

# **Final Report:**

*The San Francisco Police Department  
Needs to Improve Policies, Processes,  
and Data Tracking to Ensure the  
Timely, Consistent, and Transparent  
Handling of Officer Misconduct*

**CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO**

Department of Police Accountability

February 21, 2024

## Why We Did This Report

DPA has a Charter mandate to audit SFPD's handling of misconduct.

## Objectives

The audit evaluated whether:

- SFPD's Internal Affairs Division (IAD) ensures that complaints of officer misconduct are investigated on time.
- IAD efficiently and effectively identifies, tracks, and reports on allegations of officer bias.
- SFPD effectively complies with reporting requirements for officer misconduct investigations.

## Interim reports issued on SFPD's:

- Public Reporting on Officer Misconduct and Discipline (November 2022)
- Monitoring of Department Communications for Bias (March 2023)
- Handling of Officer Discipline (May 2023)

## Full report issued on December 21, 2023

- 3 finding areas
- 31 recommendations
- 5 other observations
- 6 appendices

## What We Found

- **Finding 1** - SFPD needs to improve data and policies to ensure the timely investigation and resolution of misconduct
- **Finding 2** - SFPD needs to strengthen its approach to handling allegations of officer bias
- **Finding 3** - SFPD needs better reporting to meet requirements and strengthen transparency

## **Finding 1: SFPD Needs to Improve Data and Policies to Ensure the Timely Investigation and Resolution of Misconduct**

- 1.1 - IAD needs to improve data tracking to ensure that it completes the misconduct investigation and discipline notification process within the statute of limitations.
- 1.2 - IAD needs stronger tracking to ensure the timely completion of investigations referred to district stations.
- 1.3 - SFPD does not set time frames for resolving appeals of intended disciplinary actions, which can delay accountability and undermine perceptions of fairness.
- 1.4 - SFPD lacks written criteria for when or how long it can hold discipline in abeyance, which could lead to arbitrary decision-making.
- 1.5 - Improved procedures may help IAD ensure that investigators complete required training courses.

## **Finding 2: SFPD Needs to Strengthen Its Approach to Handling Allegations of Officer Bias**

- 2.1 - A lack of investigation tracking requirements and limited guidelines hinder the effectiveness of IAD's handling of allegations of officer bias.
- 2.2 - A lack of required updates weakens SFPD's biased communication auditing program.
- 2.3 - SFPD can clarify policy guidance to help ensure the consistent identification of bias.

## **Finding 3: SFPD Needs Better Reporting to Meet Requirements and Strengthen Transparency**

- 3.1 - SFPD did not publish required information on officer misconduct investigations, which weakens transparency and oversight.
- 3.2 - The misconduct information SFPD does provide needs improvement to be useful to the Police Commission and the public.
- 3.3 - Better data recording and tracking practices can help SFPD report on investigations and analyze discipline data more efficiently.
- 3.4 - Station captains did not consistently follow a policy requiring complaint review, limiting the department's ability to effectively address allegation trends.

## Other Observations:

- SFPD can strengthen guidance on conflicts of interest that can arise during the misconduct investigation process.
- SFPD's procedures for disqualifying field training officers based on their misconduct history are outdated.
- SFPD's social media policies do not include training or monitoring requirements.
- SFPD addresses bias by proxy but has opportunities to strengthen guidance further.
- SFPD's bias communications audit reports show a high rate of false positives.

## Recommendations

The report includes 31 recommendations to help SFPD ensure the timely, consistent, and transparent handling of officer misconduct.

SFPD concurred or partially concurred with 26 recommendations, including those related to:

- Improved tracking of dates needed to show that it completes the misconduct investigation and discipline notification process within the statute of limitations.
- Ensuring the consistent identification and tracking of bias allegations.
- Effectively complying with reporting requirements.

Questions?

