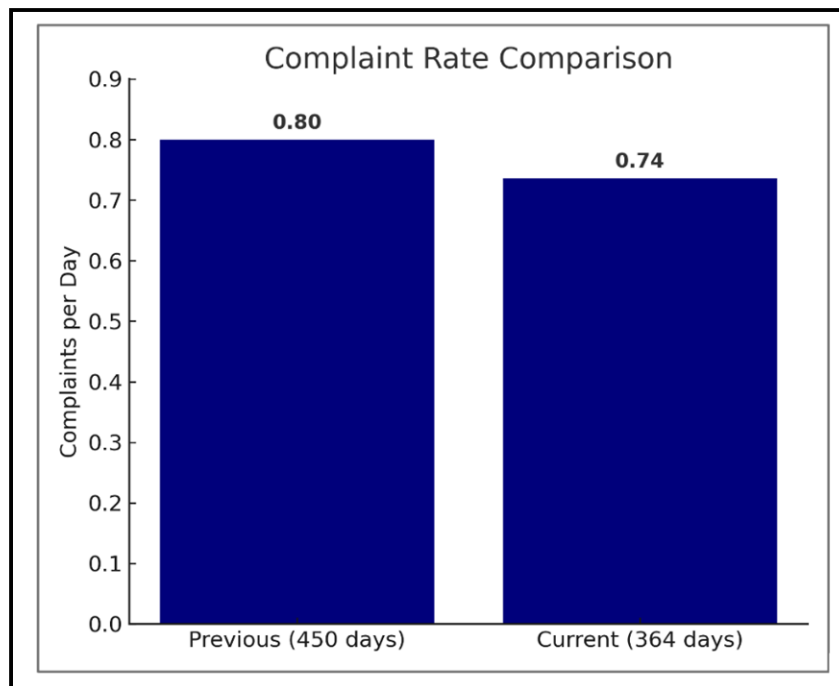
### Complaint Rate Comparison: 1st HRC Reporting Period vs. 2nd HRC Reporting Period

Overall, the number of complaints have decreased slightly when one compares the rate of complaints during the current reporting period as compared with the last reporting period.

The below chart compares the complaint rate across two periods:

- Previous (3/8/23 - 5/31/24): 360 complaints over 450 days = 0.80 complaints/day
- Current (6/1/24 - 5/31/25): 268 complaints over 364 days  $\approx$  0.74 complaints/day

This reflects a decrease of approximately 7.5% in the complaint rate.

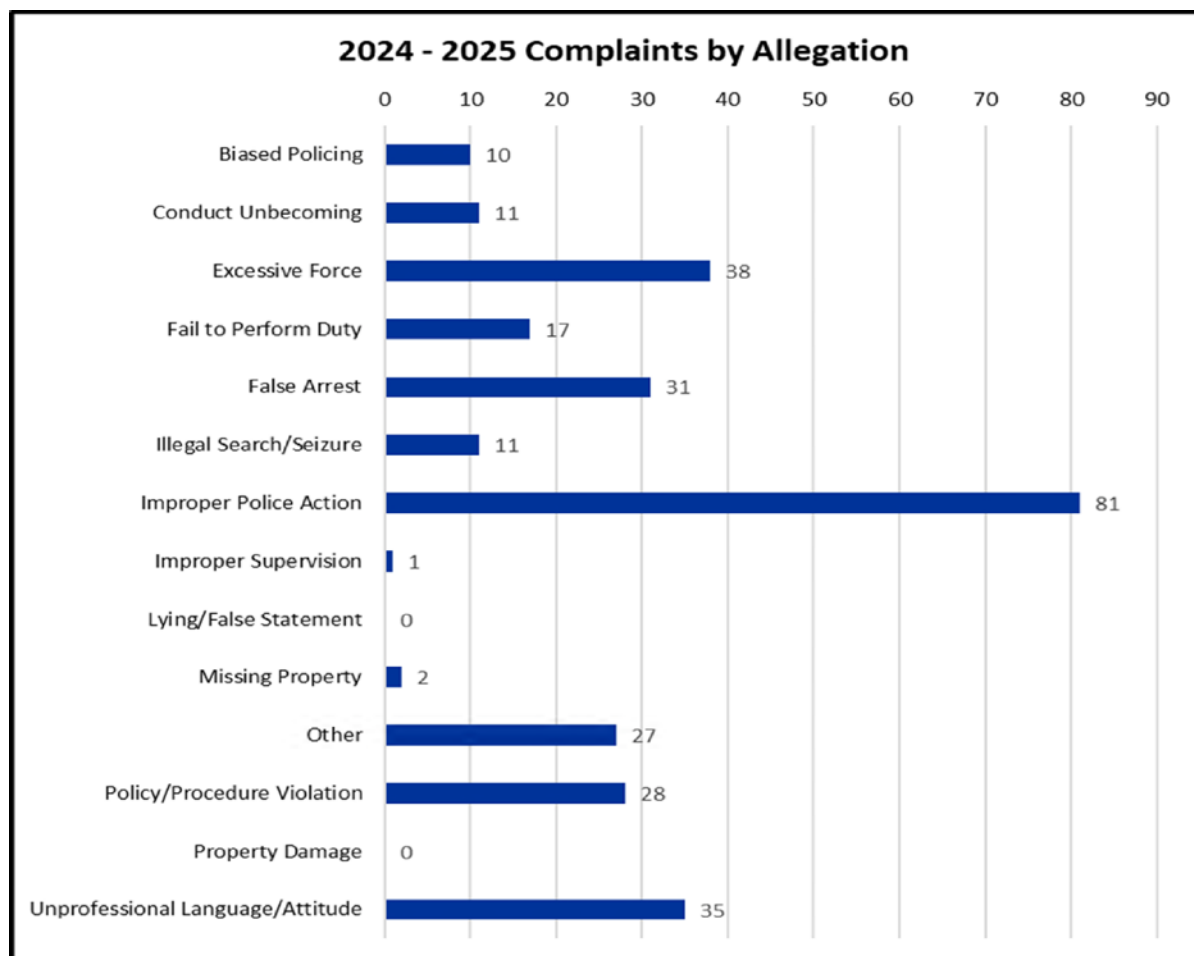


## **COMPLAINTS BY ALLEGATION**

The total number of allegations received in the 2024-2025 review period is 292. It is important to note that a complaint may have more than one allegation; hence, the total number of allegations received exceeds the total number of complaints received.

