

“The Police Officer today in every community is a symbol not only of the law, but of the entire ‘establishment’. Because of this, they are the obvious target for grievances against any shortcomings of our governmental system. The police officer can solve the complex problems of a community only when working in concert with the entire community. The police can, and must, however recognize their responsibility to serve all the public to the best of their ability. Fair and impartial law enforcement which respects the individuals is essential and must be accomplished with tact and diplomacy whenever possible. Force is used only when necessary and then that amount of force that is legally appropriate.”

As Police Officers we must professionally and objectively investigate all citizens complaints as expeditiously as possible in order to arrive at all the facts which will quickly clear the officer’s name or substantiate the citizen’s complaint, based upon the facts of the case.

Does that mean the sheriff’s Office wants complaints?

Of course not. But we do want to know when our service needs to be improved or corrected.

But will you listen to my complaint?

Certainly. We want to find out what went wrong so that it doesn’t happen again.

Who would investigate my complaint?

A supervisor assigned by the Sheriff, or Assistant Sheriff would investigate a complaint against an officer.

Well then, who should I go to first?

You should take a complaint about an officer to his supervisor. If he isn’t there, ask for the on duty supervisor.

But I want to take this all the way to the top. I want the Sheriff to know.

And he will. The Sheriff gets copies of all complaints against officers. Each of the officer's superiors is notified as well.

Do I have to complain in person?

We do prefer to talk to you in person as the matter may be a minor misunderstanding, but we will accept a complaint by telephone or letter if necessary. It won't make any difference in the attention we give it. The investigator may contact you in person.

I'm under 18; do I have the right to complain?

Yes, just bring one of your parents, guardians, or responsible adults in with you.

Will I have to write my complaint out?

We have found it's much easier to investigate a written complaint so we prefer them that way. If there are valid reasons this can't be done, we'll make other arrangements.

How close will you really investigate?

Very closely! We want to find out where we went wrong. By the same token if a person makes a false complaint, we want to find that out and take appropriate legal action.

Does that mean I could get in trouble for complaining?

Not if what you are telling us is the truth. We're only interested in prosecuting those who make malicious, false allegations about people. We wouldn't (and couldn't) bring charges against a person who has acted in good faith.

What will happen to the Officer?

That will depend on what he/she did. If their actions were criminal, they would be dealt with like any other citizen. If they were improper, but not criminal, the final disposition of the complaint will be made by the Sheriff.

Will I be told how the complaint came out?

Yes! You will be notified by the Sheriff.

What about a lie detector?

In certain cases, where we can't find the truth any other way, you may be asked to take a polygraph examination. The same is true of the officer.

What if I'm not satisfied with the results of the investigation?

We sincerely hope that would never happen. If it did, you could contact the Board of Supervisors of Plumas County, or the Plumas County District Attorney, or the Grand Jury for further assistance.