


TO: City Council
FROM: City Manager and Staff 
DATE: June 26, 2007
RE: Council Report - Internal Affairs Assessment

First Progress Report for Columbia Police Department Internal Affairs Assessment

Since acceptance of the Columbia Police Department's Internal Affairs Audit, there has been moderate progress made toward implementation of the action plan (Plan) that was suggested by the auditors. Unless there are budgetary caveats, total implementation of the Plan from the Audit's acceptance date could happen as early as January 2008. If there are personnel and budgetary constraints, the recommended time should not exceed April, 2008 (one year from the acceptance of the Plan by the City Council). It is my hope that the GO-051 will be completely revised and accepted by the necessary entities and the identification of key personnel to staff the Professional Standards Unit will take place within the next four months. This will allow the necessary training of said personnel by January 1, 2008. Therefore, my recommended time for completion would be January 1, 2008 but no later than April 1, 2008.

After completing an Internal Affairs assessment of the Columbia Police Department, I along with my partners, recommended several changes to the existing IA policy (GO-051). Although the revision of the policy is a work in progress, the CPD has already made several substantive changes.

Understanding the importance of transparency, and the lack thereof that can breed distrust among citizens, CPD posted a process for complaints and compliments on their website and in the lobby of the Police Station. Informing the public that they will receive and investigate all complaints and release as much information about each complaint to the public as allowed by law is an excellent step toward raising public awareness and public confidence. Previously, there were discrepancies between the written policy and actual practice. It is now clear that complaints will be received anonymously or by a third-party. This information was not previously available to citizens. Procedures for filing complaints and the process to be followed upon the receipt of a complaint are now clearly outlined, thus allowing the CPD and citizens to see the process as standardized and transparent. **This was a very important first-step in the implementation process.**

CPD has revised its investigative findings for administrative cases to include proper, improper, undetermined, unfounded, or exceptionally

Source:

Police

Rbb
mb

Fiscal Impact

___ YES

___ NO

Other Info.

cleared. These are important standardized findings that will be utilized by CPD for each administrative case. This process will create internal consistency of accountability.

Although CPD still plans to further revise GO-051, the department is well on its way to establishing standardized procedures which will go a long way in establishing the trust of the citizens they serve.

In the process of implementation of the suggested changes, CPD has established two committees (community members involved) that will focus on the policy revisions and the establishment of a Professional Standards Unit (PSU). The next step is organizing a process for selection of personnel and establishing other infrastructure (e.g., Early Warning System) for the PSU. Once the PSU is established, statistical data from Complaint Information Reports can be used with the newly established Early Warning System. This process will be vital in identifying patterns of conduct of officers or squad that may be out of the norm for complaints and use of force. This will be one piece of the backbone for monitoring, investigating, and accountability and will become a standard protocol for CPD. This and good communication with the citizens of Columbia will create a pattern of trust.

Respectfully submitted,
Aaron Thompson, PhD.