The most common allegations per SCPD are noted below, but the list is not exhaustive.

“Other” types of allegations include a variety of charges such as Administrative (complaints that are filed by fellow officers).



## **COMPLAINTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER**

The complainants' self-identification allows us to capture demographics in complaints. However, these two fields on the complaint form are not mandatory for filing a complaint. The rationale for this was, in part, to avoid presenting any barrier or impediment to filing a complaint.

Of those who opted to provide their race/ethnicity, we see in the 2024-2025 review period that:

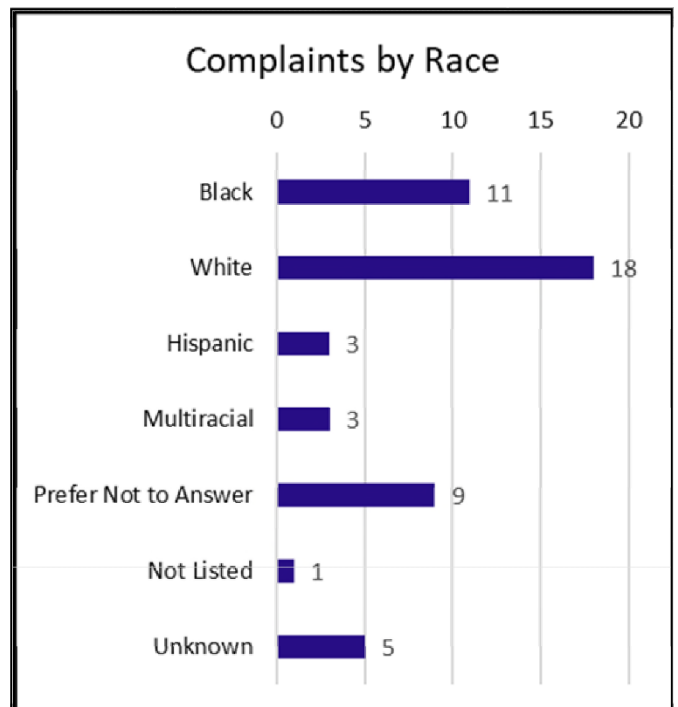
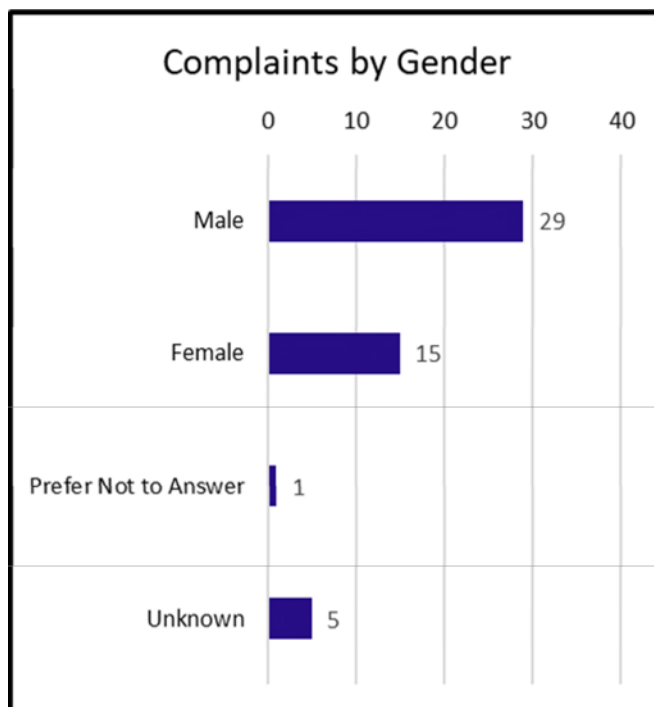
- 18 out of 50 complainants self-identified as White,
- 11 as Black/African American, and
- 3 as Hispanic/Latinx
- 3 as multi-racial
- 9 preferred not to answer
- 5 Unknown

“Unknown” represents those who left their gender and race/ethnicity blank.

For gender, 1 Complainant preferred not to answer, and 5 other Complainants left the question blank. Of the 44 who answered this question:

- 29 complainants self-identified as male; and
- 15 as female.

**While last year more than half of the complainants did not provide their gender and even fewer provided their race, this year a greater number self-reported their demographics.** The AOJ will continue to review the lack of self-reporting and a mechanism to encourage individuals to provide this important data.



## COMPLAINTS BY DISPOSITION

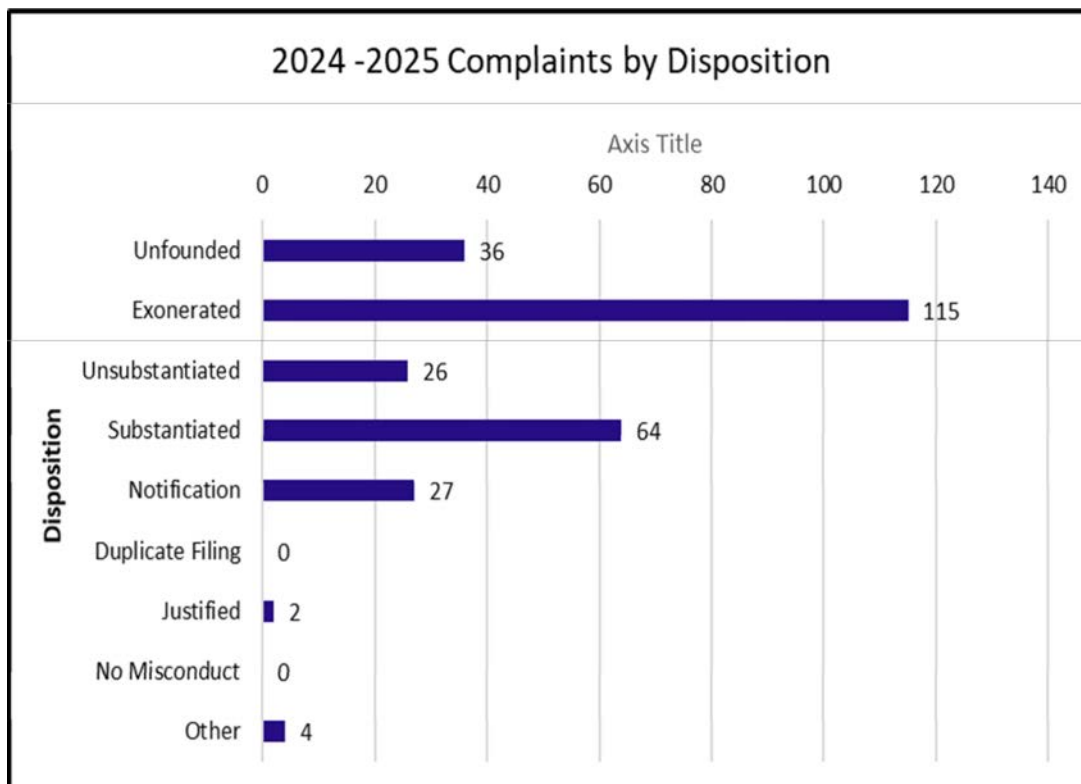
At the end of an IAB investigation, there are several possible investigative conclusions:

