

Community-police mediation: research and recommendations



City of Minneapolis
Civil Rights Department
Office of Police Conduct Review
May 01, 2026

Introduction

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered by Derrick Chauvin¹ of the Minneapolis Police Department. Following his murder the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and federal² Department of Justice both found that Minneapolis Police Department engaged in patterns and practices that deprived members of the public of their rights. As a response to these findings the city entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and a Consent Decree with the United State Department of Justice. While the Consent Decree was subsequently dismissed by the courts, city officials have indicated that they plan on continuing with the implementation of all reforms listed in the Consent Decree.³

Among the hundreds of reforms detailed in the Settlement Agreement and the Consent Decree are changes to the Minneapolis Police Department disciplinary process. Included in these changes are several mentions of mediation as an alternative to the traditional investigatory process. In contrast to other Consent Decrees⁴ neither the Consent Decree nor Settlement Agreement explicitly require the creation of a mediation program, however given the explicit mention of mediation in both documents, the Office of Police Conduct Review has decided to explore the creation of one.

To ensure the efficacy of a potential OPCR mediation program this report will look at the use of mediation in Minneapolis and across the US. Detailed case studies were completed on twenty community-police mediation programs, with analysis on what works and what does not work when designing and implementing a program. Finally, a framework for a potential pilot program for an OPCR mediation program is discussed in detail, considering the analysis included in this report.

Background

Mediation as a concept

Mediation is a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) that focuses on addressing issues without litigation or punishment. In a modern context, mediation is structured as an open discussion between two or more parties on a specific issue guided by a mediator. The purpose of the mediator is to guide the discussion, keeping it focused on the issue being mediated, and attempting to help the parties find a compromise.

Mediation is a common avenue for dispute resolution in the US and has been used throughout most of human history. Some scholars point to dispute resolution practices embedded in Chinese, Japanese, and some African cultures as forms of mediation dating back millennia.⁵

¹ Wamsley, "Derek Chauvin Found Guilty Of George Floyd's Murder."

² Murphy and Schuman, "AG Merrick Garland in Minneapolis Friday as DOJ Investigation into MPD Practices Wraps."

³ Rantala, "Federal Judge Dismisses Minneapolis Police Department's Proposed Consent Decree."

⁴ Venable LLP and 21CP Solutions LLC, "Tenth Semiannual Report."

⁵ Folberg, "Mediation Overview - History and Dimensions of Practice | Office of Justice Programs."

These practices include both formal and informal processes, with informal processes often involving family members or trusted members of the community serving as mediators in disputes. In an American context, a rise in labor strife in the 1960's is at times viewed as the origin for the mass proliferation of ADR. While originally used for solving labor disputes, the process was quickly caught on in many aspects of American life. Now mediation is used for doctor-patient, divorce, education, government-citizen, civil court, victim-offender, and intergang disputes among many others.⁶

These programs are generally viewed favorably. There's evidence that victim-offender mediation may decrease juvenile recidivism⁷ and parents may feel more settled when child custody disputes are settled in mediation⁸, suggesting that mediation may both elicit more behavioral change and provide a more satisfactory resolution than traditional disciplinary proceedings.

Mediation in Minneapolis

Mediation is utilized in Minneapolis in many of the ways it is utilized throughout the US. Minnesota courts must all abide by Rule 114.019(a) of the Minnesota General Rules of Practice, which require the courts to offer alternative dispute resolution, including mediation, for most civil and family cases.⁹ As a result, most civil litigation filed in Minneapolis itself can be mediated. Hennepin County Human Services offers further mediation for disputes arising over joint custody of children that can be utilized without a court order.¹⁰ Many nonprofit¹¹ and for-profit¹² mediation and alternative dispute resolution entities operate in Minneapolis. These groups mediate problems as small as sibling rivalries to as large as legal claims. In city government the Employee Assistance Program offers legal mediation for a variety of purposes.¹³ The Department of Neighborhood Safety also administers the Minneapolis violence prevention program, which reports to have mediated 1,500 potentially violent conflicts from May 15, 2021, to Dec. 31, 2021.¹⁴

The most extensive use of mediation within Minneapolis government is within the Civil Rights Department itself. The concept of community-police complaint mediation appears to have been introduced to Minneapolis in 1997, with the then-Civilian Review Authority reporting 15 mediations.¹⁵ In 2003 amendments to Title 9, Chapter 172 of the Code of Ordinances further

⁶ Wall and Dunne, "Mediation Research."

⁷ Bradshaw, Roseborough, and Umbreit, "The Effect of Victim Offender Mediation on Juvenile Offender Recidivism."

⁸ Ashford and Faith, "Testing Models of Justice and Trust."

⁹ "Minnesota Judicial Branch - Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) / Mediation."

¹⁰ Health, "Family Mediation and Evaluation."

¹¹ "Community Mediation Minnesota"; "Conflict Resolution Center"; "Community Mediation & Restorative Services."

¹² "JAMS Mediation, Arbitration, ADR Services"; "Gilbert Mediation Center, Ltd."; "Deer Hill Mediation."

¹³ Minneapolis, "Mental Health & Employee Assistance."

¹⁴ Minneapolis, "MinneapolisUS."

¹⁵ "CRA Mediation Statistics 1997-2001."

cemented mediation as a part of the Minneapolis police conduct review process. As a result of the amendments the Civilian Police Review Authority (CPRA), the precursor to the Office of Police Conduct Review, was required to inform officers and complainants about the possibility of mediation as well as inform the Chief of Police of any mediation proceedings.¹⁶ Mediation within CPRA was further strengthened in 2005, when Code changes established the program as mandatory mediation conducted by mediators unaffiliated with the city requiring a signed mediation agreement at its conclusion. The amendments also added the requirement that all complaints be referred to mediation with the following exemptions:

1. Where there are multiple allegations against the same officer, all allegations must qualify for mediation.
2. Where the complaint contains allegations against multiple officers, all officers must qualify for mediation
3. Mediation is not appropriate if the officer has a prior sustained complaint involving the same or similar allegations arising from an incident which occurred within one year prior to the date of the incident from which the complaint arises.
4. Excessive force complaints are eligible only if physical injuries are de minimis and medical treatment is not required.
5. Wrongful search or seizure complaints involving custodial arrest or other interference with liberty of significant duration are not eligible.
6. Theft and intentional damage to property complaints are not eligible.
7. The Review Authority Manager may depart from the above guidelines for good cause.¹⁷

From 2005 to 2011 CPRA held 117 mediations, 73 of which were ultimately successful.¹⁸ In 2012 the CPRA was again restructured, this time being effectively re-named as the Office of Police Conduct Review (OPCR) and placed within a larger police conduct oversight system. Mediation was again included in the amendments as a mandatory program utilizing mediators unaffiliated with the city. Mediation was no longer required by ordinance, with language indicating that the CPRA shall use mediation replaced by the option to mandate mediation if both OPCR and the Minneapolis Police Department's Internal Affairs Unit agree that mediation is appropriate. Additionally, all rules determining which cases may or may not be mediated were removed from the ordinance, granting OPCR much broader discretion over how to utilize the mediation program.¹⁹

Mediation was used with some regularity early in OPCR's lifespan – 34 times from 2013 through 2015 – but largely disappeared by 2016. At the 2013 peak, about 4.3% of complaints were resolved by mediation. Brief mentions of the mediation program exist after 2016, most notably

¹⁶ Johnson, Amending Title 9, Chapter 172.

¹⁷ Zimmermann and Zerby, Amending Title 9. Chapter 172.

¹⁸ "Mediation Stats 2005 through 2009"; "2011 MEDIATIONS COUNT"; "2010 MEDIATIONS COUNT."

¹⁹ Samuels, Civilian Police Review Authority, amending the chapter title and creating an Office of Police Conduct Review and a Police Conduct Oversight Commission.

a mention of the program in a presentation to the Community Commission of Police Oversight²⁰, but 2016 is the last time mediation is mentioned in OPCR annual reports.

Mediation continued elsewhere within the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department as it stalled in OPCR. The Complaints Investigation Division (CID) has conducted a successful mediation program since at least 2016. CID investigates complaints from individuals who experience discrimination in business, housing, education, public accommodations, and public services. CID has mediated roughly 12.8% of all cases since 2016, with that figure increasing in recent years. 19 of the 70 cases resolved in 2024 were resolved via mediation, totaling more than one in four cases resolved by CID.²¹

Case studies

To better determine how jurisdictions across the US have implemented community-police mediation programs, OPCR has analyzed the past and current programs from 20 jurisdictions. These jurisdictions range from Massachusetts to California and are housed within police departments and civilian oversight bodies. All 20 programs are designed to mediate disputes between city police and local complainants. Several county sheriff's departments operate similar mediation programs but given the natural differences between county-level and city-level policing, OPCR determined that city-level programs served as the best comparisons.

Albany, New York²²

Albany, New York's mediation program dates back to 2000 with the establishment of the Albany Community Police Review Board (CPRB). The law that initially established the CPRB required the creation of a mediation process. This process had to be no-cost to either party in mediation and the mediators needed to be graduates of the Albany Police Department Community Police Academy. These mediators are chosen from a list of community mediators compiled by the Mediation Program Director and the chief of police and approved by Albany City Council (referred to as the Common Council) and the mayor. The statute authorizes mediation for all complaints that do not involve:

1. Excessive force;
2. Violation of civil rights;
3. Criminal conduct of an officer;
4. Injury to either party;
5. Property damage by an officer or;
6. If the complaint is a result of an incident that involves an arrest.

²⁰ Jefferson, "OPCR Presentation to CCPO."

²¹ Minneapolis, "Civil Rights Investigations Dashboard."

²² Albany Community Police Review Board Mediation Process; "Albany Community Police Review Board Mediation Program"; Santo, "Beef with Cops?"

