



What to expect when filing a complaint against the King County Sheriff's Office

The King County Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO) represents the interests of the public in its efforts to improve the services of the King County Sheriff's Office (Sheriff's Office) by advancing equitable law enforcement practices centered on the value of all human experiences. OLEO uses professional standards and community perspectives to review and make recommendations to improve Sheriff's Office training, policies, and practices.

## Complaint Overview



Do you think a Sheriff's Office employee behaved inappropriately and want to complain?

OLEO receives complaints concerning allegations of misconduct by Sheriff's Office employees. OLEO staff are available to answer questions about the complaint process or what to include in a complaint. The Sheriff's Office investigates complaints, and OLEO monitors and reviews those investigations to promote a fair process that seeks the truth. The Sheriff's Office prohibits retaliation against anyone who complains about misconduct.

OLEO serves all people who live, work, or use public transportation in areas served by the Sheriff's Office — learn more on the last page of this guide.

## Who can file a complaint?

- Any member of the public or Sheriff's Office employee may file regardless of age, background, or immigration status.
- People may file complaints anonymously, and do not have to be involved in an incident to complain.
- Complaints may be submitted in any language, and free translation or interpretation services are available.

## What can you complain about?

OLEO only handles complaints related to the Sheriff's Office. Complaint topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Harassment
- Use of unnecessary or excessive force
- Courtesy (e.g., using language or engaging in conduct that is insulting, demeaning, or humiliating)
- Discriminatory treatment
- Ethics, conflicts of interest, and appearance of conflicts of interest
- Inappropriate use of authority

## How to file a complaint?

- Contact OLEO with questions or to file a complaint.
- Translation services are available.
- Complaint forms are available on the OLEO and Sheriff's Office websites, and at OLEO's office and at Sheriff's Office precincts.
- OLEO will send complaint forms via mail upon request.
- When filing a complaint with your local Sheriff's Office precinct, be sure to ask for a precinct supervisor. Find your precinct:
  - <http://www.kingcounty.gov/sheriff>
  - (206) 296-4155 – non-emergency
  - [sheriff@kingcounty.gov](mailto:sheriff@kingcounty.gov)
- If you live in a Sheriff's Office contract city, you may also contact a city police chief, police supervisor, or city official to file your complaint.

## When ready, you can submit your complaint to OLEO or the Sheriff's Office.



By email



In-person



By mail



By phone

OLEO does not have the authority to review Sheriff's Office criminal investigations or Equal Employment Opportunity matters like workplace discrimination, unless related to a complaint of a policy or procedure violation.

## Contact OLEO for assistance



(206) 263-8870



[kingcounty.gov/OLEO](http://kingcounty.gov/OLEO)



[OLEO@kingcounty.gov](mailto:OLEO@kingcounty.gov)



King County OLEO  
810 Third Ave, Suite 705  
Seattle, WA 98104

# What Happens When You Submit a Complaint



## FILING AND TIMELINE

Complaints can be filed with OLEO or the Sheriff's Office, and once received are sent to the Internal Investigations Unit (IIU). IIU has up to 180 days to complete an investigation.



## INTAKE AND CLASSIFICATION

Not all complaints received are investigated. Once the IIU Captain reviews the complaint, a preliminary investigation occurs and IIU assigns one of the three classifications below.



## COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION

When a complaint is classified as an inquiry, IIU gathers evidence and interviews witnesses.



## CERTIFICATION REVIEW

OLEO independently reviews a completed inquiry investigation. OLEO will only certify inquiries that are thorough, objective, and timely.