- **Substantiated:** The facts support the allegation.
- **Unsubstantiated:** The allegations cannot be resolved by investigation because sufficient evidence is unavailable, or there are material conflicts in the statements obtained.
- **Exonerated:** The act did occur, but was legal, proper, and necessary.
- **Unfounded:** The act did not occur and the complaint is false.
- **Notifications:** The complaint falls outside the SCPD's jurisdiction.

*Other terms used to mark the conclusion of a case:*

- **Duplicate Filing:** Complainant previously filed same allegations.
- **No Misconduct:** The act did occur, but was not an act of misconduct.
- **Justified:** The act did occur, but was legal.

\*Every allegation has a corresponding disposition.



## **COMPLAINTS BY DISPOSITION cont'd**

In 2024-25, 26.5% of investigated complaints (N=241) were substantiated. By contrast, in 2019, 14% of investigated complaints (N=113) were substantiated.<sup>24</sup> In 2020, 7% of investigated complaints (N=111) were substantiated.<sup>25</sup> The impact of the use of body-worn cameras has dramatically improved the ability to determine when allegations should be substantiated or unsubstantiated.

Prior to Suffolk County's civilian oversight, the Internal Affairs Bureau made case disposition determinations without making the evidence available to the public or external parties. This changed with the inaugural 2023-2024 review period and continues today, wherein the form of civilian oversight in Suffolk County requires that the AOJ and HRC Investigators have access to comprehensive evidence, including, but not limited to: body-worn camera (BWC) video, 911 call recordings, witness statements, and officer statements.

## **AOJ'S RECORD OF AGREES/DISAGREES WITH DISPOSITIONS**

Part of AOJ's role is to evaluate IAB's proposed dispositions, report whether further investigative action is recommended, and agree or disagree with IAB's case disposition recommendations. During the review period, AOJ has the opportunity to examine entire case files to determine whether the evidence supported the recommendations, and here's a summary of this year's process.

From June 1, 2024 through May 31, 2025, the AOJ concurred with IAB findings in 87.4% of cases. Importantly, this agreement followed a careful and independent review of the evidence conducted by the HRC—a level of oversight and scrutiny that was not in place prior to the establishment of this process.

Each case was subjected to a thorough and impartial evaluation by HRC Investigators and the AOJ, applying legal standards, investigative best practices, and a community-centered lens. The high rate of concurrence should not be mistaken for rubber-stamping; rather, it reflects the robustness of the review process, the critically important introduction of body-worn camera video and audio, ideally, provides the community with greater assurance that police conduct is being evaluated independently and with integrity.

In 11.9% of the cases, the AOJ disagreed with the IAB's disposition. These instances highlight the value of having an external body capable of identifying and addressing areas where internal reviews may fall short or be interpreted differently based on evidence or procedural concerns.

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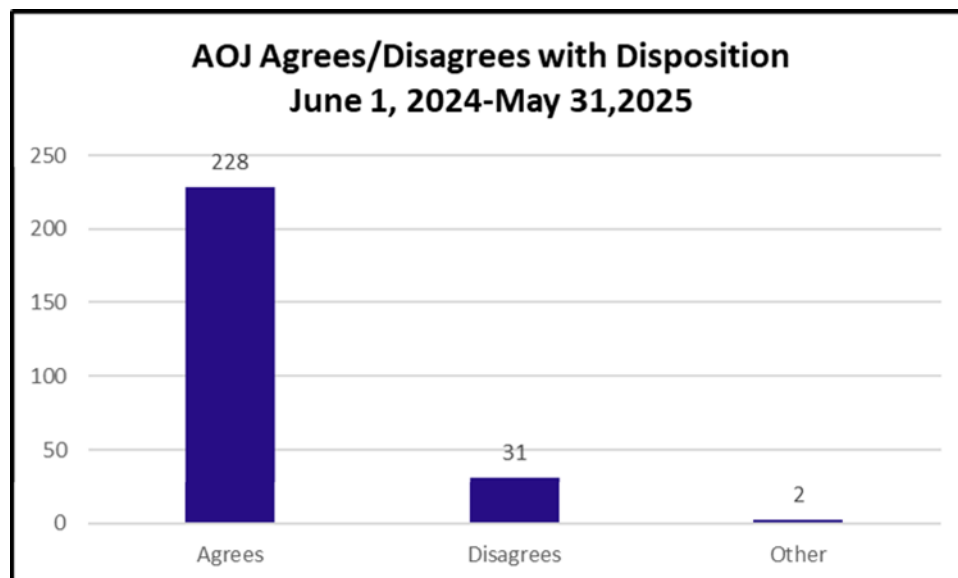
<sup>24</sup> (2019) Suffolk County Police Department Internal Affairs Report  
[https://suffolkpd.org/portals/18/scpd\\_pdfs/infoandpolicies/IAB2019.pdf](https://suffolkpd.org/portals/18/scpd_pdfs/infoandpolicies/IAB2019.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> (2020) Suffolk County Police Department Internal Affairs Report  
[https://suffolkpd.org/portals/18/scpd\\_pdfs/infoandpolicies/2020%20IAB%20Report%20.pdf](https://suffolkpd.org/portals/18/scpd_pdfs/infoandpolicies/2020%20IAB%20Report%20.pdf)

The remaining 0.8% of cases fell into an “Other” category, which includes matters deferred due to BWC not being activated, due to insufficient information, jurisdictional complexity, or other administrative reasons.

