

How to Monitor Police Agencies: Part 2

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We recently blogged about how you can use OPRA to gain access to records which shine light on the use of force by police officers. This blog discusses other types of police records that will help you monitor your local police department.

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Internal Affairs Annual Summary Reports:

The Attorney General's Internal Affairs Policy requires law enforcement agencies to release an annual summary report to the public which "summarizes the types of [internal affairs] complaints received and the dispositions of those complaints." This report, usually in the form of a chart, will help you monitor the types of complaints that are being lodged against officers.

Sample OPRA request:

"Pursuant to OPRA and the common law, I seek your police department's Internal Affairs Annual Summary Report for 2016."

Internal Affairs Public Synopsis of Disciplinary Action:

Requirement 10 of the Attorney General's Internal Affairs Policy also requires law enforcement agencies to periodically disclose to the public "a brief synopsis of all complaints where a fine or suspension of ten days or more was assessed to an agency member." While the report will not identify the officer by name, it should briefly outline the nature of the transgression and the fine or sentence that was imposed. This permits the public to see details of more serious internal affairs allegations that were sustained and will highlight an agency's most egregious problems.

Sample OPRA request:

“Pursuant to OPRA and the common law, I seek your agency’s Public Synopsis of Disciplinary Actions for years 2014 to 2017. This report is required pursuant to Requirement 10 of the Attorney General’s Internal Affairs Police.”

Vehicle Pursuit Reports:

Vehicle pursuits not only put the suspect and police officers at risk, but also other people who happen to be in their way. Every year there are reports where innocent bystanders are injured or killed when a vehicle slams into theirs during the course of a police pursuit.

There are two reports which will help you monitor vehicle pursuits. First, pursuant to the Attorney General’s Police Vehicular Pursuit Policy an officer must complete a “Police Pursuit Incident Report” for every pursuit. If you read about a pursuit in the newspaper, you can request this report to find out more details about who was involved in the incident.

Second, the Attorney General’s policy requires every municipal police agency to submit an annual agency “Vehicular Pursuit Summary Report” to the county prosecutor, which will detail the total number of pursuits and other useful information. You can compare these reports to other towns or look to see if any particular officer engages in pursuits more frequently.

Sample OPRA request:

“Pursuant to OPRA and the common law, I seek a copy of the Police Pursuit Incident Report for the vehicle chase that occurred last night near Exit 151 on the Garden State Parkway and the police department’s Vehicular Pursuit Summary Report for 2016.”