

What happens if I am unhappy with the outcome of my complaint?

If you do not agree with the results of the investigation of your complaint, you may submit a letter to the investigations commander requesting reconsideration. The investigations commander shall review the investigation, determine if it was properly handled, and notify you of the review findings in writing.

If I have any questions about the process, who should I call?

You should be in close contact with the supervisor conducting the investigation and should address specific concerns or additional information to them while your case is investigated. If for some reason your questions are not answered, you may contact the OPA at (425) 388-3249.

What if I want to commend an employee?

It is our agency's policy to recognize employees who have provided exceptional professional service to the public or performed extraordinary acts of bravery or heroism, above and beyond that which is normally expected in the line of duty. We invite nominations for recognition of these employees from the communities we serve. Please see any Sheriff's Office employee and ask them for a citizen commendation form, use the on-line "Complaints & Commendations" form or e-mail contact.sheriff@snoco.org. We will ensure your appreciation is shared with our valued employees.

How can I contact OPA?

Office of Professional Accountability
(425) 388-3249, contact.sheriff@snoco.org

Online Complaints & Commendations form
<http://snohomishcountywa.gov/OPAform>



Complaint

Commendation

Best way to contact you

E-mail _____

Phone _____

I wish to remain anonymous*

Your First Name

Your Last Name

Date of Incident

Time of Incident

Please provide the closest approximation of the date and time of the incident. If this is an ongoing situation, please provide the first or earliest date possible.

Location of incident

Please provide an exact address, if possible. If unknown, provide the nearest approximate address or location.

Employee name

Employee badge #

Description of incident:

Please continue on a separate sheet of paper, if necessary.



SNOHOMISH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Office of Professional Accountability

Complaints AND Commendations

The mission of the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office is to provide safe communities through dedicated and professional service.

To accomplish our mission, we must foster and maintain a relationship of trust with communities we serve. Just as deputies are free to initiate law enforcement action in a reasonable, lawful, and impartial manner, citizens are also free to file a complaint against Sheriff's Office employees without fear of reprisal, retribution, or harassment. The Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) has an established system to receive complaints and investigate those complaints. We also have the responsibility of initiating disciplinary action when appropriate. Our goal is to resolve the issues in a thorough, timely, and courteous manner.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I file a complaint?

If you believe a Sheriff's Office employee has engaged in inappropriate behavior, you may file a complaint in person, by phone, mail, email or on-line. Complaints can be made to any on-duty Sheriff's Office employee, regardless of rank or position.

We also accept complaints from outside agencies and from third parties reporting the complaint on the behalf of another.

Complaints should be filed as soon as is practical.

Can I remain anonymous?

While we encourage those who make complaints to provide their names and other information, we do accept anonymous complaints. However, an anonymous complaint can be very difficult to investigate. During the course of the investigation, additional information may be required from you to ensure a successful conclusion.

*Please note that we respect your privacy and will not distribute your personal information except as necessary to resolve your request or complaint. However, you should be aware that this information is subject to the Washington State public disclosure laws and may be disclosable upon request.

How long will the investigation take?

All complaints are investigated expeditiously after receipt, in many cases while the subject employee and his/her supervisor are on duty. Most complaints are completed with a finding within 60 days.

Who will investigate my complaint?

Most often, the employee's supervisor will conduct the complaint investigation because they have first-hand knowledge of their employees and monitor their daily conduct. If the case is more serious in nature, or requires an in-depth investigation, the complaint may be assigned to the OPA. The final outcome of the investigation will be sent to you in writing.

What happens after I file a complaint?

We will first attempt to put you in touch with the supervisor of the employee. The supervisor will document the complaint and immediately send a copy of the report to OPA. The OPA sergeant monitors complaints on employees and has a system in place that can help identify potential problem employees early, before questionable conduct becomes bad conduct.

What will happen to the employee?

Every complaint is different in both circumstance and seriousness. The Sheriff's Office will discipline employees in a manner that is fair and consistent. Sanctions against those who violate our policies may include counselling, written reprimand, suspension, demotion or termination. If the investigation into the complaint is found to be unfounded or non-sustained, no action will be taken against the employee.

How will I be notified of the outcome of the investigation?

The primary investigator will be your point of contact during the investigative process and is available to you for any questions you may have. At the conclusion of the investigation, you will be notified of the findings in writing. These findings must fall within five categories as defined below:

Unfounded - The incident, or incidents, did not occur or the accused employee was not involved.

Exonerated - The incident occurred, however, the employee's actions were justified, lawful, and proper.

Non-Sustained

- **Cleared:** There is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation is false or it is not supported by the facts.
- **Inconclusive:** There is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation
- The investigation revealed that the employee committed a violation(s) other than the original allegations(s). A new allegation would be alleged and a finding made.

Sustained - The allegation is supported by sufficient evidence to indicate that the employee committed one or more of the alleged acts.

Undetermined - This may involve, but is not limited to, the following:

- The Complainant withdraws the complaint;
- The Complainant cannot be located;
- The Complainant is uncooperative;
- The accused member separates from the Office before the conclusion of the investigation.