Based on the graph below, the data from June 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025 shows the following:

- AOJ Agrees: 228 cases
- AOJ Disagrees: 31 cases
- Other: 2 cases (AOJ could not agree or disagree because of the absence of evidence)



### Percentages

- Agrees:  $(228 / 261) \times 100 \approx 87.4\%$
- Disagrees:  $(31 / 261) \times 100 \approx 11.9\%$
- Other:  $(2 / 261) \times 100 \approx 0.8\%$

Overall, this data underscores the importance and impact of independent civilian oversight in promoting accountability, transparency, and public trust in the investigatory process.



IAB's turnovers, as referenced above, have impacted the AOJ's ability to meet and discuss those instances where disagreements exist. With the appointment of new SCPD leadership, AOJ intends to meet soon to address these cases.

As we move forward, we will continue to evaluate the data in these reports over time to better identify issues in our data collection methods, data representation, and overall processes. This will allow us to make necessary corrections and establish consistency. We remain proactive in making decisions and recommendations to improve both the process of investigating complaints of police misconduct and the way we collect information, ensuring a more actionable dataset in the future.

**The progress made in the last year cannot be overstated.** The data reviewed will continue to serve for ongoing comparison. The AOJ will also be looking to review the disciplinary action issued in those substantiated cases. While the discipline is outside of our purview and subject to the SCPD's respective collective bargaining agreement, this information is vital to civilian police oversight. The information collected so far will serve as an important foundation on which to base future assessments and trends. The lessons learned this year have prompted methodological adjustments that will help to improve the overall capacity for the HRC to collect and record information and improve the quality and direction of Suffolk County civilian police oversight.

### **DELAYS IN THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS**

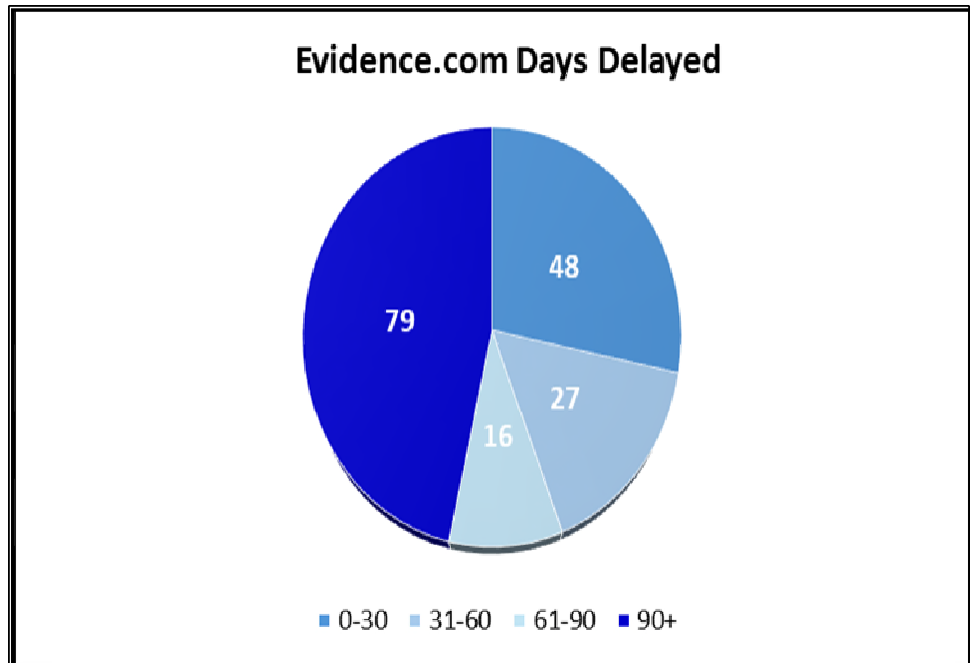
Pursuant to Policy 1010.6.7 (Completion of Investigations), IAB investigations should be conducted within 60 days. However, the data from this reporting period shows that over half (51.5%) of the cases exceeded the 60-day timeline, with more than one in five (20.8%) taking over 181 days to complete.

While 47.5% of investigations were completed within 30 days, demonstrating timely action in nearly half the cases, the delays in the remaining cases are significant. Extended investigations—especially those lasting more than three or even six months—may undermine public confidence and hinder the timely resolution of complaints.

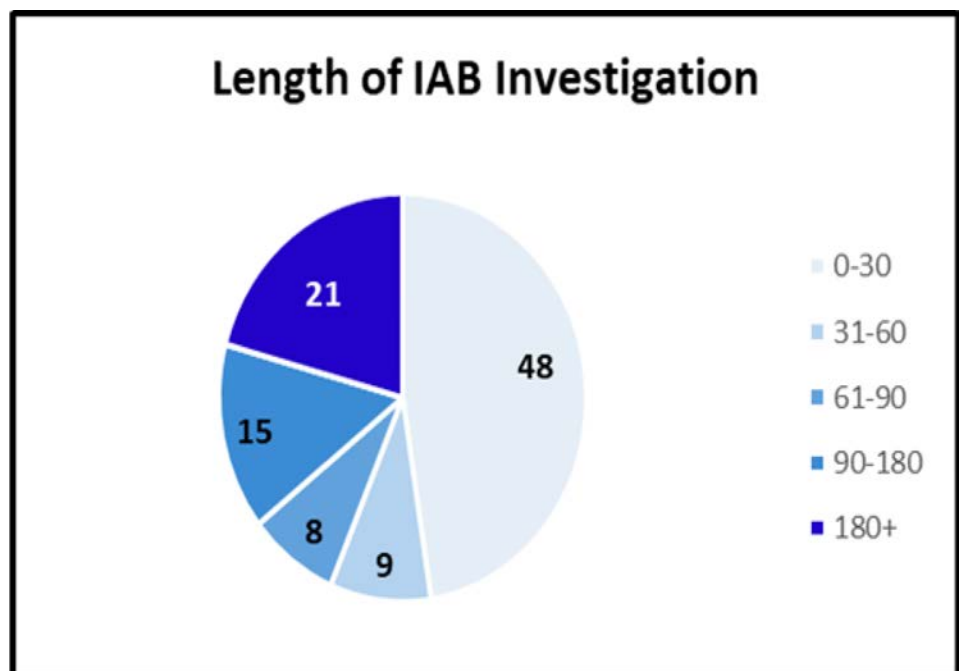
These delays are further compounded by inconsistent evidence sharing via the Axon Evidence.com portal, as noted throughout the year. In some cases, evidence was withheld from the outset, while in others, it was not made available during critical phases of HRC /AOJ's review. This lack of timely access to evidence impedes AOJ's ability to conduct thorough and concurrent reviews, ultimately affecting accountability.

