

**CITATION REFERENCE**

**Official Title:** Citizen Complaint Policy

**Abbreviated Title:** Citizen Complaints

**Volume:** CCGA Policies

**Responsible Office:** Campus Police  
Department

**Originally issued:** April 13, 2010

**Effective Date:** April 13, 2010

**Revised:** N/A

## **Citizen Complaint Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

The College of Coastal Georgia Campus Police Department (CCGPD) takes great pride in the services provided to the College of Coastal Georgia community, which includes faculty, staff, students, and visitors. As such, the CCGPD wishes to hear about allegations of wrongdoing or poor service rendered by any member of the Department. All complaints, even those made anonymously, will be investigated and a final resolution shared, to the greatest extent possible.

### **Reason for Policy**

It is essential to establish a relationship of trust and confidence, without fear of reprisal, between members of the CCGPD and the College's community for effective law enforcement.

While CCGPD officers must be free to exercise their best judgment and to initiate enforcement action in a reasonable manner, they must do so in a way that demonstrates respect for the environment and the community in which they perform these functions. Enforcers of the law have a special obligation to respect the rights of others.

With this in mind, the CCGPD has established a system of complaint and disciplinary procedures. These procedures subject individual officers to corrective action when they conduct themselves improperly. It also protects officers from unwarranted criticism when they discharge their duties properly. The purpose of these procedures is to provide a prompt, just, open, and expeditious disposition of complaints about the conduct of members and employees of the CCGPD.

### **Entities Affected By This Policy**

All faculty, staff, students of the College of Coastal Georgia, as well as visitors to the College, are covered by this policy.

### **Who Should Read This Policy**

All faculty, staff, and students of the College should be aware of this policy.

**Contacts**

Contact	Phone	E-Mail/URL
Chief Bryan Sipe	(912) 279-5819	<a href="mailto:bsipe@ccga.edu">bsipe@ccga.edu</a>

**Website Address For This Policy**

[www.ccgga.edu/PublicSafety](http://www.ccgga.edu/PublicSafety)

**Related Documents**

Citizen Complaint Procedure Form

**Definitions**

None

**Overview**

The CCGPD’s goal is to improve the quality of services provided, to promote a high level of public confidence, and to enhance and maintain the professional integrity of the Department and its members. In furtherance of these goals, members of the Department are expected to perform their duties within the boundaries of established contemporary legal and ethical standards. The Department is committed to establishing and promoting these standards through clear, written policy statements, rules and regulations, and through the thorough and impartial investigation of all allegations of misconduct or complaints regarding the directives of the department.

A formal procedure to receive, document, and investigate all faculty, staff, student, or visitor complaints against the College’s law enforcement personnel allows the Department to monitor and enforce standards, and is the administrative statement that behavior deviating from these adopted standards will not be tolerated. Further, the number and types of citizen complaints filed against the Department’s members can be indicative of serious problems that require leadership attention. With a meaningful and effective procedure for handling citizen complaints, student confidence in the integrity of the Department and its employees can be achieved and maintained.

Additionally, a professional response to complaints can impact in a positive way the Department’s relationships with the community that it is intended to serve. Alternatively, where complaints of improper conduct are perceived to be handled unfairly or in an impartial manner, this too will impact the community’s perception of the Department, albeit in a dramatically different light.

For that reason, it is the policy of the Department to accept, document, review, and thoroughly investigate all instances of alleged misconduct, including complaints regarding the directives or procedures of the Department. The focus of these investigations is to equitably determine whether the allegations are valid or invalid and to take appropriate action. All allegations of misconduct will be investigated, regardless of whether initiated by citizen complaint, other external agencies, internally generated, or discovered through the internal review and administrative processes of the department.

### I. **Filing a Complaint**

All complaints made by any party pertaining to CCGPD policies or procedures, or that allege officer misconduct, shall be documented and thoroughly investigated. Citizens who have made complaints in whatever format should expect action. Further, all complaints shall be accepted in a courteous, understanding, and professional manner.

- a. Who May Complain? Any person who is the object of, witnesses, or has direct knowledge of, CCGPD employee misconduct may file a complaint with the College.
- b. How to File a Complaint. Complaints may be made using the “Citizen Complaint Procedure Form,” copies of which may be downloaded at the Campus Police Department website ([www.ccca.edu/PublicSafety/](http://www.ccca.edu/PublicSafety/)). Complaints may be submitted in a number of different ways. These include:
  - *In person or in writing.* Complaints may be submitted in person or in writing at the following locations:
    - Brunswick Campus: Submit complaints to the Campus Police Department, Central Plant Building 3700 Altama Avenue, Brunswick, Georgia 31520.
    - Camden Campus. Submit complaints to the Campus Police Department (Room 131-F), 8001 Lakes Boulevard, Kingsland, Georgia 31548.
  - *Mail.* Complaints may also be submitted through the mail by address them to the Chief, Campus Police Department at either of the above addresses, depending upon location.
  - *Telephone.* Complaints may also be submitted telephonically by calling the following numbers:

- Brunswick Campus: To file a complaint telephonically during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday), call (912) 279-5819. For all other times, please call (912) 258-3133.
- Camden Campus: To file a complaint telephonically during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday), call (912) 510-3306. For all other times, please call (912) 552-5277.
- *Electronically*. Complaints may also be submitted electronically by completing and submitting the “Citizen Complaint Procedure Form” located on the Campus Police Department website ([www.ccgga.edu/PublicSafety/](http://www.ccgga.edu/PublicSafety/)).
- c. Anonymous Complaints. Anonymous complaints against CCGPD personnel, or complaints from citizens who wish their names to be held in confidence, shall be accepted for investigation. However, anonymous complaints are sometimes difficult to substantiate, as the complainant is unavailable for re-interview. Thus, citizens offering anonymous complaints should be advised that the College’s ability to investigate the complaint may be limited by their anonymity.