When a mediation-eligible complaint is received, it is then presented to the CPRB and the chief of police. In order to proceed towards mediation, a majority of the five-person board and the chief of police have two days to agree that mediation is appropriate given the circumstances. Should they agree, then both the complainant and the officer are given 30 days to agree to mediation. Should any party – the CPRB, the chief of police, the complainant, or the officer – not agree to mediation, the case is to then be referred for investigation.

If mediation is agreed to, then the case is not to be investigated, regardless of outcome. The parties have 30 days from this point to schedule a mutually-agreeable place and time for the mediation, which can be conducted virtually via Zoom. Mediation sessions are closed to the public, cannot be used as evidence in court, and mediators cannot be compelled to discuss mediation sessions by a subpoena. When mediation is finished, the allegations are deleted from the officer’s CPRB history.

While initially authorized in 2000, the mediation process did not begin in earnest until 2013. Attempts to start the program earlier were stymied by the Albany Police Department pulling support following complaints of bad experiences in mediation by officers. CPRB staff have indicated that the program is currently inactive and undergoing revisions.

Austin, Texas²³

Austin, Texas’s mediation program dates to at least 2012 and was a collaborative arrangement between the Austin Police Department (APD), the Office of Police Oversight (OPO, formerly the Office of the Police Monitor), and the nonprofit Dispute Resolution Center (DRC). The mediation program was initially detailed in APD Policy 902.6.5 Investigations handled through mediation and the adjoining mediation standard operating procedures.

The process for referring a complaint to mediation begins with complaint intake. OPO staff discuss the option of mediation after the submission of the complaint affidavit. If OPO staff choose to recommend mediation, the recommendation is submitted to APD Internal Affairs (IA), who have two days to determine if they view mediation as appropriate. Mediation is only available for Class B external complaints, with Class B complaints being any complaint where the potential discipline is less than a 15-day suspension. IA then has five days to review the officer’s record to determine if they are eligible for mediation. Officers may only participate in mediation if they have not been in mediation for a similar complaint in the previous six months.

If both IA and OPO recommend mediation and the officer is mediation-eligible, then the parties will be contacted to determine their interest in mediation. IA will reach out to the officer and

²³ Dispute Resolution Center, “Austin Dispute Resolution Center”; Austin Police Department, Austin Office of the Police Monitor, and Dispute Resolution Center, “Austin Mediation Standard Operating Procedures”; Austin Office of the Police Monitor, “Austin Mediation Flyer”; Austin Police Department, “Austin Police Department Policy Manual.”

OPO will reach out to the complainant. If both subsequently agree, then the OPO will reach out to the Dispute Resolution Center to schedule a mediation. The DRC mediator will schedule a time for the mediation. The standard operating procedures state that mediations will take place at the DRC on Tuesdays or Thursdays at 10:00am, 2:00pm, 4:00pm, or 6:30pm, take up to two hours, and preferably be conducted by both a male and female mediator. The SOP is dated January 2012, so it is possible this timeline has since changed. The mediation begins with the signing of a confidentiality agreement and ends with an exit survey of every party to the mediation.

Should the parties not agree to mediation or fail to participate in mediation in good faith then the complaint will be referred to IA for investigation. APD policy has procedures in place for mediation scheduling conflicts; an officer or complainant arriving less than 20 minutes late results in the mediation proceeding as normal, with a delay of more than 20 minutes requiring an agreement as to how to proceed. If one of the parties fails to appear at all then they will be contacted by either IA or the OPO. If the complainant fails to appear and does not provide a reasonable explanation the case is closed and if the officer fails to appear and does not provide a reasonable explanation the case is referred for investigation. Both parties only have one opportunity to re-schedule.

OPO has indicated that the program is not currently active and has been inactive for several years, however they are attempting to work with the Dispute Resolution Center to revive the program.

Baltimore, Maryland²⁴

Baltimore, Maryland's mediation program is borne out of the US Department of Justice's ongoing consent decree. The consent decree requires the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) provide a remediation program, advertise the existence of the mediation program, and track cases sent to mediation. As of the Monitor's Report dated Dec. 20, 2024, all three tasks related to mediation are listed as in the policy and/or planning phase.

Despite appearing to not be in full effect as of May 2025, the Baltimore Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) does have publicly available information on the structure of the program. A mediation program brochure appears to have been published on the OECR website on Jan. 26, 2024, suggesting that the basic framework for the program has been in place for nearly 18 months. The program is intended to be administered by the nonprofit Community Mediation Center (CMC). The precise complaints available for mediation is not listed, though it states that the following may be eligible:

1. Abusive language;
2. False arrest;

²⁴ "Police Complaint Mediation Program"; Baltimore City Civilian Review Board, "Police-Community Mediation Program Brochure"; Venable LLP and 21CP Solutions LLC, "Tenth Semiannual Report."

3. False imprisonment;
4. Harassment and;
5. Excessive force.

The current structure gives OECR broad leeway to determine which cases can be mediated, with no cases listed as specifically off-limits. Materials are explicit the program is voluntary, confidential, and free of charge. Should OECR find a complaint suitable for mediation, the Community Mediation Center will reach out to both the complainant and the officer to determine if they are both interested in mediation. If both agree, the CMC will schedule a time and place for the mediation. Mediation is to always take place in a neutral area in the complainant's neighborhood and is to be conducted over no more than two hours with two mediators.

Baltimore's mediation program does not require an agreement and is not a punishment process, but it does not yet specify what happens should the officer or the complainant not attend in good faith. As it currently exists as a plan and not a full-fledged program the infrastructure for the mediation program is incomplete and no measures of caseload or satisfaction with the program are available.

When contacted the OECR indicated that the mediation program was managed by the Civilian Review Board, which was closed on Jan. 1, 2025, due to the passage of the Maryland Police Accountability Act (MPAA). The MPAA will lead to the creation of a police accountability board that will take on a future mediation program.

Boston, Massachusetts²⁵

Boston, Massachusetts – similarly to Baltimore – is currently designing a new mediation program. Boston has an older program that initially began in 2016 and was administered by the Harvard Mediation Program within the Harvard Law School. This program, which was designed primarily to improve police-community relations and reduce backlogs of minor complaints, was widely considered a failure. The Boston Police Department's Internal Affairs Division only identifying 15 of the more than 120 complaints deemed eligible for mediation, as "suitable" for mediation.

Boston's Office of Police Accountability and Transparency (OPAT), along with the Boston Police Department, is currently attempting to design a new mediation program according to the OPAT semi-annual report published Feb. 7, 2024. OPAT reporting indicates that a single case was successfully mediated in October 2023, but this is the only indication that mediation has

²⁵ 12-17.18 Complaint Mediation Program.; Associated Press, "A Year in, Boston Police's Mediation Program a Failure"; Boston Police Department, "Boston Police Department Old Mediation Program"; Palma, "Boston Police Launched a Program to Reduce the Backlog of Routine Complaints"; Office of Police Accountability and Transparency, "OPAT Complaints."

occurred since 2022. Not much is publicly available about this mediation program. Chapter 12-17.18 of the Boston Municipal Charter requires the implementation of a Police-Community Mediation Program and grants the Police Commissioner broad leeway to determine which complaints are appropriate for mediation. OPAT then will determine which specific cases are appropriate and reach out to the complainant and the designated Police-Community Mediation Program liaison to determine interest in mediation. Should one or both parties not agree to mediation the OPAT staff shall determine how to proceed with the complaint.

Chicago, Illinois²⁶

Chicago, Illinois is in the process of designing a full complainant-centered mediation program following a 6-month pilot that showed mixed results. The pilot program was born out of consent decree requirements that a mediation program be developed. This program was administered by the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) for the duration of the pilot period (October 2022 to March 31, 2023).

COPA investigative staff was tasked with considering whether a complaint was mediation-eligible during the preliminary investigation. The goal is for cases to go from complaint filed to mediation within 90 days. Below is a table from the COPA guidance listing the eligible and ineligible complaints:

²⁶ “COPA FAQs”; Civilian Office of Police Accountability, “COPA Community-Police Mediation Policy Draft”; Chicago Office of Inspector General, “Community-Police Mediation Pilot Program.”

Complaints eligible for mediation	Complaints ineligible for mediation
<p>perceived bias/harassment; failure to provide service/neglect of duty; discourteous treatment/unprofessionalism; unnecessary physical contact (i.e., no-injury/contact that is not a reportable use of force); and any other complaint that, in the view of the COPA Chief Administrator, is likely to have a minimal negative impact on the operations or professional image of CPD or the complainant has conveyed that mediation is the preferred method of resolution.</p>	<p>reportable use of force by a CPD member; an arrest of the complainant; an allegation of verbal abuse, as defined in 2-78-100 of the Municipal Code of Chicago; a lawsuit filed regarding the allegations in the complaint; an intimate partner relationship between the complainant and the CPD member (i.e., instances of domestic violence or sexual misconduct); injury to the complainant or CPD member; property damage caused by the complainant or CPD member; and complaints against a CPD member that include an express or apparent alleged violation of Illinois state law, the criminal code of another state, or a criminal federal statute.</p>
<p>Generally, a complaint is not eligible for mediation if the accused Department member has had two or more prior complaints with similar allegations within the prior 12 months</p> <p>The Chief Administrator of COPA may approve an exception to this guideline for good cause. The Chief Administrator (or designee) may consult with the Chief of BIA (or designee) before making an exception for good cause. COPA will document the basis for good cause.</p>	

Should the preliminary investigation reveal that the case may be eligible for mediation, the intake staff will take the case to the Intake Coordinator to determine if mediation is appropriate. The intake coordinator will then attempt to reach both the complainant and the accused officer via email to determine if they are interested in mediation. Should both agree, then the Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR), the nonprofit who provides mediation services, is contacted and is given the guidance to schedule a mediation session within 21 days.

Mediation occurred either at the CCR offices downtown or virtually via Zoom. Should this mediation occur and both parties participate in good faith – as determined by the CCR mediator – then the case will be closed by mediation. Should the officer participate in good faith, but the

complainant did not, then the case is closed as mediated, but the complainant's objections are noted.

