



# TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE

66 MAIN STREET, WEST ORANGE, N.J. 07052

## WEST ORANGE POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

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**FROM CHIEF JAMES P. ABBOTT...**

### **Internal Affairs and Disciplinary Process Annual Public Report 2022**

A law enforcement entity in a democratic society can tie its effectiveness directly to the level of trust it enjoys within the community it serves. A significant factor in gaining and maintaining that trust is ensuring that there is a strict allegiance to a highly professional and transparent Internal Affairs function. It follows that the execution of the Internal Affairs function within a professional law enforcement entity presents challenges that require constant and consistent vigilance. I believe that a fair review of the *2022 Annual Report* will support the conclusion that the West Orange Police Department maintains that level of vigilance.

This introduction will not restate all the facts, figures and analysis articulated in this report, other than to remind the reader that police officers in the West Orange Police Department answered 29,359 police/citizen calls for service during the calendar year 2022. Any single complaint reported to the Internal Affairs Unit that was generated within that vast number of contacts was, without exception, taken, classified and addressed in accordance with the departments' Written Directive System and the 2022 New Jersey Attorney General Guidelines Internal Affairs Police and Procedures.

In addition to adhering to the best practices, the Internal Affairs Unit conducts further system checks and balances through the Early Warning System and a quarterly auditing process to identify patterns, practices or trends of inappropriate behavior or conduct of our officers. If patterns, practices or trends are identified, those members are entered into the Early Warning System. The Early Warning System is an important management tool designed to detect and address improper police conduct before that conduct escalates. The Early Warning System therefore, serves to not only increase public safety and public confidence in law enforcement, but also assists at risk officers through early intervention. In 2022, there were no sworn officers entered into the Early Warning System but one civilian employee was entered into the program and successfully completed the 3 month (minimum) long program. We believe this to be a result of increased oversight by supervisors and an effective training mechanism that is used to address and monitor officer training.

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The West Orange Police Department accepts, reviews and responds to complaints received from the public, including anonymous complaints, complaints from third party witnesses and complaints from parties not directly involved in the incident. Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, fax, email or through regular mail. Complaint forms are available in both English as well as Spanish and can be picked up at the West Orange Police Department or online at [westorange.org](http://westorange.org), similarly, West Orange Police has access to translation services for over 200 foreign languages 24 hours per day. This department continues its commitment to ensuring that members of the public have ease of access to the complaint system. Further, citizens who are not satisfied with the outcome of our investigation(s) are referred to the Essex County Prosecutor's Office for a follow up review of our procedures and investigations. This follow-up review has continued to provide citizens significantly more opportunity to provide feedback, compliments or complaints about the West Orange Police Department and its personnel.

As part of our comprehensive management system, the West Orange Police Department conducts random drug testing of ten percent of all sworn officers, twice a year. The purpose of this proactive testing mechanism has two goals. Firstly, we want to deter illegal drug use by all our sworn officers. Secondly, we want to promote a culture of professionalism and accountability, while constantly maintaining the highest level of public trust with the citizens we serve. In, 2022, we randomly tested a total of 19 sworn officers on two separate dates. All drug test results were found to be negative by the New Jersey State Toxicology Lab.

During 2022, a total of (29) complaints were reported to and classified by the Internal Affairs Unit. The total number of officers/employees who were considered Targets of these (29) complaints totaled (36).

All complaints are categorized based on the alleged conduct. Each allegation, upon review by the Chief of Police, is determined to have one of the following five dispositions:

**Sustained:** A preponderance of the evidence shows an officer violated any law; regulation; directive, guideline, policy, or procedure issued by the Attorney General or County Prosecutor; agency protocol; standard operating procedure; rule; or training.

**Unfounded:** A preponderance of the evidence shows that the alleged conduct did not occur.

**Exonerated:** A preponderance of the evidence shows the alleged conduct did occur, but did not violate any law; regulation; directive, guideline, policy, or procedure issued by the Attorney General or County Prosecutor; agency protocol; standard operating procedure; rule; or training.

**Not Sustained:** The investigation failed to disclose sufficient evidence to clearly prove or disprove the allegation.

**Administratively Closed:** Examples include situations when a complainant voluntarily requests that a complaint be withdrawn or does not cooperate in the investigation and their cooperation is deemed necessary for the investigation to proceed further.

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The West Orange Police Department employs a system of progressive discipline. Discipline plays an important role in the overall performance and credibility of any police agency. Condemnations of unacceptable and inappropriate behaviors not only provide for a specific deterrence to the affected employee in the hopes of preventing future acts of misconduct but also serves as a general deterrent to the force at large. Additionally, it protects the integrity of the organization, which is an essential ingredient to earning the public's trust.

It is not uncommon for cases involving similar allegations or circumstances to result in dissimilar penalties; as an officer's past disciplinary history is taken under consideration and repetitive transgressions will typically result in augmented discipline up to and including termination. Furthermore, the most egregious violations may spawn termination notwithstanding an unremarkable disciplinary record.

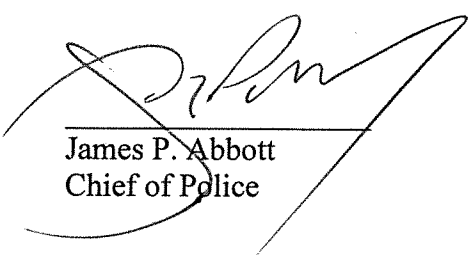
## Synopsis of Major Discipline in 2022

In accordance with Civil Service Commission regulations, discipline is categorized as either "**major**" or "**minor**", and the designation carries with it different consequences and different avenues of relief. **Major Discipline** includes removal, disciplinary demotion, or suspension / fine of more than five working days. **Minor discipline** includes Written Reprimand / Unsatisfactory Performance Notice or suspension / fine of five working days or less.

- In calendar year 2022, this agency reports no imposed **Major Discipline** of any officer/employee.

The following attachment is the 2022 Internal Affairs Summary Report.

Sincerely,



James P. Abbott  
Chief of Police