

**THE CITY OF BURLINGTON'S CITIZEN  
COMPLAINT PROCEDURE HELPS YOU, THE  
COMMUNITY AND THE POLICE**

If you have a complaint about police practices, or interference with your rights by police officers, what can you do?

The City of Burlington Police Department welcomes constructive criticism of the Department or valid complaints about its members or procedures. The prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of each complaint is essential to get and keep the trust and confidence of the people we serve. Without that trust and confidence, effective policing is not possible.

Police officers must be free to use their best judgment to take action in a reasonable, lawful and impartial manner without fear of reprisal. At the same time, they must strictly observe the rights of all people.

**HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT**

The first step is to call, write or come in person to:

City of Burlington Police Department  
224 East Jefferson Street  
Burlington, WI 53105  
262-342-1100

A complaint may be made at **ANY** time of day or night to **ANY** police supervisor. Depending on the circumstances, they will either investigate immediately or forward a report to the Chief of Police for assignment of the investigation.

The person assigned to investigate your complaint will ask the following information:

- Your name, address and telephone number (anonymous complaints may also be made and will be investigated).
- The date and time of the incident about which you are complaining.

- The names, address and telephone numbers of any witnesses, if available.
- If the incident involved is an arrest, the name, address and telephone number of the person arrested, if known.
- If the incident involves a police officer, you will be asked for their name. If you do not have this information, simply tell what happened, when and where.
- Details of the incident or action which prompted your complaint.

**INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE**

You will be asked to make a written report to the Department about the incident. The officer assigned the investigation can assist you in writing this report.

The officer who investigates the complaint will contact all available witnesses, including police officers, examine any relevant physical evidence and gather all information pertinent to each allegation made in the complaint. If there is more than one allegation, each will be examined on its own merits.

Every investigator or supervisor assigned to investigate a personnel complaint or other alleged misconduct shall proceed with due diligence in an effort to complete the investigation within one year from the date of discovery by an individual authorized to initiate an investigation.

You will be notified of the results of the investigation. You will be given an opportunity to come and discuss the results with the Chief of Police.

There are four possible findings in each case:

- **Unfounded** – The investigation conclusively proved the incident complained of did not occur, or that the individual names in the complaint were not involved.

- **Exonerated** – The act which provided the basis for the complaint did occur; however, the investigation revealed the act was justified, lawful and proper.
- **Not Sustained** – The investigation failed to reveal sufficient evidence to clearly prove or disprove the allegation.
- **Sustained** – The investigation disclosed sufficient evidence to clearly prove the allegation.

The Chief of Police reviews all internal investigation reports. When a finding of “sustained” is made, the Chief of Police will make a decision regarding the corrective action to be taken.

One or more corrective action(s) may be taken by the Chief of Police, subject to provisions of the City of Burlington Police Department Policy & Procedures Manual, City of Burlington, and the City of Burlington Police and Fire Commission Rules and Regulations. These actions include counseling; oral reprimand; written reprimand; suspension; demotion; and, removal from the Department.

No matter what the finding, you can come in and discuss the matter with the Chief of Police.

**CONCLUSION**

Your valid complaints and criticisms help protect the community from possible misconduct by police. At the same time, a thorough and impartial investigation provides a procedure to protect police officers from unwarranted charges when they perform their duties properly. The intent is to be fair to both the citizens and the police officer

*“The need for a variety of continuous checks to assure compliance with the established procedures is recognized. An awareness that such a check is being made does not constitute an affront to the officer. Rather, it is a reminder of the sensitive nature of their work and the need for maintaining high standards of conduct.”*

**CITY OF BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE**

Per Wisconsin State Statute 946.66: “whoever knowingly makes a false complaint regarding the conduct of a law enforcement officer is subject to a Class A forfeiture.”



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