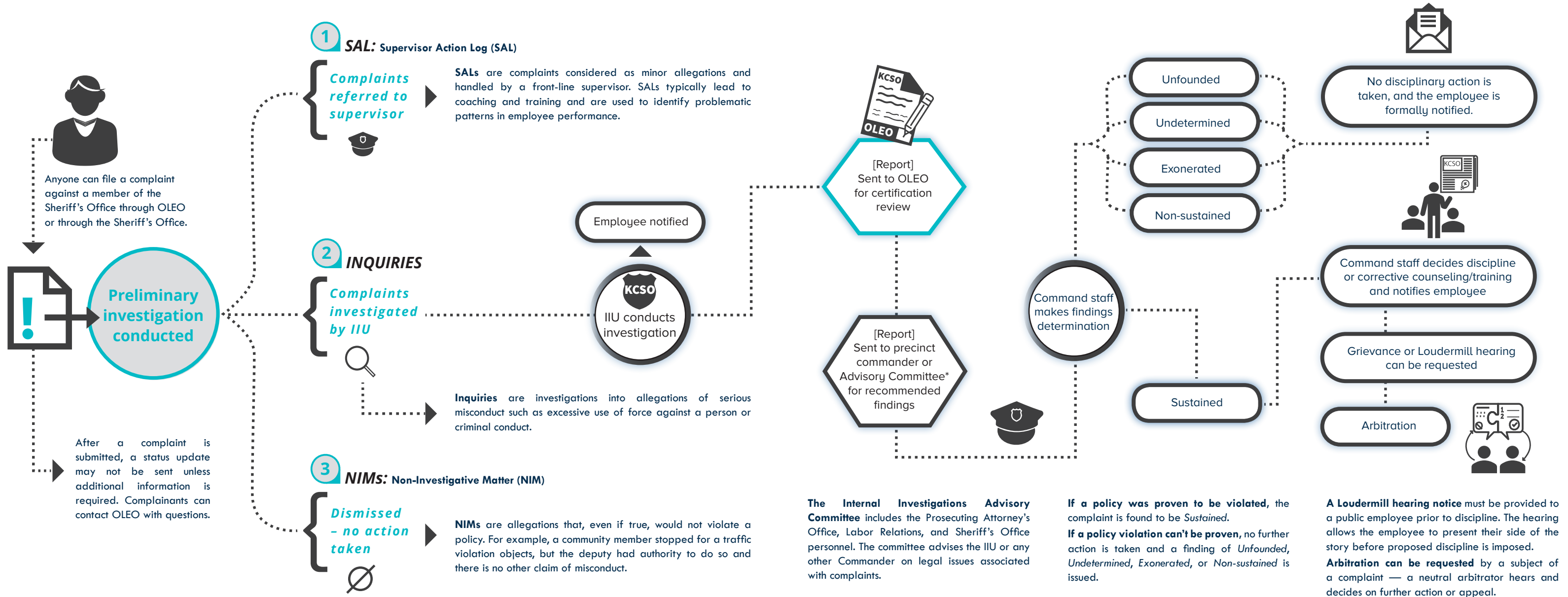
## FINDINGS

Based on the investigation, a Sheriff's Office commander determines whether Sheriff's Office policy or Washington State law was violated and issues a finding. A finding is like a conclusion or a verdict.



## DISCIPLINE / APPEAL

If the complaint is sustained, the Sheriff decides what disciplinary action is appropriate and can be imposed.



### Not sure what to include in a complaint?

#### OLEO can answer questions about what to include in your complaint.

- Sheriff's Office employees must follow the policies and procedures in the General Orders Manual (GOM), which is available online. [www.kingcounty.gov/depts/sheriff/about-us/manual.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/sheriff/about-us/manual.aspx)
- A complaint can include multiple allegations of misconduct and should include any information you have regarding:
  - The date, location, and Sheriff's Office employee(s) involved.
  - Specific details of what happened in relation to each of the allegation(s) of misconduct.
  - Potential witnesses or evidence related to the complaint.

### OLEO's role in monitoring and reviewing inquiry investigations.

- OLEO monitors IIU investigations and may review or identify evidence, attend interviews, and provide the Sheriff's Office with input related to the quality of the investigations.
- Once IIU publishes findings, the investigation is closed and OLEO can discuss findings with complainants, including what to do if new evidence is identified.
- At the close of an inquiry investigation, OLEO independently reviews the completed internal investigation and certifies whether it was thorough, objective, and timely.

# About OLEO



OLEO conducts a variety of independent review activities to assess issues of public trust related to Sheriff's Office operations and the professionalism of its employees. OLEO engages people served by the Sheriff's Office to provide education, build awareness, and to learn about community concerns and priorities.

OLEO's jurisdiction is composed of all the places served by the Sheriff's Office, including services in unincorporated areas of King County, King County airport, King County Metro Transit, Sound Transit, and thirteen contract jurisdictions:

Beaux Arts | Burien | Carnation | Covington | Kenmore | Maple Valley | Skykomish  
Muckleshoot Indian Tribe | Newcastle | Sammamish | SeaTac | Shoreline | Woodinville

## More about OLEO'S work



### Reviewing Police Use of Force

- OLEO observes the processing of incident scenes after police use of force results in serious injury or death.
- OLEO reviews critical incident investigations and attends Sheriff's Office Use of Force Review Board meetings to monitor the process, ask questions, and add perspective.
- OLEO recommends policies and practices to support quality incident investigations and use of force reviews.



### Ensuring Greater Confidence in Misconduct Investigations

- OLEO monitors and reviews how the Sheriff's Office handles complaints and encourages thorough and objective investigations.
- OLEO attends Sheriff's Office interviews with complainants and involved personnel and asks questions as needed.
- Each year, OLEO reports on how many Sheriff's Office investigations fail to meet its standards for thorough and objective investigations.



### Incorporating Community Input into Sheriff's Office Policies

- OLEO consults community to identify and explore concerns with Sheriff's Office practices and recommend improvements.
- OLEO provides the Sheriff's Office with recommendations on policies through systemic reviews that examine particular practices, as well as through review of Sheriff's Office policies under revision (which the Sheriff is required to give OLEO an opportunity to review before adopting).



### Cultivating Public Input and Engagement

- OLEO engages community in an attempt learn from public perspectives in a way that can inform OLEO's work and priorities.
- The members of OLEO's Community Advisory Committee for Law Enforcement Oversight serve as liaisons with community to explore how Sheriff's Office services are experienced and impact the public.
- OLEO shares updates and information about our work through our website, community briefings, and e-newsletter – **OLEO Insider**.



### Brokering Restorative Resolution of Disagreements

- OLEO collaborates with the Sheriff's Office to offer an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program in which a neutral third party facilitates a voluntary discussion between community members and Sheriff's Office employees about complaints to enhance understanding between the parties.

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