

The Police Review & Advisory Board was established by City Ordinance in 1984 to:

- Provide for citizen participation in reviewing Police Department policies, practices, and procedures;
- Provide a prompt, impartial and fair investigation of complaints brought by individuals, police officers upon whom a complaint has been brought, and employees of the Police Department; and
- Develop programs and strategies to promote positive police/community relations and to provide opportunities for expanded discussions, improved understanding, and innovative ways of resolving differences.

The Board consists of five civilians who are representative of the City's racial, social, and economic composition.

*The Police Review & Advisory Board is a member of the **National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement***



Police Review & Advisory Board
51 Inman St., 2nd Floor, Cambridge, MA 02139
www.cambridgema.gov/prab • 617.349.6155

CAMBRIDGE POLICE REVIEW & ADVISORY BOARD



**To File a Complaint Concerning a
Cambridge Police Officer Call
617.349.6155 or visit
www.cambridgema.gov/prab**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Police Review & Advisory Board?

The Police Review & Advisory Board is an independent civilian oversight agency that takes complaints against the Cambridge Police Department and reviews their policies, practices, and procedures making recommendations to the Police Commissioner, City Manager, and City Council. The Board was created by city ordinance to provide timely, fair, and impartial investigations of complaints brought by individuals against police officers. Police officers also have the right to file complaints with the Board against the Cambridge Police Department.

What types of complaints does the Police Review & Advisory Board investigate?

- ◆ Excessive use of force
- ◆ Use of discourteous or demeaning language
- ◆ Improper stop, arrest, search and seizure
- ◆ Inadequate investigation or improper police reports
- ◆ Discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, sex, religion, disability, or national origin or any other criteria defined in federal and state guidelines.
- ◆ Harassment
- ◆ Improper police procedures
- ◆ Improper traffic citation or towing of a car by the police

What happens when a complaint is filed?

The process begins when the Police Review & Advisory Board staff receives a written complaint. The Professional Standards Unit (PSU) of the Cambridge Police Department investigates most complaints on behalf of the Board. PSU staff will interview the person who made the complaint, the police officer(s), and witnesses. They also review police reports and other information to determine what occurred. The Board then reviews the investigation report, may ask for additional investigation, or may decide the investigation is complete. The Board then decides if the complaint is

substantiated, inconclusive, or unsubstantiated, and if policies and procedures were followed. Even if the Board finds that there was no violation of policy or procedures, it may make recommendations to the Police Commissioner about changes that can be made to avoid similar situations in the future.

How does someone submit a complaint?

Complaints can be filed with the staff of the Police Review & Advisory Board in person, by letter, or by telephone. In all cases, everyone making a complaint is required to provide a signed statement describing what happened and the specific complaint. *Complaints must be filed within 60 days of the incident.*

If You Are Stopped by the Police...

There are factors that the police may take into consideration when observing you. Every situation is different and the officer may consider the following factors:

- ◆ If you are running and a crime has recently been reported in the area.
- ◆ If you are "hanging around" with people who are under police investigation.
- ◆ If you are near an area where a crime has just been reported and may have witnessed or participated in the crime.
- ◆ If you are in an area which the police believe to be abandoned or unoccupied, or are present on public or commercial property outside of appropriate norms.
- ◆ If you are acting in a manner which appears to be suspicious.
- ◆ If the police believe you are in possession of stolen property.
- ◆ If stopped while walking or driving your car, you refuse to answer police questions, or give false, evasive or contradictory information.
- ◆ If you match a description described to the police.
- ◆ If you use derogatory or offensive language, you may be saying the wrong thing at the wrong time.

While these things are taken into consideration when questioning you, the police must respect your right to refuse to answer questions that sound accusatory.

This information is based on guidelines established by the National Black Police Association and the American Civil Liberties Union.