



Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO)

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2019/2020 Workplan

The King County Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO) was established in the King County Charter and in King County Code 2.65 to represent the interests of the public and increase confidence in King County police services through independent civilian oversight of the King County Sheriff's Office. The following describes our workplan under the 2019/2020 budget biennium.

REPORTS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Systemic Reviews of Critical Incidents

In 2019/2020, OLEO intends to conduct systemic reviews of the shootings of two prior critical incidents and may add others depending on need and capacity.

A single event resulting in death or significant injury to a member of the public, or that involves public perception of improper policing, can have a lasting negative impact on a police department. It can also undermine critical relationships with community.

One avenue to foster community understanding of such an event, and to critically assess the incident to determine ways to prevent future similar events, is by conducting a systemic review of that event. [According to the National Institute of Justice](#), such reviews are common practice in health care, aviation, and other industries as a non-punitive means to examine the systemic failures and defects that contribute to or allow tragic events to happen (called "Sentinel Reviews" in these industries). While individual responsibility is a critical component in addressing community concern with an incident, systems analysis is critical to minimizing the likelihood of similar future tragedies.

Recommendations on Use of Confidential Informants

OLEO will provide recommendations to the Sheriff's Office on potential improvements to policies and practices involving the use of confidential informants (CI).

Police departments across the country rely on confidential informants as a primary way to pursue drug investigations, but their improper use has led to serious problems. In other jurisdictions, such problems have included [loss of innocent life](#), [false arrests](#) and [unnecessarily putting people in harm's way](#).

In the Sheriff's Office, issues have arisen relating to use of confidential informants such as deputies engaging in personal relationships with informants. In one example, the informant was found in the deputy's car with a hypodermic needle in her arm and narcotics in the vehicle. According to a 2014 Sheriff's Office review of CI files maintained by the Shoreline Special Emphasis Team, not one file reviewed was without errors. Common findings included missing approval signatures for informant activation, missing criminal history reports and photo pages, no witness signatures, and use of duplicate informant numbers instead of numbers unique to each informant.

Annual Reports

OLEO's Annual Report is presented in September of each year and contains analyses, recommendations, and conclusions relating to all phases of the Sheriff's Office's complaint handling process, related findings, and final status of complaints.

Report & Recommendation Follow-Ups

OLEO continues to follow up regarding implementation of recommendations it has made to the Sheriff's Office in 2018. We seek to work collaboratively with the Sheriff's Office in processing and considering these recommendations. The following OLEO reports with recommendations are pending response:

- **Transparency and Media Relations in High-Profile Police Cases** by the Brechner Center for Freedom of Information at the University of Florida.
- **Internal Investigations Complaint Classification Review of the King County Sheriff's Office** by Daigle Law Group.
- **Use-of-Force Complaint Processing in the King County Sheriff's Office** led by Kathryn Olson, Esq. of Change Integration Consulting.

In addition, OLEO will continue to follow up on other recommendations it has made to enhance the Sheriff's Office's operations, such as creating a position and funding for a full-time Crisis Intervention Team coordinator.

INVESTIGATIONS

Certification Reviews

To help ensure that the Sheriff's Office conducts thorough and objective investigations, OLEO staff attend interviews, review investigations, and track trends within the investigation program.

One of the challenges of this program is that OLEO's efficiency depends on the consistency and efficiency of the work of the Sheriff's Office's Internal Investigations Unit (IIU), and on successful communication between our offices.

In 2019/2020, our goal is to strengthen the certification review process by:

- Solidifying communications practices between OLEO staff and IIU.

- Adopting new practices for changes in OLEO's authorities based on the resolution of the collective bargaining agreement, including reviewing findings.
- Refining data management systems for certification reviews.
- Conducting complainant satisfaction surveys to learn more about the experience of complainants who contact the Sheriff's Office.

Monitoring shootings and other serious uses of force

OLEO attends the scenes of critical incidents, which are often deadly uses of force. As part of that work, staff will continue to monitor the Sheriff's Office's administrative investigations into and attend its administrative reviews of the incidents. As mentioned above, OLEO may also independently assess the Sheriff's Office's administrative investigations and conduct reviews of an incident from a systemic lens.

Independent Investigations

In anticipation of the conclusion of collective bargaining related to OLEO's authority to conduct independent investigations, OLEO plans to update its internal policies, procedures, and staff training requirements.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

In partnership with the Community Advisory Committee for Law Enforcement Oversight, OLEO will continue to conduct outreach to the communities served by the Sheriff's Office. Toward this end, in 2019/20 we plan to:

- Conduct a public input survey to learn more about the interests and concerns of residents served by the Sheriff's Office.
- Further engage our community advisory committee members in King County's Equity and Social Justice initiative on which it advises the Sheriff's Office and Council.
- Develop a communications plan for talking to law enforcement about the role of OLEO.

STRENGTHENING OLEO AS AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY

OLEO's institutional status continues to change and grow, especially in light of its new authorities. In light of these changes, we plan to strengthen our infrastructure in the following ways:

- Reassess OLEO Mission, Values, Vision, and Purpose.
- Develop a strategic plan.
- Adopt internal policies and procedures for OLEO activities.
 - Update OLEO's relevant policies and procedures at the conclusion of bargaining.
 - Update OLEO's ordinance at the conclusion of bargaining.
- Develop a response tracking system for OLEO recommendations.
- Maintain a robust program of staff training and development.

IMPROVING SYSTEMS AND COLLABORATION WITH THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

OLEO and the Sheriff's Office have committed to adopting policies and procedures to help ensure efficient and effective communications between agencies. Topics will include procedures for OLEO communications with the Sheriff's Office for systemic reviews and OLEO access to records, trainings, personnel, and data.

COLLABORATING WITH PEER AGENCIES NATIONWIDE

OLEO has initiated a project to establish a peer review system for oversight offices nationwide. At least 20 other police oversight offices have expressed interest in participating in the pilot, and the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement has appointed a board member to work with OLEO. The intent is to create a credible structure in which police oversight offices can review or audit one another to identify issues and improve performance.