The pilot program evaluation states that of the 121 referrals, only 8 ultimately reached mediation within the 90-day window. The following issues were identified in the evaluation:

- A single full-time employee was tasked with screening complaints for eligibility.
- The guidance was to schedule mediation sessions during the officer's working hours, which made it difficult to schedule mediation.
- Complainant's requests for mediation locations were not always respected, with one withdrawing from mediation because they did not want to travel downtown and another withdrawing because they wanted mediation to occur at their local police precinct.
- A lack of clarity around programming parameters. Despite offering virtual mediation via Zoom at least two complainants withdrew due to location and travel.

Overall, in more than half of all cases the mediation did not occur because the complainant declined or withdrew.

COPA currently is engaging in public forums discussing the draft of a non-pilot mediation program. The revisions push back the timelines, with the mediation referral timeline pushed back from 21 days to 60 days and the mediation completion timeline pushed back from 90 days to 150 days. Outreach for scheduling would be given to a dedicated Mediation Director, who will work to find a location satisfactory to both parties. Mediation is now done by mediators selected and evaluated by COPA as opposed to a dedicated mediation non-profit. There is no information on how these mediators are selected or evaluated.

Washington D.C.²⁷

Washington D.C. has had a complaint mediation program administered by the Office of Police Complaints (OPC) since 2001. OPC retains broad latitude to refer a complaint to an independent mediator if they believe the complaint may benefit from mediation. The 2024 annual report indicates that mediation is discussed with the complainant prior to referral, but it is not clear if the complainant is required to affirmatively consent to the mediation. Despite being a long-running program there is very little public documentation of it, suggesting a great deal of OPC discretion within the program.

Unlike most mediation programs, the DC program is strictly mandatory. Once referred, both the complainant and the officer are required to participate in good faith. Should the complainant

²⁷ Office of Police Complaints, "Office of Police Complaints Annual Report 2024"; Office of Police Complaints, "Office of Police Complaints Mediation Services"; Office of Police Complaints, "FAQs about the Mediation Program."

refuse to participate, the complaint may be dismissed. If the officer refuses to participate, the complaint may be disciplined subject to the discretion of the chief of police. As of 2024, all mediation is done virtually. OPC reporting indicates that in FY24, 55 cases were referred to mediation, 75% of which were ultimately resolved through mediation. This resulted in 9% of all cases being resolved through mediation.

Denver, Colorado²⁸

Denver, Colorado's mediation program began in December 2006 as a partnership between the Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM), Denver Police Department, the Department of Safety, the Denver Sheriff's Department, and the nonprofit mediation firm Find Solutions. The program was originally built in response to a community-police mediation program pilot in Portland, Oregon and has since outlived that program. An older FAQ from Find Solutions lists the price as \$95 per hour for mediation services, though that price may have increased with time.

The decision to recommend mediation can occur anywhere within the complaints process, though it most often occurs during intake itself. OIM, which handles the intake and processing of community complaints, determines the complainant's interest in mediation before all else. Once they determine that a case may benefit from mediation and the complainant is interested in mediating, they must seek approval from either the Denver Police Department or Denver Department of Safety to advance a case to mediation. Inclusion criteria for mediation are broad, with only allegations of criminal misconduct or conduct that could result in termination or demotion being excluded from mediation. In practice, only the least-serious cases – largely discourtesy cases – are referred to mediation. Denver Police have a discipline matrix similar to that found in Minneapolis, with complaints based on severity ranging from Class A to Class F. Staff indicated that most Class A-C complaints along with a small subset of Class D complaints are potentially eligible for mediation. Class E and Class F are uniformly barred from mediation.

Once referred, it is expected that mediation will be conducted within two weeks, and the full mediation process is expected to take 30-60 days. Find Solutions generally mediates using a solo mediator, but larger group mediations are allowed and may include a second mediator. Mediation takes place at a neutral government location - with the Municipal Building, libraries, and city council offices mentioned explicitly as options – and can be done outside normal working hours on weekends and evenings as well as virtually. Officers do come on duty, so they are carrying a service weapon, but Find Solutions suggests this causes more discomfort with the mediators than with the complainants and does not serve as a major barrier to mediation.

²⁸ "Denver Police Mediation Program FAQs"; "Community - Officer Complaint Mediation"; "Denver Mediation Program"; Office of the Independent Monitor, "Denver Office of the Independent Monitor 2024 Annual Report"; Schaible et al., "Denver's Citizen/Police Complaint Mediation Program"; Riley and Prenzler, "Mediation of Complaints against Police."

Both external researchers and the reporting by OIM itself indicate that the program is largely successful. Completed surveys indicate a broad satisfaction with the program from complainants and officers, with Latine complainants and female officers appearing to have particularly positive experiences. Complaint resolution through mediation is timely at 68 days. However, even with the successes, the program has a relatively small niche within the larger complaint's apparatus. Only 16 mediations were completed in 2024, accounting for 4% of all complaints to the OIM.

OIM staff indicate that post-pandemic struggles continue. The switch over to virtual mediation, along with a decline in complaint volume and trust in the complaints process, hinder their ability to reach their target of 10% of complaints ending in mediation. Staff also suggested that including questions on mediation in the intake form may be a barrier to public participation. Complainants may not understand what mediation entails and are unlikely to engage deeply with supplementary material explaining the process. They also expressed concerns that mentioning mediation to all complainants may contribute to some of the negative media coverage of the program²⁹; an agency may create the perception that all complaints are eligible for mediation should mediation be mentioned on every complaint form. They suggested it may be better to bring up mediation later in the process in a more controlled setting, such as discussing mediation during intake interviews, and only when it appears that mediation may be appropriate for a given complaint.

Greensboro, North Carolina³⁰

Greensboro, North Carolina first implemented their mediation program in May 2014. The press release announcing the program mentioned New York, Denver, and Austin as models for the mediation program. Unlike those other cities, the Greensboro program was administered directly via the Greensboro Police Department (GPD).

Complaints against officers in Greensboro are handled via GPD's Professional Standards Division (PSD). PSD allows for mediation only in situations where the maximum punishment for a sustained allegation is a written reprimand. Additionally, any officer with two sustained complaints in the previous 365 days or with a pending review in the Early Warning System is ineligible for mediation. In order to proceed with mediation, it must be requested by the PSD, accepted by the complainant, and accepted by the officer. Mediation is then conducted by a neutral mediator. Greensboro's mediators were trained by Find Solutions – the mediation

²⁹ Bick, "OPA's SPOG-Directed Mediation Process Reveals Expedient Way for SPD Officers to Avoid Discipline, Complaints On Their Records."

³⁰ Greensboro Police Department, "Greensboro Police Department Professional Standards Report 2016"; Greensboro Police Department, "Greensboro Police Department Annual Report 2017"; Ginsburg, "Greensboro Police Introduce Mediation for Complaints"; "Greensboro Police Mediation Process"; "Denver Police Mediation Program FAQs."

provider used by Denver’s Office of the Independent Monitor – who also provided support for the start of the program.

The program last reported outcomes in 2017, with 9 cases referred for mediation in 2017 and 29 referred in 2016. Of those cases, 5 were successfully mediated in 2017 and 15 in 2016. The program remains in effect, though the Professional Standards Division indicates that the program is rarely used due to the stringent requirements for beginning mediation.

Greenville, South Carolina³¹

Greenville, South Carolina first implemented its mediation program in 2014 and explicitly referenced Denver, New York, and Pasadena as influences. Much like Greensboro, the Greenville program is administered by the Greenville Police Department (GPD) directly and was implemented with support from Denver-based Find Solutions. Mediation is offered for all complaints which qualify. In order to qualify a complaint cannot be:

1. Physical force using impact or deadly weapons and/or resulting in substantial injury;
2. Violations of law with pending court proceedings;
3. Accusations of corruption or other criminal behavior;
4. Against an officer who has received more than two complaints within the previous 365 days or;
5. Against an employee with a pending review in the Early Warning System.

The timeline from initial complaint to referral to mediation is roughly 5 days, with officers then given 10 days to accept or decline. Once a complaint is identified as eligible for mediation GPD reaches out to the accused officer to discuss the option of mediation. The complainant is only contacted about the option once the accused officer indicates a willingness to participate in mediation. Final decision on a mediation recommendation falls to the chief of police, who can permit or deny any complaint for mediation.

All mediations are conducted by the nonprofit Upstate Mediation Center (UMC). Once a decision to mediate is agreed upon UMC is contacted and is tasked with scheduling a time and place for mediation as well as completing the mediation. They are also tasked with determining good faith within the mediation – should an officer not participate in good faith then the case will be referred to investigation, otherwise the case will be closed by mediation regardless of whether an agreement was ultimately reached. Both the officer and complainant are given one opportunity to re-schedule the mediation, after which any attempt to re-schedule will be considered bad-faith participation in the process.

³¹ “Greenville Police Mediation Program”; Greenville Police Department, “Greenville Mediation Program FAQs”; Greenville Police Department, “Greenville Police Department General Order 163A1”; Landrum, “Police Institute New Mediation Process to Address Citizen Complaints”; Mapp, “Greenville Police Department 2022 Citizen Complaints and Internal Investigations Summary Report”; “Community - Officer Complaint Mediation”; “Information About Filing A Complaint.”

Documentation on the Greenville mediation program is spotty, with the last internal investigations report released in 2022. That report indicates that from 2020-2022 a total of four cases were closed via mediation, with three of those cases being in 2022. This accounts for 1.7% of all citizen complaints in Greenville in that timespan. No mediations have been completed since late 2023, though the department continues to refer individuals to mediation. Buy-in is low, with most officers declining mediation and those that accept mediation rarely having a willing complainant. It is possible that this indicates a general satisfaction with the traditional complaints process. GPD is required to clear complaint investigations within 60 days and Greenville lacks union protections for its officers. This greatly reduces the speed disparity between mediation and investigations and may tacitly discourage mediation.

