

# COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: Citizen Complaints & Internal Investigations

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 27, 2023

NUMBER: General Order # 2

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: Replaces G.O. # 2 of July 12, 2018

REEVALUATION DATE: as needed

APPROVED: 

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ATTACHMENTS: Appendices A through D

**POLICY:** Establishment of procedures for investigating complaints and allegations of employee misconduct is vital to maintaining the public trust. It is the policy of this Department to invite citizens to bring forward complaints about the conduct of its employees whenever that citizen believes an employee acted improperly. A review and corrective process has been established which balances the department's ability to address citizen concerns and take appropriate corrective action as necessary, while protecting employees from unwarranted criticism for properly discharged duties. Complaints regarding all CPD employees will be investigated in accordance with the procedures described herein, and in a manner consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreement, or Town Employee Handbook.

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## I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Member: Any employee of the Colchester Police Department
- B. Officer or Sworn Member: Any sworn officer of the Colchester Police Department.
- C. Command Staff: A sworn member of the Colchester Police Department with the rank of Lieutenant or higher as specified in General Order # 1.
- D. Supervisor: A sworn officer of the Colchester Police Department with the rank of Sergeant or above. A Corporal may act as a Supervisor in regards to this Order at the direction of a Command Staff member.
- E. Officer in Charge (OIC): As defined in General Order # 1.

## **II. ORIGIN OF ALLEGATIONS/CHARGES**

- A. Allegations and/or charges of misconduct by any CPD member, violations of Department Rules or Regulations or laws (both on and off duty) may be initiated from within or outside of the Department. Every such allegation and/or charge will be reviewed by a Command Staff member. CPD will accept complaints from any source and may be referred to the Officer in Charge, however, all members are required to receive any complaint and follow the procedures below regardless of availability of an OIC.
- B. An employee electing to lodge a complaint against another employee may verbally transmit the complaint to his/her immediate supervisor. The supervisor shall notify the Chief of Police, via the chain of command.
- C. A citizen verbally lodging a complaint or charge against an employee will be asked to document the complaint or charge by filling out a "Citizen's Complaint Form," which requests the name, address and telephone number of the complainant and a brief statement describing the incident. If the complaining citizen elects not to document his/her complaint or charge, the officer receiving the complaint shall obtain pertinent facts and refer the complaint to the Officer in Charge, who shall fill out the "Citizen Complaint Form" with as much information as is available. All complaints must be reported to the Chief of Police.
- D. Every effort shall be made to facilitate the convenient, courteous and prompt receipt and processing of citizen complaints. Any employee who interferes with, discourages or delays the making of such complaints shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination.
- E. This policy does not apply to minor misunderstandings on the part of a complainant, which can be quickly resolved with an explanation of State law and/or Department policy. Such minor misunderstandings may be resolved by the Officer in Charge and should be documented via an e-mail to the Chief of Police. If the complaining citizen is not satisfied with this resolution, he/she may complete a "Citizen's Complaint Form."
- F. A "Citizen's Complaint Form" and the accompanying cover letter explaining the process for filing citizen's complaints shall be available to the public at all times (Appendices D & E).
- G. The Chief of Police will determine if it is necessary to commence an internal investigation. Such investigation will be assigned to a supervisor, to act as the investigator. A copy of all relevant information will be provided to the designated investigator.
  - 1. Sometimes there is not enough information available to determine if a complaint is a minor misunderstanding or something more serious or complex that requires an internal investigation.
  - 2. When it is unclear if an internal investigation is required, the Chief of Police may order an "administrative review" to gather further

information. An administrative review is a cursory investigation into the allegations to determine if there are potential violations of department rules, general orders or laws.

3. The involved employee will be notified of the administrative review. He/she will be interviewed by the investigating officer. Participation and truthfulness during the administrative review are required.
4. The investigating officer will complete a brief narrative of the administrative review. After review, the Chief of Police will determine whether the incident requires an internal investigation or can be resolved with no further investigation.
5. Any time an allegation of felonious criminal behavior is made against a member of CPD, it shall be referred to an outside agency for investigation.
6. Allegations of criminal behavior against other Town employees or officials shall be thoroughly and impartially investigated by CPD unless a conflict of interest or unusual circumstances exist, in which case an outside agency will be contacted for assistance.

H. Whenever an internal investigation is commenced, the affected employee will be notified in writing that he/she is the subject of investigation and what the nature of the allegation(s) is, and shall be afforded any other notice as may be necessary under a relevant collective bargaining agreement.

I. The Department will comply with legislative mandates found in Title 20 VSA Chapter 51, Subchapter 2.

### **III. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE EMPLOYEE**

Internal investigations shall be conducted in an impartial and objective manner. The purpose is to determine all facts relevant to the matter, whether or not such facts may be favorable or unfavorable to the individual concerned or the agency.

All employees are required to be cooperative, impartial and truthful when asked for information concerning the matter under investigation.

