

Minneapolis Police Department Human Rights Investigation: What to Say and How it Works

Follow [this link](#) to report an incident of discrimination by Minneapolis Police.

THE INVESTIGATION

This May, Minnesotans watched in horror as an officer of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) killed George Floyd. Across Minneapolis and St. Paul, cries for justice rang out. In response, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (DHR), which fights discrimination in Minnesota, launched civil rights [investigation](#) into MPD policies, procedures, and practices over the past 10 years. The investigation carries two central goals: (1) Determining whether the MPD engaged in systemic discriminatory practices towards people of color; and (2) Ensuring any such discriminatory practices are stopped.

REPORTING DISCRIMINATION

If you have witnessed racist or discriminatory conduct by MPD officers, you may report that experience to DHR so your story can be part of the investigation. You can submit a complaint using [the online form](#) or by calling 651-539-1100 or 1-800-657-3704.

To submit a complaint, you must provide your name, phone number, and a description of the event. You may also provide an email address, city, and zip code. This contact information helps DHR stay in touch with you and reveals patterns of discrimination in certain areas. You can also report your gender, racial, ethnic, or Indigenous identity using check boxes, though you don't have to. If you have a video or picture of the incident, you can submit that too.

WHAT TO SAY

Provide as much detail as you can, including dates, times, officer names, location, and the reason for the interaction. But, *even if you do not have all the specifics, your complaint is still important.* Although it may not tell a complete story on its own, when combined with other complaints, DHR can identify patterns in MPD's behavior.

If you experienced racism yourself, it is helpful to the investigation to explain the connection between your race and your treatment by MPD officers in your complaint. Racism is systemic. You don't need to provide specific evidence that the officer or officers that you interacted with were explicitly targeting you are a member of a protected group. Rather, explain how policing has affected you and/or your community differently because of your race by using illustrative examples.

EXAMPLES

Personal Experience: "I am a light-skinned Black woman. I was pulled over on May 11 for going 2 miles over the speed limit, then again on August 1 for failing to stop completely for a stop sign, and again on September 2 for expired tabs. All these incidents occurred in 2019, all in Minneapolis, all with Minneapolis Police Officers. During each of these incidents, the officer asked me if I was drunk, if he smelled marijuana, and what was in the trunk. I asked if I was under suspicion for a crime and the officer told me I do not have a right to ask that question. One time, the officer was keeping me pulled over for a while. I asked if I was under arrest and the officer told me he did not need to answer that question."

Witness: "While the Summer X Games were in Minneapolis, I witnessed a police officer, who I believe was Minneapolis Police, berate a dark-skinned Black man. The officer alleged that the man had stolen his ticket – a tag he was wearing around his neck and was trying to pull the ticket from the man's neck. In the process, he was putting most of his body weight on the man's neck. I tried to step in, but the officer demanded I leave stating that I was violating the victim's right to privacy."

General Disclaimer: This information is not meant as legal advice. You should consult with legal counsel about your particular situation.

ABOUT DHR

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights is a state agency that enforces Minnesota's civil rights law, the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Under this law, police may not discriminate against people based on their race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or the fact that they receive public assistance like SNAP, General Assistance, or unemployment.

HOW DHR NORMALLY WORKS

People who have experienced unlawful police discrimination can sue the police in court and/or file a complaint with DHR. The DHR process [looks like this](#) and [individual complaints can be filed here](#). DHR may attempt to reach settlement, bring the police department to court, or drop the complaint. Regardless, a complainant can always file their own lawsuit.

Once the complainant or DHR has filed a suit, they must prove to the judge or a jury that the police agency violated the complainant's rights. If they do so, the court may award money to the complainant to compensate them for what they went through and to punish the police agency.

WHY THE MPD INVESTIGATION IS DIFFERENT

DHR has already filed a charge of discrimination against MPD, which indicates that DHR has reason to believe MPD is engaging in unfair and discriminatory practices. As part of the investigation into these practices, DHR is asking for incident reports so it can get as much information as possible about MPD's conduct. *If you provide information to the Department of Human Rights, it is NOT equivalent to filing an individual complaint.* Unless you also [file an individual complaint](#) (which you need to do within a year of your incident with the police), it will not be possible to receive any money to compensate you or punish the police. If you submit an incident report to the ongoing DHR investigation, it should be because you would like to help uncover the full picture of MPD's conduct and have your voice heard.

The investigation has already produced significant results. On June 8, 2020, the Hennepin County Court issued an order at the request of DHR requiring MPD to make following changes:

- Ban the use of all neck restraints and choke holds.
- Any police officer, regardless of tenure or rank, must report while still on scene if they observe another police officer use any unauthorized use of force, including any choke hold or neck restraint.
- Any police officer, regardless of tenure or rank, must intervene by verbal and physical means if they observe another police officer use any unauthorized use of force, including any choke hold or neck restraint.
- Only the Police Chief or the chief's designee at the rank of deputy chief may approve the use of crowd control weapons, including chemical agents, rubber bullets, flash-bangs, batons, and marking rounds, during protests and demonstrations.
- The Police Chief must make timely and transparent discipline decisions for police officers as outlined in the order.
- Civilian body worn camera footage analysts and investigators in the City's Office of Police Conduct Review have the authority to proactively audit body worn camera footage and file or amend complaints on behalf of the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department.

More change may be possible. [File an incident report to have your voice heard.](#)

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