Los Angeles, California³²

Los Angeles, California first implemented their mediation program as a 3-year pilot study in early 2014. This program was narrowly tailored to mediate cases of racial bias in which there was no allegations of violence, racial insults, or serious misconduct. The focus on racial bias complaints was deliberate – Los Angeles rarely sustained complaints of racial bias because, as one LAPD employee said:

“How do you get into the mind of the officer to know that there is bad faith on his part, unless he comes out and admits it”.

Officers with two prior complaints in the previous 365 days were ineligible to participate. Little documentation of the pilot program is kept online, so elements of the program structure outside of that is not readily available. While the LAPD’s union initially expressed buy-in, the program ultimately had only 73 of 363 eligible complaints resulting in mediation during the pilot period.

The report indicated that nearly half of officers – along with a quarter of complainants - preferred a full investigation. An additional 20% of complainants indicated that the program was simply too much work for them. Satisfaction was high among complainants who chose to participate, with 83.7% indicating that they were satisfied with the process.

These results were encouraging enough for the city to move forward with a full complaint resolution process called the Community Police Unification Program (CPUP). The CPUP was designed in partnership with the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Dispute Resolution Program (DRP) and relied on the existing mediation services provided by the City Attorney’s Office. The list of eligible complaints was slightly broadened to include general non-racial discourtesy complaints. Complaints that are eligible for mediation are identified by the LAPD Internal Affairs Division

³² Riley, Prenzler, and Douglas, “Mediation of Complaints against Police”; Roberts, “A Tool for Improving Mediations”; “Dispute Resolution Program (‘DRP’) | City Attorney”; Stoltze, “LAPD Mediation Program for Residents and Cops Creates Better Understanding – When They Show Up”; Rubin, “LAPD to Try Voluntary Mediation in Racial Profiling Cases”; LAPD, “Professional Standards Bureau Annual Review 2021”; “Professional Standards Bureau.”

and then referred to the City Attorney’s Office. This process can take anywhere from two to six weeks. The CPUP Program Coordinator within the LA City Attorney’s Office is tasked with determining if both the complainant and the officer are interested in mediation, a process that generally takes less than two weeks. The mediation is guided by a volunteer mediator who makes use of a “Responsivity Tool” that details the complaint and areas of concern. Unlike many jurisdictions, officers participating in CPUP are encouraged to wear plain clothes to their mediation as opposed to a uniform. Mediation is primarily conducted virtually, though in-person mediations are offered at a time and place convenient to the complainant and the officer.

A 2021 report released by then-director of the DRP Shaphan Roberts suggests that the pairing of mediators and clients may lead to poor mediation outcomes. It is possible this is also related to mediator quality – mediators in Los Angeles are volunteers and while they are trained, the variation in quality among volunteers may be larger than that among professionals. Los Angeles has also struggled to increase the number of cases referred to mediation. That number seems to cap out at around 10% and LAPD employees at times express a desire to resolve minor complaints themselves.

In 2021, the mediation program was spun off the larger Dispute Resolution Program and underwent significant adjustments. Among them was a switch to a dual-mediator process and a large reduction in the number of mediators. Prior to these changes, officers indicated that they felt unsupported at the mediations, a problem which appears to have been alleviated by having one mediator be a civilian and the other a former law enforcement official. Los Angeles has many public mediation programs, all of which draw from the same pool of community mediators. These mediators varied greatly in quality and mediations involving LAPD drew wide interest amongst the mediators. The CPUP Program Coordinator suggests that narrowing the number of mediators allowed them to better select for quality and increase the number of individuals participating in mediation. These changes appear to have been successful; the CPUP program went from 51 mediations in 2021 to over 115 mediations in 2024.

Miami, Florida³³

Miami, Florida mediation program began July 28, 2020. The program was designed as a joint program between the Miami Police Department and Civilian Investigative Panel (CIP). Both the CIP director and the Miami PD Internal Affairs director are tasked with determining if a case is eligible for mediation, which must be done within 5 days of a complaint being received.

³³ Cardona, “Miami Police Oversight Board Launches Complaint Mediation”; “CIP-MPD Community-Police Mediation Program Policy”; Jacobs and Motley, “Citizens with Complaints against Miami Police Can Meet Officers Face-to-Face to Resolve Dispute | Opinion”; “Miami Community Police Mediation Program Registration”; “Police Mediation Program”; Cetoute, “Review Board Dedicated to Holding Miami Cops Accountable Will Be Disbanded. How Come?”

Mediation is largely restricted to discourtesy, neglect of duty, and bias-based policing and an officer can only be involved in two mediations per 12 months.

Participation is strictly voluntary. Should both the CIP Director and IA Director recommend mediation then they will reach out to the complainant and officer to determine interest in and suitability for mediation. Both parties are given 10 days to sign a mediation agreement, waiving their right to an investigation. Mediation is conducted by volunteer community mediators recruited by CIP and chosen by both CIP and IA. Once agreed, the parties are given 30 business days to schedule and complete the mediation. Failure to mediate within that timeframe or failure to mediate in good faith will result in the complaint being automatically re-filed.

There is no indication that the program ever completed a mediation. Mediation is not mentioned on the Miami PD Internal Affairs website or on any annual reporting completed by Miami PD. CIP was disbanded in 2024 due to a state pre-emption on civilian oversight boards.

New Orleans, Louisiana³⁴

New Orleans, Louisiana's mediation program began in 2014 and is operated by the Office of the Independent Police Monitor (OIPM). While the mediation itself is handled by OIPM, the decision to initiate mediation is up to the New Orleans Police Department Public Integrity Bureau (PIB). All complaints of police misconduct in New Orleans are made to PIB, who then determine how to proceed with the complaint. Complaints can only be referred to mediation if they meet the criteria for a minor violation infraction – for example professionalism, courtesy, and neglect of duty. The following are explicitly exempt from mediation:

1. A criminal allegation against the NOPD employee;
2. Where discipline may result in the possible termination of an NOPD employee;
3. False arrest;
4. Unreasonable use of force;
5. The planting of evidence;
6. Untruthfulness/false statements;
7. Unlawful search;
8. Retaliation;
9. Sexual misconduct;
10. Domestic violence;
11. Theft; or
12. Possible misconduct of the supervisory or command leadership of the subject NOPD employee.

³⁴ OIPM, "Office of the Independent Police Monitor 2023 Annual Report"; OIPM, "2020 Annual Report: Community-Police Mediation Program"; Abugov, "Civilian-Police Mediation Program Offers Conflict Resolution"; "New Orleans Police Department Operations Manual Chapter 52-3 - Community-Police Mediation"; "About Mediation – New Orleans Independent Police Monitor."

Also, a NOPD employee may only participate in two mediations in any 12-month periods.

PIB has 14 days from initial intake to identify a case for mediation and refer the case to OIPM. OIPM then has 20 days to determine if both the officer and the complainant are interested and suitable for participation in mediation as well as collect all paperwork needed to begin the mediation process. Once all parties agree, a pair of mediators will be chosen from a list of trained community mediators who in turn will attempt to schedule a mediation. These can take place at whatever place and time is most convenient for both parties, though guidelines suggest attempting to schedule while the officer is on-duty at a location in the complainant's neighborhood. These locations can be governmental locations such as a library conference room or a public-school classroom or private locations such as non-profit board rooms or church Sunday school rooms. The only requirement is that the location provides the complainant and the officer the necessary privacy to mediate effectively. In 2020 it was also made available virtually via Zoom. Mediation must take place within 60 days of the initial complaint filing. Failure to complete mediation in that timeframe will lead to the complaint being re-referred to PIB for a full investigation.

Unlike most jurisdictions, New Orleans offers optional mediation for post-investigation complaints with unfounded, exonerated, or not sustained dispositions. These mediations follow the same process as pre-investigation mediation but are explicitly designed to allow complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation to discuss what happened with the officer. Participation in post-investigation mediation, in good faith, is grounds for commendation of an NOPD officer, which in turn could positively impact their chances at a future promotion.

Mediation appears to have been broadly successful. In 2020 23% of civilian-initiated complaints were referred to mediation and 37% of cases referred to mediation ultimately closed by mediation. These figures appear to have slipped slightly, with 32% of referred cases (30 total mediations, 8.4% of all public-initiated complaints) ultimately being mediated in 2023, but satisfaction with the mediation remains high. All 19 of the complainants and 26 of the officers who responded to the post-mediation survey indicated satisfaction with the process. The biggest barrier to mediation in New Orleans appears to be civilian buy-in – in 2023 40% of civilian complainants ultimately declined mediation as opposed to 12% of officers.

OIPM staff credit their comparatively high caseload to a combination of program timeliness, program convenience, and a highly communal culture. How the topic of mediation is broached may play a factor as well. OIPM prefers to avoid mention of mediation to a complainant before they refer the case, at which point they will explain the process in detail to the complainant. This gives them the ability to describe the process, answer questions, alleviate concerns, and discuss the benefits of mediation to the complainant directly even if the complainant knows nothing about mediation prior to filing a complaint. The largest factor may well be a consistency in leadership. Jules Griff, the program's Director, has been in her position since 2017 and served as a mediator within the program prior to joining OIPM.

OIPM expressed their own broad satisfaction with the program and a desire to further increase the number of cases closed via mediation. They further recommended a cohort model for community mediators should another city look to implement a mediation program. This model entails bringing on board and training a cohort of new mediators every two years. These mediators are paid a small stipend - \$100 – per mediation and are expected to be available should OIPM need a mediator for a case. They are free to withdraw from the program whenever they see fit, though OIPM indicated that roughly half of any given cohort will continue to accept cases through the two years and many even continue past their initial two years.