The rights and obligations of employees who are under investigation and subject to interrogation for any reason which could reasonably lead to disciplinary action are set forth below:

- A. The employee will be informed in writing prior to the interview that he/she is a subject in the investigation, and will be informed of the nature of the investigation. The employee shall also be informed of his/her rights and responsibilities relative to the investigation (Appendices A & B).
- B. All interrogations shall be limited in scope to activities, circumstances, events, conduct or acts, which pertain to the incident that is the subject of the investigation. An employee may be requested to participate in other

investigative processes that are specifically directed and narrowly related to the internal investigation.

- C. Except for submitting to drug or alcohol screenings based on reasonable suspicion, no employee shall be compelled to take a polygraph, participate in a photo or live line-up, or submit to medical or laboratory examinations during the course of an internal investigation initiated pursuant to this policy.
- D. Employees may be asked to provide other records that are reasonably related to the allegations being investigated. Such records may include financial records, phone records, etc.
- E. Internal investigations shall normally be completed within thirty days. The time required may vary from case to case based on the nature of the allegation(s) and the complexity of the investigation. Therefore, if additional time is necessary to complete the investigation, the Chief of Police may authorize an extension of up to sixty days, for a maximum time limit of ninety days.
- F. No information gained during the course of an internal investigation can be used in a criminal prosecution. Information gained during the course of an internal investigation shall be confidential to the extent allowed by law.
- G. At the conclusion of the investigation, the employee has a right to written findings as well as a copy of the investigative report and supporting material.

#### **IV. INTERNAL INVESTIGATION PROCESS**

- A. Organization:

The Chief of Police shall assign a Command Staff member to oversee each internal investigation. The Commander shall staff the investigation with as many officers as required. The Chief may ask for assistance from an outside agency or consultant to conduct an internal investigation. In all instances involving CPD personnel, CPD policies and procedures shall be followed.
- B. The Chief of Police shall keep the Command Staff advised of all incoming complaints, unless such a member is the subject of the complaint. The Chief of Police will be notified as soon as feasible by the affected supervisor of any complaint that may result in an internal investigation. Any complaint regarding the conduct of the Chief of Police shall be referred to the Town Manager's Office.
- C. Procedure:
  - 1. This policy does not relieve Supervisors of their responsibilities for the prompt investigation of all alleged acts of misconduct or other breaches of discipline by their subordinates. Minor complaints (i.e. rudeness) may

be investigated by a line supervisor for the purpose of conducting an administrative review.

2. An administrative review is not considered an internal investigation as defined by this policy.
  3. A LT will commence any internal investigation so directed by the Chief of Police. The Department shall investigate any allegation of criminality on the part of an employee or of any conduct that could result in discipline more substantial than a written reprimand.
  4. Employees conducting internal investigations shall have freedom of movement and authority to question all personnel regarding infractions of Departmental policy, procedure, or rules and regulations in reference to any ongoing investigation.
  5. CPD members participating in an investigation conducted pursuant to this policy and conducted in accordance with proper procedures and policies will not be retaliated against for such participation. CPD members will cooperate with any administrative review or internal investigation conducted by this department or any other law enforcement agency.
  6. During the course of any internal investigation, all relevant police records and police reports shall be made immediately available to the investigators upon their request.
  7. Upon completion of investigations, the investigator will forward a report and all supporting documentation to the supervising LT. The LT shall review all materials and make recommendations on findings and discipline to the Chief of Police.
- D. Record Keeping: The Chief of Police shall maintain a complete record of complaints. These records shall be maintained separate from all other department records and shall be strictly confidential.
- E. The Chief of Police shall be responsible for the following, regarding follow up with the original complainant:
1. The complainant shall be advised when their complaint is received.
  2. When reasonable to do so, as determined by the Chief, the complainant will be periodically informed as to the status of their complaint.
  3. Reasonable efforts will be made to advise the complainant when the complaint has been resolved. No details of discipline shall be released, but the complainant will be advised what findings were made.
- F. The Chief of Police shall annually compile a statistical summary of all complaints investigated. This summary shall include the number of internal investigations and the category of disposition of each. This summary shall be made available to agency employees and the Town Manager upon

request. If a trend indicating the need for training is detected, the Chief of Police shall make appropriate recommendations to the Training Unit. The conduct of subsequent training shall be in the sole discretion of the Chief of Police.

## **V. AUTHORITY OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE**

### **A. The Chief of Police shall:**

1. Review every case to determine the appropriate disposition.
2. Make a finding, using the following recommended categories of disposition:

**Unfounded** - The investigation indicates that the act or acts complained of did not occur or failed to involve police personnel.

**Exonerated** - Acts reported did occur, but were justified, lawful and proper.

**Non-sustained** - Investigation fails to disclose sufficient evidence to clearly prove or disprove the allegations made in the complaint.

**Sustained** - The investigation disclosed sufficient evidence to clearly prove the allegations made in the complaint.

**Non-involved** - The investigation establishes that the individual named in the complaint is not involved in the alleged incident.