The findings reinforce the importance of enforcing investigation timelines and improving inter-agency transparency and cooperation. As oversight continues to evolve, ensuring timely evidence-sharing and adherence to investigation deadlines must remain a key focus to protect the integrity and responsiveness of the complaint review process.

Evidence.com Days Delayed Report	
Days Delayed	# of Cases
0-30	52
31-60	27
61-90	16
91+	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>



Length of IAB Investigation	
# of Days	# of Cases
0-30	48
31-60	9
61-90	8
91-180	15
181+	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>



Investigation Duration	Number of Cases	Percentage
0–30 days	48	47.5%
31–60 days	9	8.9%
61–90 days	8	7.9%
91–180 days	15	14.9%
181+ days	21	20.8%
Total	101	100%

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### **Body-Worn Camera (BWC) Review**

The AOJ identified 83 incidents during the reporting period involving BWC compliance issues—a significant concern in police accountability and evidence integrity.

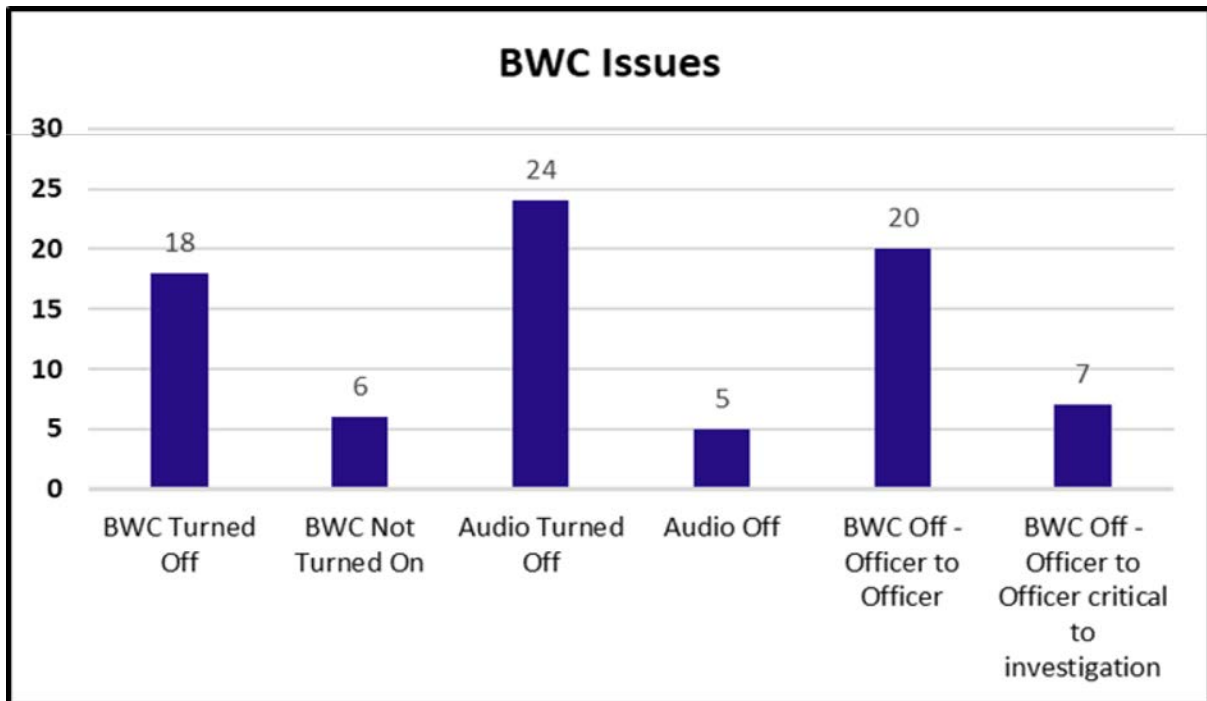
The most frequent violation (36.1%) involved officers intentionally turning off audio, thereby undermining the ability to fully assess interactions. Combined with the 6.0% labeled as simply “Audio Off,” over 42% of incidents involved a failure to capture critical sound.

Similarly, nearly one in five cases (18.1%) involved officers turning off their BWC entirely, and 7.2% failed to activate it at all—clear departures from departmental policy and training.

Of particular concern are the 27 cases (32.5%) in which BWCs were off during officer-to-officer interactions, including 7 that were explicitly identified as critical to the investigation. These instances pose a serious challenge to transparency, especially when internal conduct or accountability is at issue. While this may align with existing policy, we identified several instances where this practice proved problematic. AOJ has raised the issue with IAB and will be pursuing change in police procedures.

The findings suggest a systemic issue with compliance to BWC protocols—whether due to inadequate training, poor enforcement, or deliberate inaction. These lapses diminish the

evidentiary value of footage, limit oversight’s ability to assess use-of-force or misconduct claims, and erode community trust. In response, AOJ will recommend policy changes aimed at stricter enforcement, officer retraining, and supervisory follow-up—particularly in cases involving officer-to-officer interactions or when audio is inexplicably disabled. Consistent monitoring and accountability in BWC use are essential to upholding the integrity of both internal investigations and independent oversight reviews.