New York City, New York³⁵

New York City, New York has among the oldest mediation programs in the United States, first mediating civilian complaints in 1997. Civilian complaints are handled by the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). The CCRB is tasked with determining which incoming complaints are suitable for mediation and are granted broad discretion to determine a case eligible. However, a complaint cannot be mediated when they:

1. Involve deadly force
2. Involve serious physical injury or extensive property damage
3. Include sexual misconduct or racial profiling/bias policing allegations
4. Have open civil or criminal litigation regarding the matter
5. Have concurrent NYPD investigation regarding the same incident

Once the determination is made that mediation may be appropriate CCRB staff reach out to both the complainant and the officer to discuss mediation and determine interest. Should both parties express interest, they will proceed to scheduling a mediation with a trained mediator unaffiliated with the CCRB or the police department. The mediator is chosen from a roster of mediators kept by the CCRB; they are required to have at least two years' experience in alternative dispute resolution and are offered financial compensation for participation in the program. This mediation can be done virtually or in-person at the CCRB's office and can be completed between 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday. Preference is given to the needs of the complainant, though officer schedule is considered when it fits with complainant needs. Sessions are only deemed successful if both parties agree the issue was resolved, otherwise the case is sent back for a full investigation.

New York's program, while highly regarded, has had major hiccups over the last several years. In 2018 the CCRB completed 232 mediations and attempted 231 more. By 2022 those figures

³⁵ Hanna, "Civilian Complaint Review Board Mediation Program"; Bartels and Silverman, "An Exploratory Study of the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board Mediation Program"; Walker, Archbold, and Herbst, "Mediating Citizen Complaints Against Police Officers"; "Mediation - CCRB"; Riley, Prenzler, and Douglas, "Mediation of Complaints against Police"; "New York Civilian Complaint Review Board 2021 Annual Report"; "New York Civilian Complaint Review Board 2024 Annual Report."

had fallen to 79 and 44 respectively, and the annual reports stop detailing the number of attempted mediations after 2022 due to a change in how uncompleted mediations are coded. In 2024 – the last year with mediation data available – CCRB completed 51 mediations. 2024 also saw a low point for civilian mediation acceptance, with only 18% of civilians offered mediation accepting it. This drop off is not the result of the CCRB moving away from mediation as an option. It was offered in 1,641 cases in 2024 compared to 754 in 2022.

One possible explanation behind this drop-off is poor timeliness of mediation post-2020. The average days to completed mediation rose every year from 2017 to 2021, peaking at 421 days in 2021, before coming back down to 70 days in 2024. Even 70 days is longer than that required by policy in New Orleans and Miami, though it is significantly shorter than the 408 days it takes to complete an investigation on average. Some of these delays may also be the result of a complex complaint investigation and mediation process, with complaints having to face a partial investigation prior to being re-routed to potential mediation. This partial investigation delays the process of mediation referral, which takes roughly two to three weeks in ideal circumstances.

Results of the mediations themselves are largely positive. Research suggests that civilians are more satisfied with mediation than with the traditional investigatory process. Also, 65% of mediations are completed to successfully – though the 35% returned to investigations is higher than in previous years, with only 10% being returned in 2017.

Pasadena, California³⁶

Pasadena, California has among the newest mediation programs in the country, at least in its current form. Pasadena had a previous mediation program that languished, but in September 2024 at the city auditor's request they began to revive the program. As such it is not clear if any mediations have been completed yet, but the mediation policy exists in the Pasadena Police Department's policy manual and documentation of the program exists on their website.

This new program is designed as a collaboration between the Pasadena Police Department (PPD) – which handles complaint intake and investigation in Pasadena – and the nonprofit Western Justice Center (WJC). The Administrative Services Lieutenant is tasked with determining if a complaint is eligible for mediation. Mediation is available for complaints related to procedure, service, courtesy, and tactics and is considered generally inappropriate for use of force, arrests, slurs, and criminal conduct. General guidance is to not allow officers to participate in more than three mediations per year.

Should the Administrative Services Lieutenant determine a complaint suitable for mediation they will first contact the officer to determine officer willingness to mediate. Should the officer agree, the complainant will then be contacted. If both parties agree to mediation, then the

³⁶ "Pasadena Police Policy Manual"; Staff Report, "Pasadena Police Chief Agrees With All 11 Auditor's Reform Recommendations"; "Pasadena Police Department Mediation Program"; "Pasadena Police Mediation Flyer."

Mediation Coordinator will work to schedule a time and place for mediation along with the mediator, complainant, and officer. Mediation typically occurs at WJCs offices but can occur in any other neutral location should all parties agree. The mediation schedule should preference the convenience of the complainant and should a mediation be scheduled any time other than the officer's shift the officer is entitled to overtime. Should both parties agree the mediation was successful, the complaint will then be formally withdrawn. Otherwise, the complaint will be referred for investigation.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania³⁷

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's mediation program was first recommended by the Philadelphia Police Advisory Commission in 2020. The program appears to have first gone into effect in 2022. Mediation is only eligible for complaints of lack of service or verbal abuse, and only officers who have not received a complaint for lack of service or verbal abuse in the past two years qualify. Complaints that claim the issue was motivated by discrimination are ineligible for mediation even if they are for verbal abuse or lack of service.

The process for determining mediation eligibility begins at the Philadelphia Police Department's Internal Affairs Division (IAD). While the Community Police Oversight Commission accepts policing complaints and administers the mediation program, they do not handle complaint investigation. Instead, they re-route all complaints to IAD. Once IAD identifies a complaint as mediation eligible they will send the complaint back to CPOC, who provides a secondary review. If CPOC recommends mediation and both the complainant and officer accept mediation, then the mediation program coordinator will reach out to find a mutually agreeable time to mediate either in-person or virtually via zoom.

While the program nominally began in 2022, it does not appear any mediations were ever completed. The 2021-2023 Combined Annual Report from CPOC states that in 2022 and 2023 only 26 cases were deemed eligible for mediation, with officers declining mediation in 16 of those 26. Ultimately none of those 26 ever reached mediation. The 2024 annual report omits any mention of the mediation program, suggesting that it may have been de-emphasized.

Portland, Oregon³⁸

Portland, Oregon's mediation program was initially established in 2002 as a joint effort by the Independent Police Review (IPR) and the Portland Police Bureau (PPB). This arrangement is temporary as the city awaits the establish the Office of Community-based Accountability (OCA).

³⁷ "Citizens Police Oversight Commission 2021-2023 Combined Annual Report"; "Citizens Police Oversight Commission 2024 Annual Report"; "Community-Police Mediation February 2020"; "Community-Police Complaint Mediation"; "CPOC's Community-Police Complaint Mediation Program Is Now Live!"; Kenney, "Executive Order No. 2-17."

³⁸ Community Police Oversight Board; "Independent Police Review 2020 Annual Report"; "Independent Police Review 2022 Annual Report"; "Independent Police Review 2023 Annual Report"; "IPR Mediation Program"; "PSF-5.10 - Independent Police Review - Mediation Program Guidelines"; "Request Mediation with an Officer."

The OCA's creation was mandated by 2020's Ballot Measure 26-217 and will replace the existing civilian oversight structure in Portland, with the IPR being disbanded.

The process for determining mediation eligibility begins at the Independent Police Review. IPR handles intake and investigation for community complaints of police misconduct. Cases are eligible for mediation if:

1. The misconduct would be so minor that the matter would be better addressed through other means; or
2. The case is closed and mediation could be beneficial.

After IPR finds a complaint eligible for mediation they need the approval of the complainant, the officer, and the Portland Police Bureau. If all parties agree to mediation, then the IPR Community Relations Coordinator will select a mediator who will in turn attempt to schedule a mediation. IPR relies on a single contracted mediator to conduct all mediations – IPR has sent out requests for proposals for additional mediators but given the small number of completed mediations there has been little interest from potential partners. Mediations can occur at any location agreed on by all parties, including virtually via zoom. Mediations are expected to be conducted within 14 days – and no longer than 60 days - of being referred to a mediator. Post-finding mediation is also available.

Annual reporting from 2020 through 2023 lists three completed mediations – one virtual mediation in 2020 and two other mediations in 2022. After zero mediations in 2023 the figures rebounded to five in 2024. IPR staff points to several possible causes of the small caseload including difficulty transitioning to virtual mediation, reliance on a single mediator, and difficulty marketing the program given IPR's impending closure.

San Francisco, California³⁹

San Francisco, California first established a mediation program out of its Office of Community Complaints in 1995. The program started slowly, with 6 mediations in 2004, before being reprioritized in 2005. The Office of Community Complaints was later expanded and renamed the Department of Police Accountability (DPA). DPA still independently manages the community-police mediation program.

The Department of Police Accountability, which manages intake and investigation of community complaints against police, has sole discretion to refer a complaint to mediation. Mediation referrals occur prior to any investigation and can be referred for complaints alleging:

1. Conduct unbecoming (inappropriate behavior or comments);
2. Unwarranted action; or

³⁹ "Department of Police Accountability Mediation Division"; "DPA Annual Report 2022"; "DPA Annual Report 2023"; "DPA Brochure"; Schultheis, "DPA Mediation Presentation," September 2022; Schultheis, "DPA Mediation Presentation," January 2024; "OCC Annual Report 2005"; "San Francisco Police Department Bulletin 18-254."

3. Neglect of duty.

Prior to referral a case must be reviewed with a senior investigator or attorney. Time from intake to referral to mediation is roughly 25 days. If a case has been referred to mediation and both the complainant and the officer accept mediation, then the DPA mediation team will schedule an in-person or virtual mediation. DPA currently offers in-person mediation only at their downtown office. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic they offered in-person mediation in more locations, but staff indicated that the switch to a single location did not make a major difference in complainant acceptance of mediation. Mediators are selected from a pool of 130 (as of May 2025) unpaid volunteer mediators. DPA allows for mediation of complaints against the department more generally. Instead of a complainant meeting with an officer, they meet with a San Francisco Police Department representative regarding a complaint about general department practices or behavior. Most mediations, 29 of 39 in 2023, in San Francisco, are of this variety. As of 2017 mediated cases were open an average of 143 days – 113 fewer days than non-mediated cases.

