

City of Sunnyvale Public Safety Accountability Questions and Answers

Transparency

1. How can I get information on specific disciplinary cases related to excessive use of force? Can the public find out the consequences of a complaint against an officer/s that was sustained?

Internal affairs files related to citizen complaints of police officers are confidential per California Penal Code section 832.7. These files are only subject to release following strict requirements in Evidence Code sections 1043 and 1046.

In 2018, the California legislature enacted SB 1421. This changed the confidentiality of certain personnel records. Now some police personnel records may be released if they relate to only the following categories:

- An incident of a discharge of a firearm at a person, or the use of force resulting in great bodily injury or death by a police officer;
- A sustained finding of sexual assault by a police officer against a member of the public; or
- A sustained finding of dishonesty by a police officer directly relating to the reporting, investigation, or prosecution of a crime or misconduct by another officer.

2. How do I find out about a specific police or fire incident?

Make a [public records act \(PRA\) request](#). The City will work with you to determine what records can be made public and released to you.

3. Can I request body camera footage?

Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety began utilizing Body Worn Cameras in 2016. Body worn camera audio-visual files are considered records of police investigations that are generally exempt from public disclosure under the California Public Records Act. Footage is released, if subpoenaed or as required by law.

4. What police misconduct information is available for the public to view?

You can find information on the process for investigating and disciplining police misconduct on the City's [DPS Accountability page](#). You can also find summary data on the number of citizen complaints and misconduct investigations initiated in the past six years. Specific details on internal investigations are confidential (see question 1).

Policies/Practices

5. What is the process for investigating and disciplining officers for inappropriate behavior?

You can find informational fact sheets on the City's [DPS Accountability page](#) under Misconduct and Discipline.

6. What training do officers receive regarding de-escalation?

All officers are trained in de-escalation techniques. De-escalation training begins very early in an officer's career starting at the basic academy. It is a consistent theme throughout their career through training and interwoven in policy, values and culture. Components of this training include mechanics of de-escalation, communication techniques, and techniques involved with maintaining calm during high pressure situations. DPS promotes and reinforces de-escalation as a Departmental value through training and daily interactions. This approach is widely referenced throughout DPS policies. DPS expects that members of the department use de-escalation techniques whenever possible. Officers should only use force as necessary when attempts at de-escalation fail or are not possible. ([State Guidelines on De-escalation](#))

7. How does DPS respond to situations involving a person experiencing mental health issues?

All sworn officers must complete training focused on communication techniques when interacting with people who are experiencing a mental crisis. This training is mandatory for all sworn officers in the State of California. Nearly 40% of DPS officers have also received enhanced Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), with a goal of 100%. Officers with advanced training respond to these calls for service. If needed, they provide ongoing follow-up and referrals for wrap-around services. DPS' model of wrap-around services helps to ensure that these residents have access to resources to meet their needs.

Neighborhood/School Assigned Officers

8. What is the role of Neighborhood Resource Officers (NROs)?

Neighborhood Resource Officers (NRO's) serve as a liaison between DPS, the community and our schools. They focus on community outreach, crime prevention, fire and public safety education, and mentoring youth through a variety of programs. They also address quality of life issues in our neighborhoods. NROs use prevention, education and problem-oriented policing to meet the many diverse needs of our community.

9. Why do Public Safety Officers respond to school sites?

There are many reasons why Public Safety officers might be called to a school site. DPS may respond if there is a traffic complaint, report of a crime, alarm call or other emergency need. The most common reason an officer is at a school site is to provide public safety education and mentoring to students and staff. Programs and activities provided by officers include:

- Safe Routes to School - National program educating/encouraging safe walking/biking to school.
- Fire Safety Presentations – may include a visit from a Fire Engine.
- Bike Rodeo - Teaches bicycle safety to youth. Funded by the California Office Of Traffic Safety.
- Digital Safety presentations - Education on safe use of social media.
- Active Shooter Presentation and Training for school staff and students
- Gang Resistance and Education Training (GREAT program)

Most interactions at school sites are positive. Most relate to training or collaboration on general safety issues. DPS responds to intervene in a narrow number of cases when called.

10. How much funding does DPS receive from Sunnyvale schools?

DPS does not receive funding from Sunnyvale schools. DPS has received an annual grant from Fremont Union High School District in the amount of \$10,000. This grant is discretionary and is not used to fund salaries.

11. How does DPS build relationships and trust between officers and community members?

DPS provides services and programs throughout the City. This allows for relationship-building, increased trust, and positive interactions with community members. Programs focus on improving quality of life in our community. We have a wide variety of safety, education, and community outreach programs and activities :

- National Night Out
- Citizen's Academy
- Youth Leadership Academy
- Car Seat Inspections
- Fire Station Tours
- Neighborhood Watch Meetings
- Neighborhood Association Meetings
- Safe Routes to School
- Special Olympics events including Torch Run and fundraising through Tip-a-Cop
- Bigs in Blue
- Active Shooter Training
- Coffee with a Cop
- Rides for Toys
- DPS Explorer Program
- Walk with the Chief
- CERT Program (Community Emergency Response Program)
- BERT Program (Business Emergency Response Program)
- LISTO Program (CERT program for Spanish speakers)

Complaints/Compliments

12. How can the public share praise or concerns about Sunnyvale public safety officers?

Visit our [Compliments and Complaints page](#). You can file a compliment recognizing employees who perform their duties exceptionally well. You can also file a complaint about questionable performance, actions, policies or procedures.

Have More Questions?

13. How can I reach out if I have more questions?

Use [Access Sunnyvale](#) to contact us and ask your question. City staff members track requests during regular business hours, Monday through Friday.