

How the Complaint Process Works

First, our Mission, Vision and Values. Why are they important?

Mission: Securing the Commonwealth through leadership, collaboration, and community engagement.

Vision: The Virginia State Police will be at the forefront of ensuring a safe and secure Commonwealth by developing exceptional relationships. These include:

Our Public ... who see legitimacy and credibility in a trusted law enforcement service.

Our Partners ... who perceive the Virginia State Police as a collaborative and resourceful organization.

Our People ... who feel respected, valued, and that this is their organization.

Values: Competence. Innovation. Trust. Commitment. Wellness. Leadership

Our mission, vision and values were carefully crafted to ensure they reflect our commitment to high quality, professional, progressive law enforcement services. We recognize our ability to protect the public is based upon mutual trust and respect and our power and authority are bestowed upon us by the people of the Commonwealth. This symbiotic relationship cannot be compromised; to do so would undermine our ability to fulfill our mission, vision and values as well as erode the confidence of the people we serve. Therefore, if we have not met your standards, please let us know. We will conduct a thorough investigation to determine if our employee has violated the Standards of Conduct.

What are the Standards of Conduct?

The Commonwealth of Virginia has a set of rules governing the performance and personal conduct and acceptable standards for work performance of employees. These Standards of Conduct and Performance are designed and used to correct behavior. Discipline, under the Standards of Conduct, will not be based on any employee's race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, political affiliation, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. These standards were developed to protect the rights of all people.

How do I initiate a complaint against a Virginia State Police employee?

A complaint may be made in the following ways:

- ◆ Go to any department facility or contact the local State Police office and ask to speak with a supervisor. Our office locations and phone numbers can be found at vsp.virginia.gov/sections-units-bureaus/office-locations/
- ◆ Contact the Internal Affairs Section at (804) 799-3223 or via e-mail at IAUnit@vsp.virginia.gov
- ◆ Write a letter to the Superintendent of State Police or the Director of the Professional Standards Division at P. O. Box 27472, Richmond, VA 23261.
- ◆ Complete a Complaint Form (SP-163). This form is available at all State Police offices, at vsp.virginia.gov/services/forms/, or by mail.
- ◆ Anonymous complaints are accepted, however, they are very difficult to investigate because pertinent details are often omitted. If possible, please provide your name and contact information so we can ensure a thorough and proper investigation.
- ◆ Please note the Department of State Police does not conduct personnel complaint investigations involving other agencies to include other police departments or their employees. Personnel complaints against other agencies or their employees should be directed to the appropriate agency head.

What information is necessary?

- ◆ A personnel complaint alleging misconduct can be filed with little information. The investigating supervisor will assist as best as possible by trying to "fill in the blanks." However, providing all the information you have will help to make the investigation thorough and complete.
- ◆ Key facts include:
 - Who committed the misconduct (if you don't have a name, a description or other identifying info is helpful).
 - Where and when the misconduct occurred.
 - What happened (What did the officer say or do?)

Once you file a complaint, what happens next?

- ◆ A record of your complaint will be forwarded to the Internal Affairs Section for evaluation and assignment. Allegations of criminal wrongdoing are typically investigated by the Bureau of Criminal Investigation prior to the initiation of an administrative investigation.
- ◆ You will be notified in writing by the Director of the Professional Standards Division that your complaint was received.
- ◆ The complaint will be assigned to an investigating supervisor. The supervisor will contact you and other witnesses, conduct interviews, and obtain all evidence and relevant information. The interview will be conducted in a location where you feel comfortable.
- ◆ It may be possible that the supervisor may be able to explain the employee's actions to your satisfaction. If, after this discussion, you are satisfied with the explanation and assistance provided, then no further action is taken.
- ◆ Every complaint investigation is unique. Depending on the complexity of the case, the investigation may take as little as a month or as long as several months to complete.

Findings of an Investigation

- ◆ The completed report will be reviewed by a Division Commander, who will thoroughly review the case file and determine the finding as:
 - SUSTAINED - The facts substantiate the specific allegation(s) made or other misconduct.
 - NOT SUSTAINED - Insufficient facts exist to either prove or disprove the allegation(s) made.
 - EXONERATED - The facts show the employee did not violate policy or law.
 - UNFOUNDED INQUIRY - The facts in an initial inquiry reveal the alleged actions of the employee are not in violation of the Standards of Conduct. Complainant recants the alleged improper action(s).
- ◆ If the determination is SUSTAINED, the Division Commander will recommend the appropriate level of discipline commensurate with the severity of the offense. Disciplinary measures range from counseling, Written Notices, Written notices with demotion, suspension without pay, transfer or termination.
- ◆ In cases where the discipline includes a Written Notice with a demotion, suspension without pay, transfer or termination, the case file will undergo executive level review. The Superintendent reviews all disciplinary actions involving demotion, suspension without pay, transfer or termination prior to the disciplinary action being taken.

How do I find out what happened?

- ◆ The Director of the Professional Standards Division will notify you in writing when the investigation is complete.
- ◆ The disposition of the complaint (outcome and any disciplinary action) and the investigative report are confidential personnel information and exempt from the Freedom of Information Act, specifically [§ 2.2-3705.1](#) and [§ 2.2-3706](#).
- ◆ The Internal Affairs Section prepares an annual analysis of internal affairs cases. This analysis is provided to Department division and unit commanders and is available to the public, upon request.

How do I commend an employee?

- ◆ Just as it is important to address violations of the Standards of Conduct, it is also important to recognize our valuable employees when they have performed in a commendable manner.
- ◆ Go to any department facility and / or contact the local State Police office and ask to speak with a supervisor. Our office locations and phone numbers can be found at vsp.virginia.gov/sections-units-bureaus/office-locations/
- ◆ Write a letter to the Superintendent of State Police at P. O. Box 27472, Richmond, VA 23261.
- ◆ Email the Superintendent at supt@vsp.virginia.gov
- ◆ Send the employee a thank-you note for a job well done.

Final thoughts

- ◆ Thank you for taking the time to provide us with important information about the Department and its employees. We appreciate your time and efforts to bring matters to our attention. We value your respect and trust and we will continue to provide professional services to you and the people of the Commonwealth now and in the future.