

Public Oversight Program of Law Enforcement in Humboldt County

This proposal is for a two-component (hybrid) system consisting of:

Advisory Committee on Law Enforcement that will:

- Help educate the public on law enforcement policies and procedures;
- Summarize reports of Independent Auditor's findings to the community when not bound by personnel confidentiality;
- Develop criteria justifying recommendation for involvement of an Independent Auditor;
- Provide an annual report for the Sheriff's Office, or appropriate governing body (e.g., City Council).

Independent Auditor that will:

- Provide an annual review of policies and procedures of the contracted law enforcement agency (e.g., Sheriff's Office; City Police Department)
 - Evaluate specific events or concerns, as requested.
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Purposes of the Program:

1. Develop and enhance trust between the general public and law enforcement personnel;
2. Work with law enforcement agencies to help educate the public about law enforcement issues & concerns;
3. Work with the public in addressing concerns involving law enforcement policies and practices, and in lessening conflict in the community following law enforcement actions;
4. Tender advice to the governing bodies concerning policies and issues about law enforcement;
5. Provide advice to law enforcement agencies regarding development of stronger relationships with the general public.

Advisory Committee on Law Enforcement will:

1. Be local community members appointed by the Board of Supervisors, after consultation with the law enforcement community and appropriate public interest groups;
2. Be unpaid volunteers who will not be vested with investigative powers for law enforcement internal investigation cases;
3. Be constrained by the Brown Act and other relevant laws;
4. Become familiar with key laws, policies, practices, and procedures of law enforcement agencies;
5. Provide public education designed to help clarify law enforcement policies and procedures to the public prior to the onset of crisis situations;
6. Work with law enforcement agencies and members of the public to address potential public concerns and how best to address them prior to the onset of problems;
7. Provide a conduit for enhancing meaningful and constructive dialogue between members of the general public and the law enforcement community;

8. Recommend improvements to law enforcement agencies about their current policies and issues;
9. Recommend improvements to the governing body about current policies and issues regarding law enforcement;
10. Review citizen complaints and input received from the community and make recommendations on the potential need for an Independent Auditor to the Sheriff or to the appropriate governing body for other law enforcement agencies;
11. Refer a matter to the Grand Jury, as appropriate;
12. Formulate and periodically review guidelines for recommending an Independent Auditor, and periodically review these guidelines for their appropriateness to this community. Both law enforcement agencies and community members will be invited to contribute to this process;
13. Review the recommendations of the Independent Auditor concerning agency policies and procedures and summarize and educate the public concerning that review;
14. Be available to work with the Independent Auditor and Sheriff in educating the public regarding the results of the audits of specific cases, as needed;
15. Provide an annual report of their work to the Board of Supervisors.

Independent Auditor will:

1. Be contracted by the governing body, after consultation with members of the law enforcement community and appropriate public interest groups;
2. Be a trained, independent professional with experience working in similar jurisdictions, with a clear understanding of applicable laws, and law enforcement policies and procedures, and with the trust of both the public and law enforcement community;
3. Conduct an annual review of the policies and procedures of contracted agencies, and report his/her findings to the law enforcement agency and to the appropriate governing body, if the agency requests it;
4. Conduct an annual review of internal affairs investigations, as selected by the Independent Auditor, for contracted agencies; the Independent Auditor will report his/her findings to the law enforcement agency and to the appropriate governing body, if the agency requests it;
5. Provide necessary training to the Advisory Committee on Law Enforcement;
6. Be available to the County Sheriff and city police chiefs as a training resource;
7. Be available to work with the Advisory Committee in educating the public on the results of audits, as needed;
8. Recognize that the sheriff/police chief retains all disciplining authority;
9. Have investigative powers to review all pertinent documents regarding citizen complaints and internal affairs investigations and to make (non-binding) recommendations, subject to approval by the law enforcement agency;
10. Be restricted by all personnel confidentiality rules during investigations and when reporting to the Advisory Committee;
11. Report findings to the governing body if the audited law enforcement agency requests it, or if it is determined such a report is necessary – subject to all applicable laws and confidentiality restrictions.