

Question list for reporters to ask law enforcement when covering misconductCourtesy of **Ivy Scott**Last updated on **Feb. 18, 2026**

The Ethical Society of Police ([ESOP](#)), a St. Louis-area association of Black and brown police officers focused on police reform and accountability, connected The Marshall Project - St. Louis to current and former law enforcement officials. We asked those officers what questions they wished journalists would ask more often when covering police misconduct. Below is their advice, along with suggestions from veteran attorneys and other journalists.

If an officer is suddenly no longer working at a department:

- Was the officer fired, or allowed to resign or retire? Will they still get their benefits/pension? Can they be employed at another department?
- When was their last day with the department? How long were they on paid/unpaid leave before this date?
- Was this person employed at any other law enforcement agencies in Missouri prior to being hired by your department? Are you aware of any discipline they received at their former department? (If so, were you aware of it at the time you hired them?)

If you're thinking of requesting data related to police misconduct from a department:

- Can you share the total number of complaints you've received about officers in your department? Can you share how many of those complaints were made by other officers and how many were from civilians?
- How many of those complaints did you pass on to [POST](#)? How many did you dismiss?
- How many complaints were dismissed by your internal affairs division versus by a commanding officer at a local precinct? Does every complaint against an officer make it to your internal affairs division?
- Can you share the intake data and disposition breakdowns for all complaints against officers last year (when the incident occurred, whether they were disciplined, etc.)? What about the outcomes of any arbitration?

If you want a general understanding of how a department responds to allegations of misconduct:

- Does your department have a duty-to-intervene policy? Can you share a copy of that policy, if it exists?
- Can you share the department's policy or standard operating procedure for its internal affairs department, if it's not already publicly available online?

If you're curious about department culture as it relates to police misconduct:

- How many academy and in-service training hours are devoted to de-escalation, duty to intervene, and stop/search law?
- Can officers report police misconduct anonymously? What about civilians? What whistleblower protections do you offer to people who must live or work in close proximity with an officer they are accusing of misconduct?
- What are your minimum standards for hiring new officers? Can an officer work at your department if they have been charged or convicted of a crime, and if so, what offenses? Is there a statute of limitations on any of these offenses (no DUIs in the last five years, no misdemeanors in the last decade, etc.)?

You can also contact ESOP directly at info@esopstl.org, or through its media contact Rachel Brown at rachel@leveraged-brands.com.