Community satisfaction with the mediation program is high. In 2024 DPA reported that 93% of survey respondents indicated satisfaction with the mediation process and 97.5% indicated that mediators provided an environment where they felt safe to express concerns and issues. Even with complainants overwhelmingly indicating satisfaction with the program, the overall mediation caseload remains small. Mediation was used in 39 of 748 cases closed in 2023, accounting for roughly 5% of all case closures. In only 10 cases – 1.3% of all cases - did a complainant get to mediate directly with an officer they accused of wrongdoing. Staff indicated that this was in part because of a lack of referrals. DPA investigators – who also function as intake specialists and generally the intake and investigation of a complaint are handled by the same investigator – prefer to advance complaints to investigation instead of referring them to mediation.

San Jose, California⁴⁰

San Jose, California's mediation program was first implemented in the early 2000s in response to a recommendation by the San Jose Independent Police Auditor (IPA). The program is a joint venture between IPA and the San Jose Police Department (SJPD), with both parties tasked with actively scanning complaints to determine which may be appropriate for mediation. No specific guidelines are given as to which complaints may be eligible for mediation. To proceed to mediation both the SJPD and the IPA, along with the complainant and the officer, must agree to mediation. Additionally, the complainant must withdraw their complaint in writing prior to any attempts at mediation. Mediation sessions are planned and scheduled by the SJPD Internal Affairs Unit conducted by retired judges who serve as volunteer mediators and are held in City Hall.

⁴⁰ "IPA 2023 Annual Report"; "IPA 2016 Year End Report"; "Independent Police Auditor Recommendations"; "IA Unit Guidelines 2023 Update"; "San Jose Police Department Internal Affairs."

The San Jose program is poorly documented and does not appear to still be in active use. The IPA's 2023 Annual Report makes no mention of mediation and the last report to clearly indicate the use of mediation was 2016, where two mediation sessions were held.

Seattle, Washington⁴¹

Seattle, Washington's mediation program first began in late 2005 as a partnership between the Seattle Office of Police Accountability (OPA) and King County Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution (OADR). OPA typically identifies a complaint as mediation-eligible during the 30-day intake process. There are no set guidelines for what qualifies for mediation, though allegations of professionalism, bias, and general miscommunication are explicitly mentioned as mediation eligible. When mediation is deemed appropriate the OPA will reach out to the complainant and the officer to determine interest in possible mediation. Should both agree the OPA will then work to schedule a mediation – which is typically conducted at the OPA office – and then request a mediator from OADR. OPA works with the Seattle Police Officer's Guild to find a mutually agreeable mediator. There is no internal timeline for when to contact officers to request mediation or when to convene the mediation, with both figures varying a great deal by year.

While King County has the framework of a robust mediation program, it is rarely used in recent years. From 2019 through 2023 OPA mediated a total of 10 cases, seven of which were in 2019. Numbers were higher earlier in the program's lifespan; 27 mediations were conducted in 2010, accounting for 8.7% of all civilian complaints. The falloff is in part the result of a lack of public awareness. A 2019 report indicates that there was virtually no marketing of the program in 2017 or 2018 and while exit survey data was collected it was never analyzed. Annual reporting suggests that a change in leadership at OPA may have led to a de-prioritization of the program. The 2011/12 Combined Annual Report lists 24 completed mediations. After 2012 leadership in the OPA changed and the 2013 and 2014 Annual Reports list zero total mediations.

OPA staff indicate that community trust in the department and the requirements for mediation are persistent barriers to increasing the caseload. In 2024 OPA mediated one case out of the seven referred.

St. Louis, Missouri⁴²

St. Louis, Missouri's mediation program began in 2015 in the St. Louis Civilian Oversight Board (COB). The program was initially developed with the help of the nonprofit MediationSTL. While

⁴¹ "OPA Mediation Flyer"; "2022 OPA Manual"; "Office of Police Accountability 2023 Annual Report"; "Seattle OPA Mediation Program"; "OPA 2011/12 Combined Annual Report"; "OPA 2013 Annual Report"; "OPA 2014 Annual Report."

⁴² "Civilian Oversight Board 2016-2019 Quadrennial Report"; "Civilian Oversight Board 2018 Annual Report"; "Crisis Resolution Center"; "Community Mediation Services of St. Louis."

developed with MediationSTL, the program ultimately went into effect with the support of the nonprofit Crisis Resolution Center of St. Louis (CTCSTL). COB intended for mediation to be offered for most complaints, with the reporting suggesting that only the following explicitly prevent mediation:

1. Allegations of serious physical injury;
2. Allegations of serious property damage;
3. A pending criminal case; or
4. A pending civil lawsuit.

Not much is known about the program beyond this. CTCSTL's website implies that either COB or St. Louis Police's Internal Affairs can request mediation and seek complainant approval independent of one-another. However, such a structure seems unlikely and no mention of it exists on St. Louis governmental sources. The program overall appears to have been ineffective. COB has not released any annual reporting since its 2016-2019 Quadrennial Report, which indicates four mediations occurring over four years.

Analysis of case studies

Timeliness matters

A consistent theme during the case study interviews was the notion that a program can succeed and fail on the timeliness of its process. New Orleans, New York, Denver, and Los Angeles all resolved cases through mediation in 60 to 70 days, a pace several times faster than their traditional investigations process. New York saw large drop-offs in mediation acceptance when its case resolution timeframe increased post-pandemic, and this combination of long timelines and low acceptance appears in Chicago as well.

Staff in several cities indicated that one of the primary benefits of mediation for officers is an ability to resolve the complaint significantly faster than via the traditional investigation process. While a majority of complaints are ultimately not sustained, the mere existence of a complaint can hang over an officer. Even in cases where the complaint is highly unlikely to be sustained, officers appear to place value in ending the process in 60 days as opposed to 180 or more. It's possible that the gap between the investigation and mediation timelines plays a larger role in officer acceptance than the mediation timelines themselves. Greenville has had low officer uptake – a rarity in community-police mediation – and staff suggested that some of that may be due to the rapid nature of the traditional investigations process. Greenville closes complaints within 60 days, the same length of time as their mediation process.

Timeliness is an even bigger deal when trying to convince complainants to mediate. Mediation program staff almost uniformly indicate that complainant acceptance is a larger barrier to mediation than officer acceptance, and there appears to be a relationship between complainant acceptance and the speed at which mediation is resolved. This may be in part a function of the types of complaints that are traditionally mediated. Mediation focuses on low-level misconduct. It seems plausible that this kind of low-level misconduct has a “getting over

it” effect, meaning that while the incident caused a great deal of distress to the complainant when it happens, that distress dissipates over time. A complainant who is no longer distressed by an interaction – or has time to re-frame the interaction – is likely less willing to take time out of their day to go through mediation. There is some evidence of this effect in Chicago, with one complainant in Chicago’s pilot program directly stating that they declined mediation because they came to believe the officer did nothing wrong. Complainants may also have a desire to see a quick resolution in much the same way as officers. A timeline of 60 days means that within two months a complainant receives closure, a significant difference from the 180 days or more often seen in the traditional investigations process.

No consistent standard for what kinds of cases can be mediated

Case selection is crucial to the question of timeliness – a more rigid case-selection criteria requires more intake investigation and thus reduces the speed at which complaints can be referred to mediation – unfortunately there’s very little standardization in terms of which cases can be mediated. On the restrictive end, Portland allows for mediation only in cases where the complaints are deemed so minor the matter is better addressed through other means. While on the high, Boston and Washington DC have no limits on which complaints can ultimately be referred to mediation. This range of case selection criteria masks some commonalities among programs. Most focus on minor violations, specifically complaints of discourtesy and failure to provide service. No jurisdiction appears to mediate any cases involving potential criminal activity, use of force, or explicit racial animus.

The lack of a formal standard appears to be a major hinderance to many programs. Cities with broad discretion or vague case selection criteria appear to struggle to refer cases in the first place. While Seattle has broad discretion to refer virtually any type of complaint to mediation, they often fail to refer complaints in the first place with only seven referrals in 2024. This is not universal – New York has a high number of referrals and broad discretion – but in cases where discretion is broad it appears more planning needs to be done internally to maintain a consistent stream of referrals.

The most successful programs tend to be ones with specific referral criteria that are not overly strict. New Orleans refers all cases which meet the definition of a minor violation infraction, meaning that the complaint alleges behavior that would likely result in non-disciplinary corrective action such as coaching or re-training, and many cases that meet the definition of credible violation infraction. Los Angeles is slightly more permissive, instead referring all complaints of discourtesy and racial profiling that do not show explicit racial animus. Denver is among the most permissive but still maintains a great deal of specificity, with nearly all complaints of Class A-C on their A-F discipline matrix being referred to mediation. The experience of these cities suggests that it is more important to have specific criterion to follow for the referral to mediation than it is to merely allow for many cases to be referred in the first place. It is possible for the requirements to be too strict – as Portland appears to be – but in general complaints of misconduct appear to be heavily weighted towards minor violations. As

such the best-case selection process appears to be the one that allows the 25% most minor complaints to be referred to mediation as quickly as possible while also minimizing the amount of discretion that goes into the referral process.

Convenient scheduling is burdensome, but worth it

Cities appear to benefit from convenience in addition to pure speed. Programs often attempt to schedule mediations either during, immediately before, or immediately after an officer's shift and an officer is almost always on the clock during their mediation so combined with the easy access to a vehicle convenience is much more of a factor for complainants than officers.

Convenience does not appear to be a huge barrier to officer participation – New York and Seattle have both had fairly easy times getting officers to agree to mediation taking place in their oversight agency's downtown offices – but is a much larger barrier for complainants.

The first part of convenience is the allowance of virtual mediation. For programs that existed prior to 2020 the pandemic wound up being highly disruptive, and the largest factor in this disruption was the lack of protocols for virtual mediation. The COVID-19 pandemic almost entirely shut down cities' ability to conduct in-person mediation in 2020, and it took a great deal of time to create policies and procedures for the usage of virtual mediation. New York's program virtually stopped conducting mediations in 2020. When it began to pick up again in 2021, it saw huge delays in the process resulting in completion timelines exceeding 400 days. It is crucial for any mediation program designed in 2025 to have explicit policies and procedures governing the use of virtual mediation to both allow mediation to be accessible to those that cannot easily travel, and to prevent the disruptions that occurred in 2020.

