

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, December 7, 2015

Justice Department Opens Pattern or Practice Investigation into the Chicago Police Department

Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch announced today that the Justice Department has opened a civil pattern or practice investigation into Chicago Police Department (CPD), pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The department's investigation of CPD will seek to determine whether there are systemic violations of the Constitution or federal law by officers of CPD. The investigation will focus on CPD's use of force, including racial, ethnic and other disparities in use of force, and its systems of accountability.

"Building trust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve is one of my highest priorities as Attorney General," said Attorney General Lynch. "The Department of Justice intends to do everything we can to foster those bonds and create safer and fairer communities across the country. And regardless of the findings in this investigation, we will seek to work with local officials, residents, and law enforcement officers alike to ensure that the people of Chicago have the world-class police department they deserve."

During the course of the investigation, the Justice Department will consider all relevant information, particularly the CPD's policies, training and practices related to using, reporting, investigating and reviewing force. The Justice Department will also look into CPD's practices related to disciplinary and other corrective action; and its practices related to intake and handling of allegations of misconduct.

"The Justice Department's investigation – opened with currently available, preliminary information – seeks to determine whether the Chicago Police Department's use of force practices and accountability systems comply with constitutional standards necessary to effectively serve its community and productively support its police officers," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta, head of the Civil Rights Division. "In the coming months, we look forward to engaging directly with all stakeholders in Chicago – including the city's residents, law enforcement officers and public officials – as part of our fact-driven and thorough review."

"Today's launch of this investigation marks an important and positive opportunity for Chicago and its police department," said U.S. Attorney Zachary T. Fardon for the Northern District of Illinois. "The U.S. Attorney's Office is fully committed to doing everything in our power, in partnership with our colleagues in the Civil Rights Division, to ensure that this process is a success."

As part of the investigation the department will gather information directly from police officers and local officials; community members, and other criminal justice stakeholders, such as public defenders and prosecutors. The department will also observe officer activities through ride-alongs and other means; as well as review documents and specific incidents that are relevant to the investigation. Pattern or practice investigations of police departments do not assess individual cases for potential criminal violations; instead they look at incidents for patterns created by systems and practices.

The Justice Department has taken similar steps involving a variety of state and local law enforcement agencies, both large and small, in jurisdictions throughout the United States. When investigations result in findings of systemic violations of federal law and the Constitution they have in many instances resulted in comprehensive, court-overseen agreements to fundamentally change the law enforcement agency's police practices. When the department's investigations do not result in findings of violations of federal law and the Constitution the department will close the investigation without an agreement.

This matter is being investigated by attorneys and staff from the Civil Rights Division with assistance from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois. They will be assisted by experienced law enforcement experts. The department welcomes the views of anyone wishing to provide relevant information.

[Police Reform and Accountability Fact Sheet](#)

[How P&P Investigations Work](#)

15-1494

Civil Rights (including EEOC)

[Civil Rights Division](#)

[Civil Rights - Special Litigation](#)

[Office of the Attorney General](#)

Updated December 7, 2015