

HOW TO REPORT Misconduct or Discrimination by Law Enforcement Officers or Agencies



Law enforcement officers are sworn to protect and serve all members of the public. If you believe that you have been mistreated by a police officer, including if an officer in any way discriminated against you or harassed you, then you have the right to file a formal complaint against them. By law, all complaints against police officers must be thoroughly investigated. You have the right to be told the outcome of your complaint, and whether or not the police officer in question received any discipline as a result.

There are multiple options for filing a complaint against an officer, depending on the officer's employer, the type of misconduct at issue, and your personal preferences. No matter which method you choose, you always have the option of filing a complaint anonymously if you are uncomfortable with giving your identity. It is against the law for any police officer or police department to retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

- 1 If your complaint is against a local law enforcement officer,** then you can file a complaint with your local police department. You can file a complaint by visiting the police station, or if you are unable to do so, an officer can meet you elsewhere. Police departments are required by law to accept your complaint at any time, and may not turn you away. Many police departments also accept complaints by telephone or email. Your complaint will be investigated by that police department's internal affairs staff. Routine complaints should be resolved within 45 days, and only rarely should complaints take more than 180 days to resolve.
- 2 If you are uncomfortable making a complaint to the local police department, or were in any way discouraged from making a complaint by the police,** then you may contact the County Prosecutor's office. Contact information for each office can be found at www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/county-prosecutor.html. If you feel as though the County Prosecutor has not adequately handled the issue, then you may also contact the Attorney General's Office at www.nj.gov/oag/safestopnj/complaint or by phone at 833-472-3365.
- 3 If your complaint is against a State Trooper,** then you may file a complaint with the State Police's Office of Professional Standards, which will investigate your complaint. You can file a complaint by calling the toll free hot line at 1-877-253-4125, or by making a complaint in-person at any State Police facility. For more information, visit www.njsp.org/information/complaint.shtml.
- 4 If you believe that a police officer or department discriminated against or harassed you because of your race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or gender identity or expression,** or retaliated against you for complaining about such conduct, then you may also file a complaint with the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights (DCR) under the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD). For example, if an officer used a racial slur during an encounter, then you could file a complaint with DCR, and DCR will investigate to determine if the LAD has been violated. For more information, you can contact DCR at 973-648-2700, or visit their website at www.NJCivilRights.gov.

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