Several cities see virtual mediation as sufficient from a convenience standpoint, but others have had success with broader in-person mediation locations. Virtually every city allows for in-person mediation at a central location. This is often the police oversight body's office or the office of the mediation firm that the oversight body has a contract with. However, some cities offer mediation at a wider variety of locations. New Orleans is the leader in this strategy, with their program looking to complete mediations within walking distance of the complainant's home. New Orleans reports a great deal of success with this plan. This success is reinforced by Chicago's experience with its pilot program; Chicago originally offered mediation only in the main office of the Center for Conflict Resolution, but several complainants indicated that having to travel downtown was an impediment to accepting mediation, so the program was re-structured to allow for mediation at any location agreed upon by both parties.

Convenience is not just in location but in time. Virtually all programs offer mediation during normal business hours, but more permissive programs will allow for mediation on weekends and later into the night. Staff in New Orleans indicated that, while helpful, even when allowing complainants to request mediation during off-hours most of their mediations took place Monday through Friday 8am to 6pm. However, some complainants do need off-hours mediation and some officers work shifts that do not align conveniently with the complainants'

schedule. In situations like this, a more convenient mediation schedule can allow for more complaints to be resolved via mediation.

More than any other program component, the scheduled mediation time and location exists on a spectrum with clear trade-offs. The program can be as restrictive as virtual-only from 9am-5pm or as permissive as any time any place or anywhere in between. In general, the more permissive the program the more mediation referrals that will ultimately be successful, but the needs and abilities of the mediators need to be considered. At minimum, a successful program should allow complainants broad authority to choose an in-person mediation location and should work to provide an extensive list of locations in which mediation can be completed. Off-hours mediation is helpful, but a majority of complainants will likely be able to schedule between 8am and 6pm, Monday through Friday, when the location itself proves convenient. While theoretically virtual mediation is the most permissive, not all complainants are comfortable meeting online and thus convenient in-person options maximizes mediation accessibility.

Public awareness of mediation as a concept is low

Each city has a very different mediation program with different struggles, but one barrier to mediation identified everywhere was a lack of community awareness. The ways low awareness of mediation manifests differ, but it serves as the most consistent barrier to increased acceptance rates. Complainants often do not know mediation is even an option in the complaints process, and when told it is an option, they often do not understand what it is or the benefits of it. The overall lack of awareness may explain the central contradiction in community-police mediation – complainants indicate significantly higher levels of satisfaction with mediation as opposed to the traditional investigation process, but a majority of complainants still choose to undergo a traditional investigation.

Some cities, like Denver, discuss mediation on the complaint intake form itself. While this may make sense on the surface, Denver indicated that this may serve as an active impediment to increased mediation referral rates. Even when given written information on mediation, it is likely that complainants are self-selecting out of mediation without fully understanding what mediation entails. This sentiment was echoed by New Orleans, where the Office of the Independent Police Monitor actively discourages The New Orleans Police Department's Public Integrity Bureau from discussing mediation during intake. Instead, they prefer to discuss the option of mediation after referring the case to mediation. This allows them to tailor their explanation of mediation to the specific case, provide details about the process, talk about benefits, and answer questions in a more controlled environment while ensuring all complainants who reject mediation do so knowing exactly what they are declining.

Surprisingly, no city that OPCR contacted appeared to place much emphasis on external marketing of the mediation program. That is not to say this external awareness is not beneficial – virtually every city that conducts more than a handful of mediations has some degree of community outreach regarding the program – but discussing mediation in detail to the

complainants themselves appears sufficient to get most individuals who may potentially be interested in mediation to accept it. Any mediation program being developed should be done so with the assumption that complainants will not know what mediation is prior to submitting a complaint, and can be provided with much of the information needed to provide informed consent even after the complaint is initially filed.

Mediation as community policing

What came up just as often as the lack of public awareness of mediation was the concept of mediation as a crucial component of a generalized community policing strategy. Community policing is a term used to describe an ideology of police departments that focuses on officers as members of the community, and not merely as agents of law enforcement. Several cities discussed the impact of mediation on the relationship between the public and the officers, often describing a restorative aspect of mediation. Los Angeles emphasized this, noting that officers came out of mediations expressing a new understanding of the community, and community members with a new understanding of why officers behave as they do.

One of the community policing benefits of mediation is the ability of officers to express why they behaved in a specific way during an interaction. Public understanding of policing is spotty, and officers may be acting in a way that is appropriate – or even required by law – but that comes off as discriminatory or concerning to the public. A perfect example of this occurred at the 2024 Grammys⁴³ where the rapper Killer Mike was arrested following an altercation with a security guard. The Los Angeles Police Department faced enough criticism to warrant a statement defending the action despite California law requiring an arrest given the circumstances. Situations like this offer opportunities for officers to express the “why” behind the incident in a less confrontational environment, which may be able to improve the public understanding of policing more broadly.

Officers also often lack awareness of the experiences and lives of the people they interact with, a reality that can also be addressed via mediation. An individual that an officer views as difficult or non-cooperative may have deeper trauma, previous dehumanizing interactions with police, or one of many life stressors that the officer is wholly unaware of during the interaction. Mediation gives the complainant time to sit down and discuss why they were uncomfortable with the interaction. Even interactions not explicitly against policy can create a great deal of discomfort among members of the public. The hope is that by discussing these interactions openly and honestly, officers can be taught how to better police the community. Officers may learn to approach suspects in a different way, de-escalate more effectively, or intercede more quickly in certain conflicts based on what they learn from sitting down and talking to individuals who feel in some way wronged by the department.

Any mediation program should be designed with the intention of serving within a larger framework for community policing. A core tenant of broader community policing programs is

⁴³ Dasrath et al., “Killer Mike Blames Confusion and ‘over-Zealous Security Guard’ for Grammys Arrest.”

improving the dialogue between officers and the community they serve with the hope that by humanizing one another, the two sides will be able to better work with one another. Cities repeatedly emphasized to OPCR how much both officers and complainants can learn about each other from the process and how emotionally healing it can be. Mediation gives both sides the rare opportunity to talk without any concern of arrest or penalties, enabling a level of honesty not available during normal enforcement work. No city was able to provide hard evidence that mediation changed officer behavior, but that remains a clear possibility.

Analyze and adjust

Mediation programs often collect a great deal of data, mostly via exit surveys, but an area of consistent weakness is in the ability to analyze that data and adjust to program needs. Several cities indicated struggles to either analyze data or adjust program parameters in response to incoming data. Mediation programs remain somewhat novel as a form of alternative complaint resolution and analysis of the data can both find weakness to correct and strengths to emphasize. An inability to quickly adjust can result in external factors quickly sinking your program. The COVID-19 pandemic was a clear test case of this; mediation programs struggled to adjust to a world where in-person mediation was discouraged and virtually none of the programs that began pre-pandemic have fully recovered.

To date, it does not appear any city has conducted an analysis to determine if complaint mediation changes officer behavior relative to the traditional investigatory process. Complainant and officer exit survey data is almost always collected but only sporadically reported. Despite a history dating back more than 30 years, these programs have little in the way of outcome data, a fact that almost certainly damages the ability to convince the public of their worth.

Mediation is not self-sustaining

A point brought up indirectly several times was the fact that mediation programs required consistent effort to keep in operation. This stands in stark contrast to the investigation process, which is fully institutionalized and would lead to severe consequences for any agency that fully decommits from it. The Office of Police Conduct Review has direct experience with this, with OPCR's own mediation program fading quickly in 2016 seemingly because of changing leadership. The same thing appears to have occurred in Portland and Seattle, causing their annual number of referrals to fall into the single digits. It is likely not a coincidence that the most successful mediation programs such as New Orleans and Denver have operated in the same manner with the same staff or contractors since their inception.

Should mediation be deemed helpful then efforts should be made to fully protect the program against changes in leadership. Until a program is viewed as an intractable part of city operations, it is susceptible to changes in priorities. This can include policy elements such as consistent and easy-to-follow criteria for mediation referral and more informal measures such as increasing awareness of the mediation program and consistent reporting so that any disruptions faced by the program can be subject to outside scrutiny.

Mediator quality over mediator quantity

One of the most vexing elements of mediation in many cities is the mediators themselves. The most common recruitment models are unpaid and trained community volunteers, paid and trained experienced mediators, and working with larger mediation nonprofit and for-profit firms. All three models struggle with a lack of cases and inconsistent mediator quality.

The lack of cases tends to be the largest struggle. Los Angeles and New Orleans indicate that mediator recruitment tends to be simple, with many community members interested in mediation for relatively modest payment per session. However, the lack of cases leads to mediators being unsettled with their small caseloads. Both recommended a relatively small number of mediators be used to ensure a consistent caseload. However, this means that the mediators will inevitably end up less diverse – with 13 wards in Minneapolis anything less than 13 mediators will result in specific wards not represented among the ranks of the mediators.

The lack of cases is an even larger issue when it comes to working with outside partners. Portland and Arizona both indicated a great deal of difficulty drawing responses to requests for proposals for mediation work given their meager caseloads. The small caseloads limit the financial benefit to a partner for working with the program and in some cases the cost of insurance alone can outstrip the cost of the contract. Some cities such as Seattle can navigate this issue by joining onto larger mediation contracts, having community-police mediation be just one type of mediation offered by the city via the outside firm, but Minneapolis does not appear to have that luxury.

Mediator quality has also been an issue. Albany's first attempt to conduct community-police mediation was short-circuited by a mediation that went poorly enough for the Albany Police Department to pull support from the program. Los Angeles similarly ran into issues with mediators, leading to officers to complain that they were not given a chance to speak and to feel as if the community mediators were purely representing the complainant in the mediation session. In response to this they adopted a dual-mediator model, where every mediation session has two mediators. One of those mediators is a member of the community without professional criminal justice experience and the other is a mediator with professional criminal justice experience, preferably a former law enforcement officer. They report that this model helped to ensure both sides feel "seen" by the mediators in the process even with both mediators expected to be non-biased.

