



BILL DE BLASIO
MAYOR

CIVILIAN COMPLAINT REVIEW BOARD
100 CHURCH STREET 10th FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007 ♦ TELEPHONE (212) 912-7235
www.nyc.gov/ccrb



FREDERICK DAVIE
CHAIR

To: Members of the Board
From: Olan Carayannis, Director of Quality Assurance and Improvement
Date: October 10, 2018
Re: Investigations Division Benchmarks

In 2014, the Civilian Complaint Review Board (“CCRB” or “Agency”) instituted a series of “benchmarks” within which the Investigations Division was to complete various stages of investigations. Specifically, the Agency instituted a 90-day benchmark for full investigations to be sent to the Board for review. The purpose of these benchmarks was to ensure that the investigator had sufficient time to obtain relevant evidence while also preventing unnecessary and protracted delays. These are values that the Agency still upholds. Today, however, the average time for full investigations to be sent to the Board is 130 days, and the average time for all cases (full investigations plus truncated cases) is 71 days.

The landscape of civilian oversight has changed drastically in the intervening years. Various factors have affected the CCRB’s processes, including the decision by the Board to investigate sexual misconduct allegations, and, most importantly, the central place that video evidence has taken in CCRB investigations. The implementation of the Body-Worn Camera (“BWC”) program, an ever-increasing amount of surveillance devices (both private and city-owned), and the near omnipresence of personal recording devices have led to a significant rise in the amount of video evidence that the CCRB receives during its investigations. In second half of 2014, the CCRB received 393 video files of roughly 137 GB. In the first half of 2018, the CCRB received 2,198 video files of roughly 908 GB. That is a 563% increase in video evidence. We expect that this number will continue to rise as new commands are enrolled in the BWC program. When the BWC program is fully implemented, approximately 20,000 police officers will be equipped with a body camera, which means that virtually every CCRB complaint will have some form of video evidence. This upsurge in the amount of video evidence exponentially increases the cumulative time that it takes to obtain, process, view, and analyze footage as well as the time that it takes to follow-up on investigative leads discovered in the video evidence.

From July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, the CCRB received roughly 680 hours of video evidence. The CCRB obtains video evidence from a myriad of sources, including, but not limited to, the New York City Police Department’s (NYPD) BWC program, city-owned cameras, social media platforms, private surveillance systems, and personal recording devices. Each of these sources requires a different retrieval method, and all take time to obtain. In response to this difficulty, the CCRB developed a Field Team, which rapidly responds to locations all over the city to attempt to preserve and extract video evidence. The CCRB has also hired additional employees in the NYPD Liaison unit to assist in the timely acquisition of BWC footage and other NYPD-owned video sources. Even with these resources, tracking and extracting video evidence increases investigative times.

Once video evidence is obtained, CCRB investigators must process and analyze the evidence. While video evidence from cellphones and BWC are often packaged in the standard MP4 format, most surveillance cameras are packaged in a proprietary player, which requires assistance from the CCRB Information Technologies Unit to identify and locate an appropriate player to view the video.

Analyzing video evidence is more than merely watching. Investigators must identify each of the individuals pictured and take detailed notes as to the statements made and the images portrayed. This requires multiple viewings and, oftentimes, a frame-by-frame review. One of the great benefits of such careful analysis of the video evidence is that it often provides the investigator with leads on additional witnesses whom the civilians and officers may not have recalled as being present — or would not have recalled the identity of the person — without examining the video. Better investigative leads mean more individuals to interview. Although that produces better evidence, it slows investigation time. Video evidence is often shown to civilians and officers during interviews, which also increases the length of the interview and the subsequent transcription.

The CCRB recently obtained licenses and additional training for powerful video processing and analysis software. This software will enable investigators to view substantially more proprietary footage, in its correct aspect ratio, thus eliminating the need for searching for the proper player. It will also enable the investigator to more efficiently switch between frames and sections, ensuring the veracity of the image and sounds and enhancing the investigator's ability to discern certain features (like vehicle and shield numbers). While this technology will provide the CCRB with a better understanding and grasp of the evidence it collects, it will correspondingly increase the amount of time to investigate the case because proper analysis requires time and careful processing.

The Investigations Division is aware of the challenges that the increase in video evidence presents for the Agency, especially in terms of expeditious investigations. The increase in video evidence is a boon to investigations, and we embrace it. However, Agency benchmarks should reflect this new reality. Furthermore, the expected increase in complaints due to the commencement of the Right to Know Act and the implementation of Phase Two of the Agency's plan to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct will likely cause a further increase in investigative times. In the coming months, the CCRB will continue to study this issue and will revise the investigative benchmarks accordingly.