

Performance Audit of SDPD's Data Analysis

SDPD Can Improve Operational Data Analysis and Procedures for Accepting Citizen Complaints

Why OCA Did This Study

The San Diego Police Department's (SDPD) mission is to maintain public safety by providing the highest quality police services to all of the City's communities. SDPD is the largest General Fund department, accounting for a third of both funds and employees. However, SDPD also has a low officer-to-resident ratio compared to other major city police departments. Therefore, complete and accurate data collection, analysis, and reporting are essential to monitoring SDPD's activities and ensuring SDPD delivers the most efficient, effective, and equitable services possible to promote the well-being of the community.

What OCA Found

Finding 1: We found that SDPD has policies and procedures, system controls, supervisory review, and outside agency review to help ensure reported crime and Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) data is complete, reliable, and secure. However, we found there may be some minor variations in the completeness of the data reported by officers.

Finding 2: We found that SDPD can better use its existing data to internally evaluate and improve its operations and enable evidence-based decision making. Surveyed commanders in SDPD's Patrol and Neighborhood Policing Divisions reported that they regularly use data analysis tools for tactical purposes, but they do not generally receive or use data analysis to evaluate operations. For example, SDPD could gain valuable information for improving police services by evaluating the effects of community-based policing efforts on crime levels and the impact of response times on the likelihood of a crime report or arrest.

Finding 3: We found that SDPD's complaint process requires accepting, investigating, and reporting complaints, including anonymous and third-party complaints. However, we found that SDPD's complaint forms are not as readily accessible as Best Practices require, and the Community Review Board on Police Practices' (CRB) online complaint form embedded on SDPD's website includes statements and requirements that may inadvertently discourage the submission of anonymous or third-party complaints. Having readily available complaint forms and informing potential complainants of other ways to file complaints—including anonymously and on another's behalf—would help ensure all potential complaints are accepted. Additionally, there is an inherent risk that sergeants may not always follow procedure, and we found this risk is increased for the complaint process due to several recent changes to the complaints procedure and practices. This could result in some complaints being incorrectly classified and documented, preventing SDPD and the public from identifying and addressing potential misconduct.



What OCA Recommends

SDPD largely follows best practices regarding crime reporting, crime data analysis, and procedures for filing complaints against officers. We identified a few ways that SDPD could further improve its policies and procedures to ensure that it is maximizing the quality of its data, use of that data for evidence-based decision making, and ensuring all potential complaints against officers are accepted.

We make 9 recommendations to improve crime reporting, RIPA reporting, data analysis, and the complaint process. SDPD agreed to implement all of them.

Key recommendations include:

- Have an independent third party validate the data reliability of SDPD's crime report systems.
- Update crime report procedures and training materials.
- Ensure RIPA data collection guidance and training align with all requirements.
- Require regular data analysis of Department operations, such as community-based policing efforts or the effects of response times on call outcomes.
- Conduct outreach and surveys of officers, sergeants, and commanders to improve data analysis reports and tools.
- Establish review access to allow the CRB to review all formal and informal investigations, including calls resolved without filing a formal complaint.
- Keep complaint forms in all vehicles and ensure forms do not inadvertently discourage anonymous or third-party complaints.

For more information, contact Kyle Elser, Interim City Auditor at (619) 533-3165 or cityauditor@sandiego.gov