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CCRB Blake Fellow Report Outlines Path to Reducing Truncations

Field-work, individualized approach to engaging with complainants are key to ensuring complaints are fully-investigated

New York, NY – The New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) released its first Blake Fellow report today, outlining how the agency can better serve complainants who are at risk of being unable to complete the CCRB’s investigatory process. When a complainant, victim, or witness in a complaint cannot participate in a CCRB investigation, oftentimes the complaint will be closed and recorded as a “truncation.” These cases make up a significant number of CCRB case closures every year—in 2019, 58% of cases closed were truncated.

Through her work with complainant/victims (C/Vs), the CCRB’s inaugural (and current) Blake Fellow, Chelsea-Leigh Flucus, was able to recover more than 20% of the truncations on her docket to full-investigations. In their analysis, the Blake Fellow found that when C/Vs were offered field interviews and were engaged with empathy-focused, individualized communication strategies, they were more likely to continue participating in a CCRB investigation.

“Easing the barrier to entry into the CCRB’s complaint process by meeting with complainants in-person, across the city, was a privilege I deeply valued prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and one that I look forward to having again soon,” **said CCRB Blake Fellow Chelsea-Leigh Flucus.** “I believe the strategies I used empowered victims of police misconduct, gave them a chance to share what happened to them that they may not have otherwise had, and created space for increased accountability within the NYPD. It’s essential the CCRB be given the resources to employ these strategies at scale, and I’m appreciative of the agency’s continued support for my work.”

The report recommends that the CCRB:

- adopt a more individualized and field-oriented approach to C/V engagement and be given the resources to allow investigative staff to do more fieldwork.
- consider the creation of specialized units to take over tasks that would allow investigators to spend more time in the field; consider the creation of a Truncation Recovery Unit.

- be given a dedicated public education budget for its Outreach Unit, in addition to an annual budget specifically for reserving public board meeting space and hiring additional Outreach personnel.

“The work Chelsea-Leigh has done in her position as the CCRB’s first Blake Fellow provides an important window into how the City can better address allegations of police misconduct, particularly in underserved communities. The CCRB process should be accessible to those who may be struggling to hold down two jobs, who may be housing unstable, or who are in circumstances that makes travel to our office during business hours, difficult,” **said CCRB Chair Fred Davie.** “I will continue to advocate for the resources necessary to make our investigative process more accessible to all New Yorkers. I am appreciative of the work Chelsea-Leigh has done to outline the path forward to ensuring greater civilian participation in our investigations.”

Background on the James Blake Fellowship:

James Blake, an internationally known tennis player, became interested in policing issues following an incident in which he was the victim of excessive force used by a New York City police officer. The CCRB investigation into this incident resulted in a trial handled by its Administrative Prosecution Unit. The purpose of the James Blake Fellowship, which is funded through a settlement agreement reached with the City of New York, is to analyze the reasons for CCRB case truncations, and make recommendations aimed at increasing the number of complaints that are resolved by a full investigation.

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The New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) is the largest police oversight entity in the nation and is empowered to investigate, mediate, prosecute, and recommend disciplinary action for complaints alleging misconduct by NYPD officers. See NYC Charter § 440(c)(1). The agency's jurisdiction includes excessive and unnecessary force, abuse of authority, discourtesy, and use of offensive language. To further this mission, CCRB issues monthly, biannual, and special statistical and qualitative reports analyzing trends and recurring issues arising from the many thousands of civilian complaints it receives each year.