BWC Issue	Number of Cases	Percentage
BWC Turned Off	15	18.1%
BWC Not Turned On	6	7.2%
Audio Turned Off	30	36.1%
Audio Off	5	6.0%
BWC Off – Officer to Officer	20	24.1%
BWC Off – Officer to Officer Critical to Investigation	7	8.4%
Total	83	100%

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The following is a list of outreach engagements conducted by the various members of the AOJ subcommittee in the past year, related to the third objective as outlined earlier in this document.

- April 21, 2025  
Southold Town Anti Bias Task Force (13) participants  
(Carolyn Peabody)
- May 5, 2025  
North Fork Unity Action Committee (7) participants  
(Carolyn Peabody)
- May 10, 2025  
Brentwood Liga Saturday Program Family Day (94) participants  
(MaryAnn Pfeiffer)
- May 12, 2025  
Islip Chamber of Commerce (14) participants  
(MaryAnn Pfeiffer)
- May 14, 2025  
Town of Islip Opioid/Heroin Task Force (21) participants  
(MaryAnn Pfeiffer)
- May 14, 2025  
LGBT Network Human Services Consortium  
(Rabbi Lina Zerbarini)
- May 15, 2025  
Uplift Our Communities BW/CI Clean Streets Committee (11) participants  
(MaryAnn Pfeiffer)
- May 20, 2025  
Bay Shore South Country Elementary School Family Night (158) participants  
(MaryAnn Pfeiffer)

- May 21, 2025  
YES Board of Directors (10) participants  
(MaryAnn Pfeiffer)
- May 28, 2025  
Town of Islip Unity Council (19) participants  
(MaryAnn Pfeiffer)

## **AOJ OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF THE EVOLVING PROCESS**

Last year's Annual Report referenced our experience of "building the plane while flying it." While we would like to say the plane is now fully built, it remains a work in progress. This is due in part to the changes discussed above and outlined in more detail below. It is also due to the nature of our role: the work of the AOJ and HRC investigative staff is (rightly) separate from that of the Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB), as our mandate is to monitor, not conduct, the investigations of police misconduct complaints.

Our role involves reviewing cases, examining the associated evidence, and assessing the investigative decisions made by IAB. However, we remain in the position of having to infer the investigators' evolving analysis from the evidence that is shared with us. We rely on IAB to upload all relevant materials as they become available, prior to the issuance of their case report (wherein they recommend the disposition of the case to their superiors based on their investigation).

### **I. Relevant Changes**

1. Our primary connection to the IAB is through the Chief of IAB. Earlier this year, former Chief of IAB, Chief Soto left IAB and moved to headquarters. Chief Soto was replaced by Chief Crawford.
2. In April 2025, Chief Crawford retired.
3. At the beginning of the year, we were informed that several of our AOJ commissioners, along with other HRC commissioners, would be replaced with new appointments. The three AOJ commissioners who were not reappointed were (and remained) deeply committed to civilian oversight—approaching the work with fairness and objectivity, recognizing the challenges faced by police officers, honoring the work of law enforcement, while also holding the firm belief that officers who violate policy must be held accountable. These commissioners had been involved from the outset, were thoroughly trained, and had developed a deep understanding of the oversight process. Their departure resulted in the loss of two commissioners who were exceptionally well-versed and experienced in the civilian oversight procedures we established from the beginning.
4. We were very happy to get to know the newly appointed commissioners. They have demonstrated deep respect for the importance of civilian oversight. They also are dedicated and approach the work with a commitment to fairness, objectivity and a passion for justice. There was a transition and onboarding period that slowed the work, to some degree, while they shadowed veteran commissioners to gain an understanding of the process. However, this mentoring gave us an opportunity to share not only the process but also to get to know our new colleagues. Going forward, we are extremely happy that they each are contributing their strengths to our work.

5. In addition to losing three fully appointed commission members from the AOJ, we also had some turnover among the small staff of HRC investigators.

There has also been a significant change with a new County Executive and with turnovers in the Suffolk County Legislature. Change is always a challenge, bringing many unknowns. We are pleased to say that the new administration has been supportive, and we have received resources for critical training that all of us needed. Additionally, we have had two new police commissioners (one interim and one appointed) and two new deputy police commissioners, one of whom became the permanent police commissioner. We look forward to working with both the Police Commissioner and the Deputy Police Commissioner.

## **II. Implications of our Civilian Oversight Model**

We are a hybrid model of civilian oversight. Thus, we do not do the investigations ourselves. We rely on the IAB investigators to conduct every step of the investigations. We monitor the investigations but are typically not able to completely assess the process or understand the rationale of the approach that the Internal Affairs investigator is taking because we wait to see the evidence and as the evidence is uploaded, it provides us with pieces to the puzzle. Once the investigation is completed and the Internal Affairs investigator submits their recommended disposition, it is forwarded to their supervisors. Knowing that it has been issued, indicates to us that all the evidence deemed by the IAB investigator to be necessary and appropriate has been gathered.

The rate at which that evidence is uploaded varies: it is uploaded at varying rates during the investigation or sometimes all at the very end. This obviously has an impact on the HRC Investigator's and AOJ'S understanding of the case as it is unfolding. When large amounts of evidence are uploaded just before the end or at the end of a case investigation, it can require an extraordinary amount of focused review time by the HRC Investigator and may include many hours of body worn camera footage (as there are often many officers responding to calls). It is important to note that in addition to reviewing IAB evidence, HRC investigators are also responsible for actually investigating Human Rights complaints filed with the HRC related to housing, employment, public accommodations, education, and credit.

There have been times when the case file or report makes mention of evidence that was not included in Evidence.com. In some of those instances, where the evidence was significant to the case, we requested it be uploaded. However, had it not been mentioned in the case notes, we would not have known that it was not included in the evidence available to us to review. These few situations where it was significant has prompted us to wonder how we can know that all the actual evidence that is relevant to a case is in fact being uploaded for other cases.



