



Home » Office of Public Affairs

## JUSTICE NEWS



### Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 4, 2014

### Attorney General Holder Announces Next Steps to Address Concerns Regarding the City of Ferguson and St. Louis County Police Departments



Attorney General Eric Holder announced today that the Justice Department has launched two initiatives to address concerns about police services in the city of Ferguson and in St. Louis County, Missouri. First, in addition to the ongoing criminal civil rights investigation, the Civil Rights Division has opened a civil pattern or practice investigation into allegations of unlawful policing by the City of Ferguson Police Department (FPD). Second, the Attorney General announced that the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office has launched a Collaborative Reform Initiative with the St. Louis County Police Department (SLCPD).

“The Department of Justice is working across the nation to ensure that the criminal justice system is fair, constitutional and free of bias,” said Attorney General Holder. “The interventions in Missouri are an important part of that commitment. While there is much work left to do, we feel confident that there are solutions to any issues we find and that community trust in law enforcement can be restored and maintained. Ferguson and St. Louis County are not the first places that we have become engaged to ensure fair and equitable policing and they will not be the last. The Department of Justice will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the Constitution has meaning for all communities.”

The pattern or practice investigation will look at whether officers of the Ferguson Police Department have engaged in systemic violations of the Constitution or federal law. The investigation will focus on the Ferguson Police Department’s use of force, including deadly force; stops, searches and arrests; discriminatory policing; and treatment of detainees inside Ferguson’s city jail by Ferguson police officers. The department will consider all relevant information, particularly the efforts that FPD has undertaken to ensure compliance with federal law, and the experiences and views of the community.

Over the past five fiscal years, the Civil Rights Division has opened over 20 pattern or practice investigations into police departments across the country, which is more than twice as many as were opened in the previous five fiscal years. The division is enforcing 14 agreements to reform

- [Report a Crime](#)
- [Get a Job](#)
- [Locate a Prison, Inmate, or Sex Offender](#)
- [Report and Identify Missing Persons](#)
- [Find Help and Information for Crime Victims](#)
- [Apply for a Grant](#)
- [Find Sales of Seized Property](#)
- [Submit a Complaint](#)
- [Report Waste, Fraud, Abuse or Misconduct](#)
- [Find a Form](#)
- [Register, Apply for Permits, or Request](#)

law enforcement practices at agencies both large and small. These agreements have already resulted in tangible changes in these communities by ensuring constitutional policing, enhancing public safety and making the job of delivering police services safer and more effective.

The investigation is being conducted by attorneys and staff from Civil Rights Division. They will be assisted by experienced law enforcement experts. The department encourages anyone wishing to provide relevant information to contact the department at 1-855-856-2132, or via email at [community.ferguson@usdoj.gov](mailto:community.ferguson@usdoj.gov).

The COPS Collaborative Reform Technical Assistance process with the SLCPD is a voluntary process that will include an open, independent and objective assessment of key operational areas of the police department, such as training, use of force, handling mass demonstrations, stops, searches, arrests, and fair and impartial policing. The assessment will include the SLCPD police academy which trains officers for many police departments in the region, including the FPD. The findings of this assessment, and recommendations to address any deficiencies that it uncovers, will be provided in a public report and shared with the community. Additionally, SLCPD Chief Jon Belmar has requested that COPS conduct an after action report on the SLCPD's response to the protests following the shooting of Michael Brown.

The Collaborative Reform process is an initiative in which the COPS Office, in partnership with a designated technical assistance provider and subject matter experts, works with a law enforcement agency to assess an issue that affects police and community relationships. Grounded in the principles of constitutional policing and procedural justice, it is a means to organizational transformation through an analysis of policies, practices, training, and tactics around a specific issue that can jeopardize an agency's legitimacy within its community. It is not a short term solution for a serious deficiency, but a long term strategy that identifies the issues within an agency that affect public trust and offers recommendations on how to improve the issue and enhance the relationship between the police and the community.

The Collaborative Reform process was initially launched in 2011. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department was the first agency to participate and complete the process, which resulted in the adoption of over 75 recommendations regarding the use of force. The COPS Office is currently working with the Philadelphia and Spokane police departments with this process.

"Today we are launching a comprehensive review of the Ferguson Police Department to assess whether police practices are constitutional and fair in Ferguson," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Molly Moran for the Civil Rights Division. "We are encouraged by the pledge of cooperation from Mayor Knowles and Chief Jackson, and we look forward to working with them as our process moves forward."

"The recent disturbances in Ferguson have revealed significant mistrust between the community and police agencies throughout the county, including the St. Louis County Police Department," said COPS Director Davis. "The county has expressed a strong desire to take steps to create a relationship of trust and to ensure fairness and equity in its policing practices, and I applaud St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar for seeking technical assistance and agreeing to the Collaborative Reform process. The advancements that will be made through this effort will not only benefit the St. Louis county police department; they will serve as a model for all police

Records

Identify Our Most Wanted  
Fugitives

OFFICES of THE  
UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

agencies in the region and throughout the nation.”

The department is also conducting in a thorough, fair and independent criminal investigation into the circumstances of the fatal shooting of Michael Brown on in Ferguson on Aug. 9, 2014.

Although the department is working cooperatively with the local investigators, the federal investigation supplements, but does not supplant, the St. Louis County Police Department’s investigation into the shooting incident. The initiatives announced today are also separate from the ongoing current criminal investigations related to the death of Michael Brown.

The Civil Rights Division has an ongoing, separate investigation of the St. Louis County Juvenile Court to determine whether it engages in patterns or practices of violations of young people’s rights. The section is assessing whether there are violations of due process, equal protection or access to counsel. Anyone wishing to provide information related to that investigation can email the department at [Community.StLouis@usdoj.gov](mailto:Community.StLouis@usdoj.gov) or call toll free 855-228-2151.

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 using its authority under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Under Attorney General Holder’s leadership, more investigations have resulted in comprehensive, court-overseen agreements to fundamentally change the law enforcement agency’s police practices than in any other five-year period in the department’s history.

14-937

Civil Rights Division

U.S DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE | 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20530-0001

JUSTICE.GOV

**ABOUT**

The Attorney General  
Budget & Performance  
Strategic Plans

**AGENCIES**

**BUSINESS**

Business Opportunities  
Small & Disadvantaged  
Business  
Grants

**RESOURCES**

Forms  
Publications  
Case Highlights  
Legislative Histories  
Information for Victims in  
Large Cases

**NEWS**

Justice News  
The Justice Blog  
Public Schedule  
Videos  
Photo Gallery

**CAREERS**

Legal Careers  
Interns, Recent Graduates,  
and Fellows  
Diversity Policy  
Veteran Recruitment

**CONTACT**

Site Map	For Employees
Archive	Office of the Inspector General
Accessibility	Government
FOIA	Resources
No FEAR Act	Information Quality Plain Writing
Privacy Policy	USA.gov
Legal Policies & Disclaimers	BusinessUSA