

## HOW HAS THE ERIE BUREAU OF POLICE IMPROVED THE COMPLAINT PROCESS

- The Erie Police Department's Internal Affairs policy has been revised and expanded for better understanding and functionality.
- It does not discourage, dishearten, or intimidate complainants, or give them cause for fear.
- Complaint forms no longer are required to be notarized.
- Complaint forms are now available at multiple locations.
- Interpretive services are available through the International Institute.
- Complaint mediations of a minor nature that do not require a full investigation are documented and reviewed by the Chief of Police and Office of Professional Standards.
- Mandatory written notification is required to individuals submitting a complaint from the Chief of Police with outcome results.
- The Office of Professional Standards will be properly staffed and provided appropriate training.



### CONTACT INFORMATION

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE  
CHIEF DAN SPIZARNY  
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814-870-1113

We take allegations of employee misconduct seriously. Consequently, to protect the rights of citizens as well as officers, if the investigation reveals a complaint was made maliciously, in bad faith, or with knowledge that the accusation was false, action may be taken to prosecute the complainant for making a false report.

# ERIE BUREAU OF POLICE



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## CITIZEN COMPLAINT INFORMATION BROCHURE

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*PROFESSIONALISM,  
COURTESY, AND  
FAIRNESS*

## COMPLAINTS

The Erie Police Office of Professional Standards has as its major function the receiving, processing, and investigation of complaints made against members of the Department, to ensure the public's trust and maintain the Department's integrity. The Bureau conducts immediate, objective, and thorough investigations of all complaints.

### **Q. What is a complaint?**

**A.** A complaint is an allegation, either internally or externally in origin, that must be:

1. An allegation from any set of circumstance(s) amounting to a specific act or omission which if proven true would amount to employee misconduct, or
2. Any dissatisfaction with a policy, procedure, practice, philosophy, service level, or legal standard from an external source.

### **Q. What happens to my complaint?**

**A.** When received, the complaint is classified and assigned to an investigator from the Office of Professional Standards by the Chief of Police. Statements are taken from the complainant, all witnesses, and the subject employee(s). Upon completion, the case is reviewed and a disposition determined on the information.

### **Q. How long does it take the Office of Professional Standards to complete the investigation?**

**A.** The average case takes from 25 days to 6 months to complete. This depends on the complexity of the case, the availability of witnesses, and the involvement of other agencies, such as the State Attorney's Office.

### **Q. Do other agencies investigate allegations of police misconduct?**

**A.** Yes. Outside agencies are used when the need exists.

### **Q. Will I be notified of the findings?**

**A.** Yes. Both the complainant and the employee are notified when the investigation has been completed.

## HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Complaints can be made:

- In person
- By phone
- By mail
- Anonymously

Complaint forms are available:

- On the Erie Bureau of Police Web Site: <http://www.erie.pa.us/police>
- At the Erie Bureau of Police Station
- City of Erie Magisterial District Judge's Offices
- By mail on request
- Hand delivered on request

## OUTCOMES

Each allegation in a complaint is judged according to the following categories:

- **SUSTAINED** – The investigation disclosed sufficient evidence to clearly prove some or all of the allegations made in the complaint.
- **NOT SUSTAINED** – The investigation failed to discover sufficient evidence to clearly prove or disprove the allegation(s) made.
- **EXONERATED** – The investigation reveals that the acts did occur, but the actions taken were justified, lawful and proper.
- **UNFOUNDED** – The investigation indicated that the alleged act(s) did not occur.
- **INCOMPLETE** – The investigation could not be thoroughly completed due to extenuating circumstances.
- **POLICY REVIEW** - The investigation reveals that there is a need to modify an existing policy/procedure or to implement one.