### **III. Impact of Body Worn Cameras**

The implementation of body-worn cameras has transformed the investigation of police misconduct, providing critical, objective evidence that aids in the accurate determination of an officer's culpability or exoneration. This revolution serves the interest of every officer who receives a complaint because it allows for there to be a conclusion as to their innocence if they are innocent. Previously, if there was a complaint and there was insufficient evidence, complaints would be deemed unsubstantiated, which means that there was not enough proof to determine innocence or guilt. This was always left hanging in an officer's record. However, now with body-worn cameras, it is much easier to see when an officer is clearly innocent, regardless of the insistence of the complainant. And for the complainant, previously, unless there was physical damage or injury, even having witnesses would not be sufficient to substantiate a complaint. Now with body-worn cameras, the truth is accessible most of the time (depending on the activation of the BWCs). Therefore, it is critical that now that officers and superior officers have been trained and have been using BWC's, they actually activate them, both audio and video, when they are interacting with the public and in relevant interactions with other officers and supervisors.

The following are policy and procedural concerns that we have addressed or are planning to address with Internal Affairs leadership for those issues related to IAB investigative policies and procedures. Following these are policy and procedural concerns that we have addressed or are planning to address with SCPD leadership for police related issues.

## **IDENTIFIED AREAS OF CONCERN, IAB/SCPD RESPONSE AND AOJ CONCERNS STATUS**

The following are policy and procedural concerns we have addressed or plan to address with Internal Affairs leadership regarding IAB investigative policies and procedures.

### **CONCERNS RELATED TO IAB PROCESSES:**

#### **The Current State of the Investigatory Process**

As described in our first annual report, Human Rights Commission Investigators have access to Evidence.com. This platform is where complaints submitted through the HRC online portal, SIVIL, or other access points in the Police Department are registered. HRC Investigators review the evidence uploaded to Evidence.com as it is posted by Internal Affairs Investigators.

### **Concern #1: Continued Instances of Officers' Failure to Activate Video or Audio on BWCs**

As noted in our first annual report and above, the use of body-worn cameras is essential to the investigation process. We have found that there are times when officers do not activate their body-worn cameras or turn off their video or audio during interactions at the scene. Early in the rollout of BWCs across precincts, with training provided, our concerns about officers not turning on their BWCs were recognized by IAB as part of the adaptation to new technology. However, we have moved past that stage and are now very concerned about instances where we cannot determine an officer's innocence or guilt due to the lack of body camera footage or audio. Initially, as this issue arose, IAB would note it in the officer's record for a supervisor to investigate. However, as the process continued, AOJ recommended that failure to activate a body-worn camera should be added as a standing allegation on its own, in addition to whatever allegation was derived from the initial complaint.

#### **IAB Response:**

Internal Affairs has agreed to categorize the failure to activate body-worn cameras as its own allegation.

**Current Status of AOJ Concern:** We will continue to track the application of this new allegation and related officer disciplinary action.

### **Concern #2: Lack of Provided Rationale for Converting Complaints into Notifications**

AOJ has raised questions about why a complaint is considered a notification. As noted earlier, complaints are either investigated or classified as notifications. A notification is a complaint that has been determined by Internal Affairs to fall outside their jurisdiction. Consequently, the complainant receives a letter from IAB informing them that their complaint will not be investigated and may be directed to other resources. The reason for this classification has largely been unclear.

The responses to our questions have been quite general because they pertain to notifications overall. When we inquired about specific cases, IAB provided explanations. As a process, this becomes very cumbersome given the high volume of notifications. Although evidence is uploaded for investigated cases, no evidence has been uploaded to Evidence.com for notifications. Nonetheless, we argued that there must be a rational basis for this classification and that such rationale should be accessible to the AOJ. Additionally, we have found that in some cases, there was an investigation to determine whether certain complaints should be classified as notifications. We proposed, and continue to propose, that all evidence leading IAB to categorize a complaint as a notification be uploaded to Evidence.com.

#### **IAB Response:**

IAB has committed to uploading any evidence used to classify a complaint as a notification. We continue working with IAB to ensure they provide clarity for each notification.

**Current Status of AOJ Concern:** We will continue to track those cases designated “notification” and their associated rationales.

**Concern #3: Lack of Access to Officers’ Prior History of Complaints**

We have no way of knowing if an officer has multiple complaints against them when we review a complaint. Repeated complaints about an officer’s misconduct are a serious warning sign, indicating the need to take special measures.

**IAB Response:**

IAB has assured us that there is an automatic tracking process that goes on when IAB receives a complaint about an officer. We are continuing to work with IAB for them to share that information with us.

**Current Status of AOJ Concern:** We are continuing to work with IAB to share Officers’ prior history of complaints.

***CONCERNS RELATED TO SCPD:***

**Concern #4: Reactive v. Proactive Policing**

The complaint-filing, investigation, and the HRC review process is primarily reactive and tends only to have significant influence on preventing future incidents. It is recommended that insights gained from these investigations be utilized for training police officers, updating policy, and emphasizing the importance of professional conduct and adherence to standard police procedures.

**SCPD Response:**

At a recent meeting with the Deputy Police Commissioner and the Assistant Deputy Commissioner, as well as a separate meeting with the Police Commissioner, it was announced that the Police Department is establishing a Professional Development Unit that will review our input as they develop preventive procedures and training.

**Current Status of AOJ Concern:** As this development was only recently announced, the AOJ looks forward to closely monitoring how the new unit incorporates our findings to inform policy and training changes.

**Concern # 5: Access to Lexipol and Relevant Police Policies**

To effectively assess cases and evidence related to police misconduct complaints, the AOJ requires access to the relevant police policies and procedures that govern officer interactions with complainants or members of the public. Currently, the HRC Investigators have access to Lexipol, Suffolk County’s online repository of police policies. However, when the AOJ needs to review specific policies related to a given case, we must request that the HRC Investigator download and share the relevant PDF documents. We recognize that multiple policies may apply to a single

incident.

Because Lexipol is continuously updated to reflect changes in federal, state, and county law, it is essential to access the version of the policy that was in effect at the time of the incident.

Ultimately, the AOJ must be able to identify and review the policies that define appropriate policing behavior in order to carry out its oversight responsibilities.