## II. Investigating Complaints

Once a complaint has been received through any means, a comprehensive investigation into the complaint will be conducted.

- a. Contact With the Complainant. Upon receipt of a citizen complaint, the Chief, CCGPD shall contact the complainant and advise him or her of the following:
  - The complaint is under investigation;
  - Periodic status reports regarding the investigation will be provided to the complainant, as necessary; and
  - The complainant will receive written notice of the final disposition of the matter from the Chief, CCGPD.
- b. Notification. Additionally, upon receipt of a citizen complaint, the Chief, CCGPD will immediately notify the President and Vice President for

Business Affairs to make them aware of the allegations contained within the complaint.

- c. Appointment of Investigator. After notification of the nature of the allegations contained within the complaint, the President will determine who shall conduct the investigation into the matter. This may be the Chief, CCGPD or another appropriate College representative.
- d. Criminal Allegations. If, after consultation with the President and Vice President of Business Affairs, it is determined that the allegations contained within the complaint are criminal in nature, the Chief, CCGPD will notify the Georgia Bureau of Investigation of the matter so that they may conduct an appropriate criminal investigation.
- e. Timeliness of the Investigation. All investigations into allegations of misconduct by CCGPD personnel shall be completed within thirty (30) days of the Investigating Officer's appointment. Extensions may be granted by the President upon a showing of "good cause."
- f. Content of the Report. Once the complaint has been thoroughly investigated, a report from the Investigating Officer to the President will be prepared. This report will include, at a minimum, the following:
  - Taped and/or signed statements from the complainant, the employee named in the complaint, and all witnesses to the event;
  - A narrative summary of the events;
  - A finding of facts as determined by the taped and/or signed statements of those involved; and
  - A recommended case disposition using one of the four categories discussed more fully below.

It is critical that the final report provide an unbiased picture of the circumstances as they actually occurred. Only through a thoughtful, yet impartial, investigation will an appropriate decision regarding resolution of the case be achieved. Both the complainant and the CCGPD employee are entitled to this fundamental aspect of fairness.

- g. Chain of Command Review and Recommendations. Prior to being presented to the President, the completed report will be forwarded through the Chief, CCGPD and the Vice President of Business Affairs. The

report will be reviewed for completeness and objectivity. Further, the Chief, CCGPD and Vice President of Business Affairs will recommend:

- The appropriate case disposition using one of the four categories discussed more fully below; and
  - The proper administrative and/or disciplinary action to be taken in light of the investigative findings.
- h. Records Retention. Complaints made pursuant to this policy, as well as any reports and findings relating to those complaints, will be retained by the CCGPD for a period of at least five (5) years.

### III. **Investigative Findings**

After a complaint has been thoroughly and completely investigated, the outcome of the inquiry will result in one of the following dispositions:

- a. Not Sustained / Unfounded. This disposition will be used when the investigation indicates the alleged action did not occur.
- b. Not Sustained / Exonerated. This disposition will be used when the investigation indicated the act occurred, but was justified, lawful, and proper.
- c. Not Sustained / Inconclusive. This disposition will be used when the investigation discloses insufficient evidence to clearly disprove the allegations made.
- d. Sustained. This disposition will be used when the investigation discloses the alleged act did occur, and constitutes misconduct or improper job performance.

### IV. **Resolution**

Once the case has been resolved consistent with the disposition categories listed above, appropriate administrative or disciplinary action will be taken, if warranted.

- a. Administrative Action. In all instance, even where the complaint has not necessarily be sustained, administrative action may be warranted, such as requiring an employee to participate in remedial training to improve performance.

- b. Disciplinary Action. Where the complaint is “sustained,” the employee may be disciplined, to include an oral or written reprimand, suspension without pay, demotion and, in severe or repeated circumstances, termination.

**V. Feedback to the Complainant**

The complainant will be provided comprehensive, timely feedback regarding the outcome of the investigation.

- a. *Timeliness.* Generally, the complainant will be notified of the disposition of the allegations within thirty (30) calendar days following resolution. This period may be extended, if necessary; however, the complainant will be notified by the Chief, CCGPD of the delay.
- b. *Written Notification.* The complainant will be notified in writing by the Chief, CCGPD of the investigative findings and whether the allegations were sustained.
- c. *Actions.* Inasmuch as the actions taken against a College employee are confidential, the complainant will be notified that no specific information will be provided that violates an employee’s right to privacy or the exact nature of the action taken (e.g., thirty day suspension).

**Responsibilities**

(Party)	(Responsibility)
Chief, College of Coastal Georgia Police Department	To ensure that Campus Police Department staff comply fully with the mandates of this policy

**Forms**

Citizen Complaint Procedure Form

**Appendices**

None