3. Any employee named in a complaint will be notified in writing as to the findings.

### **B. Disciplinary or corrective action, up to and including termination may result from the investigation of a complaint pursuant to this policy. The type of corrective or disciplinary action will be dictated by the facts of the given situation and will be determined consistent with the relevant collective bargaining agreement, Town personnel policy and CPD policies and procedures.**

### **C. Any discipline as a result of an internal investigation will be documented and a copy kept in the employee's personnel file.**

### **D. Should an incident occur which is, in the opinion of the Officer in Charge, of such magnitude that immediate action is necessary, the OIC may immediately relieve the employee from duty for the balance of his/her shift. The OIC shall notify the appropriate Bureau LT and prepare a report before the end of shift.**



Appendix A

**COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT  
ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEW NOTIFICATION**

Person to be interviewed/questioned: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Before asking any questions, I am advising you of the Colchester Police Department's Internal Investigation policy and your responsibility as an employee of the Colchester Police Dept.

An Internal Investigation or Admin Review is about a violation of the Police Department's Rules & Regulations.

The purpose of the interview is to ask for responses that will help in determining whether disciplinary action is warranted. The answers furnished may be used in disciplinary proceedings that could result in administrative action against you and any other employee of the Colchester Police Department, including reprimand, demotion, suspension or dismissal.

All questions about the performance of official duties must be answered completely and truthfully. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be undertaken if the employee refuses to answer completely and truthfully. [Colchester Police Department's Rules - Rule 24, Truthfulness & Rule 17, Conduct Unbecoming.]

No answers given or any information gained by this administrative interview may be admissible against you in any criminal proceeding.

You may have the presence of an attorney or anyone of your choice on a consulting basis. However, there will be no interference with the interview by either party.

Do you understand what I have said? \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have any questions about what I have said? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you understand that by not answering my questions you would be violating the Rules & Regulations of the Colchester Police Department - Rule 17: Conduct Unbecoming - the failure to cooperate with an Internal Investigation? \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgement of Administrative Inquiry Procedures:

I have had the above statement of the Administrative Inquiry Procedures read to me.  
I fully understand my responsibilities as an employee of the Colchester Police Department.

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

INVESTIGATOR'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ BADGE # \_\_\_\_\_



**COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT  
INTERNAL INVESTIGATION NOTIFICATION**

**I.A. #** \_\_\_\_\_

**TO:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBJECT: Internal Investigation**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**You are hereby notified that you are the subject of an internal investigation being conducted by this department.**

**The nature of the investigation is as follows:**

**Name, rank and assignment of the officer in charge of the investigation:**

**Witnesses that have been interviewed thus far are:**

**Please acknowledge receipt of a copy of this memorandum.**

**OFFICER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**WITNESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The officer under investigation has the right to have an attorney or other responsible representative of their choice present during interrogation.**





Appendix C

**COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CITIZEN'S COMPLAINT ADMINISTRATIVE  
COVER SHEET**

Date Received \_\_\_\_\_ Complainant \_\_\_\_\_

Intake Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Incident Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Employee(s) Involved \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Complaint:


Admin Review? \_\_\_\_\_ Internal Investigation? \_\_\_\_\_ IA# \_\_\_\_\_

Date Initial Letter Sent to Complainant \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date assigned \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewing Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date Reviewed by COP \_\_\_\_\_ Disposition \_\_\_\_\_

Date Closed with Employee(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date Closure Letter Sent to Complainant \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:



## CITIZEN'S COMPLAINT FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF REPORT: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ INCIDENT DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION OF INCIDENT: \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICER/EMPLOYEE INVOLVED: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION OF COMPLAINT: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Continue on back if necessary)

WITNESS TO INCIDENT:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return form to Officer in Charge



835 Blakely Road • Colchester, Vermont • 05446 • 802.264.5555

Douglas Allen, Chief of Police

Colchester Police Department is dedicated to ensuring a safe and vibrant community for our residents and visitors of the Town of Colchester. Maintaining order, enforcing the law and providing emergency response services can sometimes place our employees in situations where conflicts or questions arise. Protecting and respecting everyone's civil rights is of paramount importance to us as we go about safeguarding our community.

Maintaining the public's trust is crucial to our success. We take this responsibility very seriously and have a process in place to address complaints from the public about how we accomplish the mission of community safety. We encourage everyone to report improper employee conduct. These complaints will be dealt with in a prompt, open and professional manner.

Our complaint process is established to investigate concerns and complaints regarding the performance of our employees. This process helps us to determine if training or corrective action is required. It also serves to protect employees from unwarranted criticism while properly performing their duties.

The first step in our process is to meet or speak with an on-duty supervisor to address your questions or concerns and to document the events that transpired. If you are unable to come to the police headquarters, you may call and ask to speak with a supervisor at 802-264-5555. A supervisor can meet with you at your convenience, or in unusual cases, we can accept your complaint by mail, email, or by phone. Your concerns will be evaluated and forwarded to a member of the Command Staff for review. Many concerns can be resolved quickly, but in some cases a lengthy investigation may be required. At the conclusion of the internal review process, you will be contacted and informed of the disposition.

On behalf of the Colchester Police Department,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Allen", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Douglas Allen  
Chief of Police