

Employee Commendations and Complaints

The Palm Beach Gardens Police Department has established standards for the performance of our employees and expects our employees to meet and exceed those standards. When our employees meet those standards, or go above and beyond those standards in the performance of their duties, we wish to recognize them for that. When an employee falls below the standard, we wish to correct that and prevent it from happening again.

We have a proactive employee recognition program that is designed to recognize and reward those employees who go above and beyond the call of duty and who provide exceptional service to our community.

When necessary, we conduct internal investigations of alleged employee misconduct. The purposes of this are to protect the public, protect the department, protect the employee (from false allegations), identify and remove employees who are unfit to serve our citizens, and identify and correct procedural problems. When these investigations are based on external complaints, the cooperation of the complainant and any witnesses are critical to accomplishing those purposes.

As a progressive, professional public service organization, we are dedicated to ensuring the integrity and performance of our Department and its members as we go about the business of law enforcement, including community-based policing, crime prevention and crime control.

The integrity and performance of our Police Department depends on the personal integrity and performance of each and every member of the Department. These commendation and complaint processes are integral parts of maintaining that integrity and performance, by recognizing and rewarding professional behavior and by identifying and correcting inappropriate behavior. These processes are a direct reflection of our commitment to professional excellence.

Whether you wish to make a commendation or complaint, be assured you will be treated with the same respect and dignity.

Commendations

The Police Department appreciates receiving positive feedback on the performance of our employees, and the employees appreciate it as well. The nature of our business means that many of our encounters with the community are in less than ideal situations. People seldom call us just to let us know everything is going well; they call when they have problems.

That is why it is so important to us to recognize the employees who are helping the community with those problems, big or small, in a positive manner. If you feel that one of our employees did a good job, or a great job, please let us, and the employee, know. We want to recognize our employees based on how well they serve the community, so it is important for us to know how they are doing in the eyes of the community.

Also, community recognition of our employees' efforts helps to create a positive cycle. As employees see that their efforts are appreciated, they increase those efforts, and everyone benefits when that happens. The employees know they are providing an important and appreciated service to the public, and they maintain their efforts to do so.

The Police Department also has a formal awards program. Awards include, among others, Officers and Civilian Employees of the Quarter and Year, Life Saving Awards, Meritorious Service Awards, Exceptional Police Duty Awards, Department Commendations, and Certificates of Merit. Many times, employees receive these awards based on commendations received from the community.

Complaints

If you feel that any of our employees did something improper or did not handle your encounter properly, please call or come to the Police Department and ask to speak to a supervisor. Many times, citizen concerns turn out to be a result of a misunderstanding about the law, legal guidelines, policies and procedures, etc., and that can frequently be corrected through discussion.

Regardless of the nature of your complaint, it will be documented and addressed. If you are satisfied after speaking with a supervisor, that will be noted. If additional investigation is required, that will be accomplished in a timely manner. You will be kept advised of the status and outcome of your complaint (if you have provided contact information).

The Department utilizes a progressive discipline concept where the objective is to encourage appropriate behavior and performance and gain voluntary compliance with Department policies and procedures. Informal complaints (rudeness, driving complaints, mishandling a call, etc) are generally handled by the involved employee's immediate supervisors. Most of these types of complaints, when founded, are resolved through training, performance counseling and other informal methods. Complaints of serious misconduct or that could result in more severe sanctions are generally referred to the Professional Standards office for formal internal investigation.

If you do not wish to make your complaint in person with a supervisor, you can submit your complaint through alternate methods. You can use the form on the back of our complaint brochure and give it to any Department supervisor or mail it to the Department to the attention of "Professional Standards." You can also write a letter to the Department or send an email.

Please keep in mind that Department employees, as do all citizens, have a Constitutional right of due process and other statutory protections. For this reason, formal action cannot be taken in the case of anonymous complaints without independent corroborating evidence, although those complaints will still be documented and addressed. A formal complaint of serious misconduct should be made in writing, preferably on Department complaint and witness statement forms, and submitted to a supervisor. In some cases, it may be necessary to take sworn statements under oath from complainants and witnesses in order to conduct a proper investigation and support disciplinary action against an employee, if such action is warranted.

Some issues are not considered complaints. For example, guilt or innocence in an incident is a court issue that cannot be decided by the Department. Only a court can decide if there is sufficient proof of the offense, and the complainant will be referred to the court for the resolution of those issues.

Also, any complaint that is shown to have been malicious in nature and that was knowingly false may subject the complainant to possible criminal and/or civil sanctions. This does not apply to genuine misunderstandings, but to those instances where the complainant knew, or should have known, the information they were providing or the complaint they were making was false. This Department will take a proactive approach in pursuing sanctions against those who knowingly and intentionally file false complaints.

Summary of Commendations and Internal Affairs Investigations

- 2006: Employee Commendations – 200
2 complaints arising to Internal Affairs level, both determined to be unfounded.
- 2007: Employee Commendations – 114
No complaints arising to Internal Affairs level.
- 2008 Employee Commendations –96
2 complaints arising to Internal Affairs level; both were sustained with discipline given to the involved employees.
- 2009: Employee Commendations – 105
1 complaint arising to Internal Affairs level; Employee subsequently resigned.
- 2010: Employee Commendations – 110
1 complaint arising to Internal Affairs level; Employee subsequently resigned.
- 2011: Employee Commendations – 79
3 complaints arising to Internal Affairs level; two were sustained and one was unfounded.
- 2012: Employee Commendations – 118
1 complaint arising to Internal Affairs level; complaint was unfounded.
- 2013: Employee Commendations – 107
No complaints arising to Internal Affairs level.