



FACT SHEET
U.S. Department of Justice Investigations of Police Departments

After numerous police-involved shooting deaths of unarmed persons of color in cities such as, Ferguson, MO, Chicago, IL, and Baltimore, MD, communities have asked the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to open federal investigations of their local police departments. In some cities, the Civil Rights Division of DOJ has responded by conducting a civil rights probe of a law enforcement agency. In other cities, such as North Charleston, SC and San Francisco, CA, city officials have asked the DOJ’s Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office to help police leaders with reviewing their policies and practices and making recommendations for improving community-police relations. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Educational Fund encourages community activists to consider the differences between these investigations and determine which approach best meets the needs of their policing reform efforts.

DOJ Office	<u>Civil Rights Division (CRD)ⁱ</u>	<u>COPS Officeⁱⁱ</u>
Type of Investigation/ Assistance	CRD conducts civil rights investigations to determine whether a police department has engaged in a pattern or practice of discriminatory and/or unconstitutional policing.	The Collaborative Reform Initiative of the COPS Office provides technical assistance to police departments to improve trust between police and the communities they serve.
The Process	<p>The CRD may initiate a civil rights pattern or practice investigation on its own or at the request of community and/or police leaders. It conducts an independent investigation to address numerous, serious incidents of excessive use of force, discriminatory policing, such as racial profiling, unconstitutional searches or arrests, or restrictions on speech and the right to protests.</p> <p>The CRD gathers information from the police department and community members. At the end of the investigation, the CRD will release a public report of its findings.</p>	<p>In response to a request for assistance from police chiefs, the COPS Office will work with police departments to review and identify policies and practices that may affect public trust. The COPS Office has partnered with police departments to review and reform policing practices and policies concerning use of force, the investigation of police misconduct, police supervision, community policing, and civilian stops and searches.</p> <p>After gathering information from the police department and community members, the COPS Office will release a public report of its findings and recommendations. CRD may initiate a separate civil rights investigation during or after a COPS collaborative reform.</p>

<p>The Potential Outcome</p>	<p>If CRD finds that the police department has engaged in a pattern or practice of discriminatory or unconstitutional policing, then it will enter into a written agreement with the police department and local officials detailing how the department will change its policing practices. These agreements may be monitored by a federal court over several years to ensure compliance with the agreement.</p>	<p>After the release of the COPS Office’s report of findings and recommendations, the Office will work with the police department for 18 months to carry out the recommended changes. This “collaborative reform” effort is <u>voluntary</u>, but local police departments must express a commitment to undertaking the changes that the COPS Office recommends.</p>
<p>Contact Information</p>	<p>Chief Civil Rights Division, Special Litigation Section U.S. Department of Justice 950 Pennsylvania Avenue Washington, D.C. 20530 202-514-6255 https://www.justice.gov/crt/special-litigation-section</p>	<p>Collaborative Reform Initiative U.S Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services 145 N Street, NE Washington, DC 20530 technicalassistance@usdoj.gov 202-353-4400</p>

ⁱ See, U.S. Department of Justice, *How Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Conducts Pattern-or-Practice Investigations*, at <https://www.justice.gov/file/how-pp-investigations-work/download>.

ⁱⁱ See, U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services, *Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance*, http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/technical_assistance.pdf.