**SCPD Response:**

During the same meeting with the Police Commissioner and the Deputy Police Commissioner, our concerns were acknowledged. They explained that there is a department responsible for identifying relevant policies with specific timeframes for the IAB Investigators to reference in their investigations. They also stated that both the AOJ and HRC Investigators should have access to those identified policies. Additionally, they noted that requests for specific policies could be submitted at any time.

**Current Status of AOJ Concern:** We are pleased that after much discussion, IAB has committed to ensuring we have access to pertinent and updated police policies.

**Concern #6 : Detectives Do Not Wear Body Cameras**

All interactions by police with the complainant and other members of the public should be recorded. For the same reasons that all police officers and their superiors must record their engagement with the public and especially the subjects of any incident, the same is true for Detectives.

**IAB Response:**

When AOJ raised this issue with IAB leadership, their response was repeatedly that current police policy does not require detectives to wear body-worn cameras.

**Current Status of AOJ Concern:**

The AOJ recognizes that current police policy exempts detectives from the requirement to wear BWCs. Therefore, AOJ is planning to recommend a policy change with the Deputy Police Commissioner at a meeting in the near future.

**Concern #7: Timely Updating and Sharing of Evidence**

To effectively conduct our review and make timely recommendations, it is essential that evidence is uploaded consistently—both in terms of timing and completeness. It is equally important that the HRC Overview Form (also known as a case summary/overview) is completed as thoroughly as possible at the outset of each investigation.

**IAB Response**

IAB acknowledges the impact of delayed sharing and have improved their delay times, but more is needed in both areas of timely sharing of evidence and the case overview.

**Current Status of AOJ Concern:** While we acknowledge improvement in this area, it remains a serious concern that we will continue to monitor and address with IAB.

## **AOJ Reflections and Overall Recommendations**

In the realm of civilian oversight initiatives across the nation, ours is very young and still in early development. While experiencing multiple changes in the organizational environment, this year, we have deepened our focus on case reviews, policies, procedures and the need for clarification about standard operating procedures (SOPs) in our work with IAB. We have continued to raise concerns about patterns of police misconduct, including especially officers' failure to activate BWCs and officers that escalate already fraught situations in their interactions with the public. We have also continued to raise issues with delays in investigations and the uploading of case-related evidence to Evidence.com for our review. Though improved, there needs to be additional improvement.

Last year, as our oversight of new cases was still in its early stages, many of the investigations we were monitoring had not yet progressed to the point where the AOJ received the IAB Investigators' recommended dispositions. As this year proceeded, and IAB Investigators completed their investigations, that stage of our work expanded rapidly. Assessing entire investigations and the evidence presented as a whole, to identify and request evidence we believed was missing and potentially relevant, and once satisfied that the evidence was complete (as best we could), we would determine our agreement or disagreement with the proposed dispositions. As a result of BWCs, we agreed with most dispositions as the evidence was there to be seen. However, in cases where the proposed dispositions were based on missing evidence such as the lack of BWC footage and/or audio, or where an officer's abusive behavior was not addressed in the allegations investigated or the proposed dispositions, we could not simply concur with "unsubstantiated" as a disposition. What would our disagreement mean in the process of the cases moving forward? From the beginning, we have been assured that as the cases move forward up the chain of command, we could raise such questions and thereby intercede to gain more evidence or change the recommended disposition. Moving forward, we are still at the stage of determining how this process will actually work.

As we have continued to assert, the significance of BWCs cannot be overstated. The presence or absence of BWC video and audio is critical to assessing the validity of the complaints, and allegations. The work of the IAB Investigators, as law enforcement officers and our capability to provide oversight is enabled, or obstructed by whether officers activate and continue the activation of both video and audio components of their BWCs.

Insights into police conduct derived from BWCs and related evidence has highlighted the critical importance of officers' de-escalatory approaches. The situations officers encounter in the course of enforcing the law often involve inherent tensions in many, if not most, cases with person(s)

under investigation. In many of the recordings we reviewed, even those where the members of the public with whom they were interacting were rude, provocative and even appeared out of control, officers maintained a professional, low key attitude, handling the situations without exacerbating the already challenging tension. These situations most often worked out reasonably, reflecting the critical value of de-escalation and professionalism. We have been very impressed by BWC footage that documents these interactions.

Similarly, we have witnessed, with alarm, the rapid and unnecessary deterioration of interactions, where officers enter situations hot and angry, escalating the tension and provoking members of the community in ways that effectively create a cascading series of actions and reactions between the officer and individual.

Lastly, and of great concern, as alluded to earlier, we are entirely dependent on IAB Investigators uploading ALL relevant evidence in order to ensure the effective integrity of our civilian oversight.

**Areas about which we will be continuing to address that fall into the area of IAB and Police procedures and policy include:**

We are very pleased that the SCPD has instituted the Professional Development Unit to promote new preventive training and policy development based on learning from SCPD supervisors and lessons gleaned from BWCs and elsewhere. We are looking forward to contributing to this proactive effort.

We will be exploring with SCPD and IAB the specification of allegations generated to address those situations where officers escalate and exacerbate the tension, abusively taunt and misuse their authority toward no positive law enforcement end.

We will continue to ensure that officers who fail to activate video and audio components of their BWCs are held accountable.

We will continue to move to institute more standard formal working protocols in our working relationship with IAB. With the ongoing cooperative approach that we have experienced from SCPD and IAB, we have experienced improvements and commitments to improve in the areas we've identified such as timely uploading of evidence, inclusion of ALL significant case elements on Evidence.com such as the HRC Overview, ALL relevant evidence, notations of evidence deemed non-evidentiary with explanations and, evidence and rationale utilized to justify deeming a complaint as non-jurisdictional (as a "Notification"). However, though better, the timeliness and consistency of such inclusions remains uneven.

To move beyond our ongoing efforts to address apparent glitches, delays, and the lack of clarity surrounding the rationale behind IAB actions and decisions, and to ensure that the work of HRC and IAB functions as a coordinated effort, it is highly recommended that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) be established between the two entities. SOPs will help ensure that tasks are performed correctly and consistently, maintain quality and efficiency, provide clear guidance for staff, and support the timely completion of all investigations.