A new Minneapolis community-police mediation program

Case selection and intake

An OPCR mediation program should look to refer cases to mediation as quickly as possible. The long-term goal should be to close 10% of cases through mediation, which given the experiences of other cities will likely require roughly 25% of cases to be referred to mediation, and to complete the full mediation process in 60 days. To reach those goals, OPCR should look to refer all complaints that could reasonably be believed to be Class A. This may prove to be too limiting

to reach those stated goals. However, the Consent Decree states that only Class A misconduct should be closed via mediation, and the City has stated that it plans on fully complying with the requirements of the Consent Decree even absent court oversight. The Consent Decree lacks clear guidance on misconduct class determination, so a policy of referring nearly all cases with a reasonable likelihood of being Class A or below does not appear to conflict with Consent Decree requirements. Case selection should be worded to be maximally inclusive, with the ultimate choice as to whether to mediate being held by the complainant. There may be room to discuss this further with City officials given the cancellation of the Consent Decree. Many complaints of discourtesy, the most commonly mediated complaint types nationwide, more appropriately fit within Class B misconduct so it may be necessary to expand the criteria to include complaints reasonably likely to be Class B. Only mediating Class A would make Minneapolis an extreme outlier, with successful mediation programs mediating cases that may rise to low-end Class C misconduct according to the Discipline Matrix.

The intake process, including intake forms, should remain largely unchanged. Interest in mediation should not be asked about on the complaint intake form. Complaints that may benefit from mediation should follow the current intake process up until the intake interview. After the interview the intake specialist should determine if they believe the complainant may benefit from mediation. If mediation may be beneficial the intake specialist should discuss mediation with the complainant, gauging interest and explaining the process. They should make a positive case for the program but should not push the complainant into accepting – the choice must ultimately be made voluntarily, and the complainant should feel comfortable turning down mediation should they not be interested. The intake specialist should work to determine who the subject officer is – or who they are should it be multiple officers – prior to moving forward with referral to mediation.

The intake team should discuss all the cases where the complainant indicated interest in mediation during their weekly intake case presentations meeting. At this meeting they should collectively determine which cases should ultimately be referred to mediation. The decision should be made at the meeting with the explicit goal of beginning the process of scheduling mediations for the cases discussed within 24 hours of the meetings end. This discussion should include not only the complaint itself but also the complainant and the subject officer. Efforts should be made to ensure that individuals who may not be willing or able to mediate in good faith are not referred to mediation. With that in mind each officer should be limited to two mediations per year and individuals – both officers and complainants – who fail to mediate in good faith should be barred from mediation for a set timeframe. Level of interest expressed by the complainant should also be considered – a complainant who brings up mediation prior to it being formally discussed by the intake specialist should have their complaint referred except in exceptional circumstances.

Mediation scheduling

Once a case is referred it should be assigned to an on-staff mediator within the Civil Rights Department. This mediator should have no prior knowledge of the case when assigned. Before being scheduled, written consent for mediation needs to be obtained from both parties. If multiple complainants or subject officers exist, then all of them need to consent to proceed to mediation. The assigned mediator should reach out to the complainant and the subject officer to discuss mediation and obtain consent from all parties. While the complainant has already indicated some interest in mediation, they still need to consent in writing and are free to refuse mediation at any point. Should any party refuse mediation or simply not submit their written consent within a set time frame then the case will be returned for full investigation.

Should all parties consent then the mediator should work to schedule a time that works for all parties. Ideally OPCR mediators will be fully flexible, being able to mediate nearly any time and nearly any place, but it is possible staffing constraints will limit overall availability. Mediators should be expected to be available to start a mediation session any time between 8:30am and 5:30pm Monday through Friday at minimum to accommodate a variety of complainant and officer work schedules. Mediation should be offered virtually and in-person. In-person mediation should take place at a variety of public or private locations with the preference of the complainant taking priority. OPCR should work with the city to curate a list of locations in each Ward that are willing to provide a private space for mediation and then provide that list to complainants so they are fully aware of where they can request mediation take place.

To maximize convenience to officers as well as complainants, mediators should strive to schedule mediations immediately before or immediately after an officer's shift. OPCR may also wish to work with the department to allow for officers to mediate during their shift. In keeping with national best practice, the subject officer should be considered on-the-clock during the mediation session. This may make it easier to schedule mediation during an officer's normal working hours.

The mediation itself

For an initial pilot program OPCR should attempt a single-mediator model. However, several jurisdictions have indicated a lack of trust in the ability of mediators to be non-biased, so should that concern arise in the initial pilot then OPCR should be prepared to switch to a two-mediator model. This would function very similarly to the single-mediator model, but in addition to an on-staff mediator from the Civil Rights Department there will be a trained volunteer recruited from the community. Prior to the mediation session all parties, including any mediators, should be given a brief summary of the complaint. This is the only time prior to the mediation itself when any party should be made aware of the contents of the complaint.

The officer should be strongly encouraged to come to the mediation in plain clothes and unarmed. Should the officer come armed then they should be expected to disarm for the mediation. This can be done in a formal way, with the mediator supplying a lock box to store the officer's belt for the duration of the mediation. Requiring an armed officer to disarm prior

to any discussion in full view of the complainant may provide the complainant with additional peace of mind that the officer is not a threat to their safety.

The mediator or mediators should then proceed under a facilitated conversation model of mediation. Under this model there does not need to be an explicit agreement between the two parties at the end of mediation. Instead, the goal is to talk out what happened and discuss in good faith. Parties should be encouraged to come to an explicit agreement, but it should not be strictly necessary. Either party should be able end mediation whenever they see fit.

After the mediation

Immediately after the mediation the mediator should determine if both parties mediated in good faith. Mediating in good faith means that they took the mediation seriously, listened to the other person, and genuinely tried to resolve the issue in a way both sides found satisfactory. Should both parties be determined to have mediated in good faith then they should be asked to sign an acknowledgement of mediation. This acknowledgement should be clear that the case is now closed via mediation and should be necessary to close the case. Should the complainant refuse to sign the acknowledgement or the officer fail to mediate in good faith then the case should be returned to investigation. Should the complainant fail to mediate in good faith then the case should be closed.

Following the signing – or refusal to sign – the acknowledgement both parties should be provided an exit folder. This folder should contain information about what happens post-mediation, resources for both the officer and the complainant, and an exit survey. The exit survey should be available both online and in paper, with the online version available via a code provided and the paper version with a prepaid envelope to make the process of sending it back easier. It would be beneficial to make the survey for the complainant and the officer identical. It seems likely that complainants would have some concern about providing information to OPCR, and by making all the surveys identical besides for an identifying number that concern can be somewhat alleviated. If a complainant appears to have some concern about providing data it may make sense for the mediator to have the officer and the complainant switch folders, which would demonstrate that nothing about the survey itself can be used to determine the complainant's identity.

Community outreach

While not strictly necessary to get complainants to accept mediation, it would benefit the program if some level of community outreach was conducted. This outreach can take many forms but should focus on making the public aware of mediation as an option and of the benefits of mediation. OPCR should, with the written approval of all parties to the mediation, look to highlight stories of mediation success to show how individuals benefit from participation. Additionally, OPCR should look to design a study of mediation outcomes to determine if mediation changes officer behavior when compared to traditional investigations.

The goal of highlighting the program should be to improve public trust in the process. Mediation cannot function without the trust of everyone involved, and by highlighting the impact and successes of mediation OPCR can make a case to the public that mediation is worth considering.

The program by component

A summary of each program component:

Intake

- Mediation first discussed with complainant at intake interview.
- Intake specialist determines during the interview if they believe complaint may benefit from mediation, providing information and gauging interest if they believe it may be beneficial.
- When a complainant indicates that mediation may be of interest the case is discussed at the intake case presentation meeting, where the intake team determines if the case should be referred to mediation.
- The intake team should look to refer most complaints that can be reasonably be interpreted as alleging misconduct of Class A and below at minimum, with some Class B and C misconduct if that section of the Consent Decree is open to adjustment.
- This meeting should also consider the complainant and the officer themselves, avoiding mediation when it is believed one or both will not mediate in good faith.
- Explicit goal of 25% of cases referred and 10% of cases closed by mediation.

Scheduling

- Mediators will be OPCR investigators
 - Should concerns of bias be expressed OPCR should be prepared to bring on and train volunteer mediators to co-mediate, but only after an initial pilot period.
- Both officer and complainant must agree in writing to participate voluntarily.
- Mediation should be scheduled at the time and place most convenient to the complainant
 - OPCR should work with the city to provide a variety of locations for mediation to occur.
 - Should staff be unable to handle the time and place requirements then scheduling may need to be limited to specific times and specific places, but this is not ideal.
- Mediators should attempt to schedule mediation right before or right after an officer's shift.
 - OPCR should look to work with the Department to get mediation scheduled during an officer's normal shift.
 - Officers should be considered on duty during mediation.

Mediation

- Mediation using a facilitated conversation model.
 - No need for an explicit agreement at the end of mediation, though agreement should be encouraged.
- Officers should be encouraged to come in plain clothes and should always be unarmed.
 - Should an officer come while armed they should be made to disarm in front of the complainant, perhaps by placing their belt in a lock box provided by the mediator.
- Mediation can be ended at any time by any party.

Post-mediation

- Mediator must determine if both parties mediated in good faith
 - If the officer did not mediate in good faith, then the case is referred for investigation.
 - If the complainant did not mediate in good faith, then the case is closed.
- If both parties mediated in good faith, they must then sign an agreement acknowledging that the case has been closed by mediation.
 - Should the complainant mediate in good faith and refuse to sign the acknowledgement then the case should be referred for investigation.
- Exit folder should be provided to both parties.
 - Exit folder should contain any information that an individual may want post-mediation along with a survey.
 - All the exit folders should be identical so that they can be switched to show that the survey cannot be used to track the complainant.

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