How To File a Complaint

Against Public Safety

EOAA
Employees, students, and third parties may contact EOAA to inquire about their rights under University policies, request assistance, seek information about filing a complaint, or report conduct or behavior that may violate these policies.

103 Low Library, MC 4333  Medical Center hours
212-854-5511 by appointment only - 212-854-5511
eoaa@columbia.edu
http://eoaa.columbia.edu

OMBUDS OFFICE
The Ombuds Office offers a confidential place to discuss workplace issues, academic concerns, issues relating to administrative paperwork and process, explanation and interpretation of policies and procedures, and many other issues or concerns.

Medical Center
154 Haven Avenue
Room 412
Tel: 212-304-7026

Morningside Heights
660 Schermerhorn Extension
1200 Amsterdam Avenue
Tel: 212-854-1234

PUBLIC SAFETY
The Department of Public Safety welcomes your comments concerning our service to the Columbia community.

You may contact us at any hour by calling:
Morningside 212-854-2797 / Medical Center 212-305-8100 / Manhattanville 212-853-1301

You may send any correspondence to:
Columbia University Department of Public Safety
535 W 116 Street, Room 101 Low Library
New York, NY 10027
Mail Code 4301 or e-mail: publicsafety@columbia.edu.

You can visit our offices at the following locations:

- Morningside Office
  - Low Library, Room 101
  - 535 W 116th Street, New York, NY 10027
- Medical Center Office
  - Black Building, Rm. 109
  - 650 W 16th Street, New York, NY 10032
- Manhattanville Office
  - Public Safety Operations Center
  - 3270 Broadway, New York, NY 10027

Against N.Y.P.D.

If you want to file a complaint against the police for misconduct or corruption, you should notify the N.Y.P.D.’s Internal Affairs Bureau (I.A.B.) by phone, letter or in person at:

315 Hudson Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10038
212-741-8401

For complaints of unnecessary use of force, abuse of authority, discourtesy or offensive language, you should notify the Civilian Complaint Review Board (C.C.R.B.) by phone, letter or in person at:

100 Church Street, 10th floor
New York, NY 10007
212-NWYORK or 311 1-800-341-2272

Other Useful University Numbers

Alicia C.U.’s Health Education Program: 212-854-5453
Affirmative Action/EOAA: 212-854-5511
CUEMS (Emergency Medical Services): 212-854-5555
Ombuds Office: Morningside 212-854-1234
Medical Center: 212-304-7024
Gay Health Advocacy Project: 212-854-7970
Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-621-HOPE
Mt. Sinai/St. Luke’s Hospital Crime Victim Treatment Center: 212-523-4728
NYS Office of Victim Services: 800-247-8035

Statement on Racial Profiling

The Department of Public Safety is committed to the impartial enforcement of laws, University policies and Constitutional rights. Therefore, to emphasize these commitments and to ensure that all members of the Department engage only in constitutionally sound public safety practices, the Department prohibits the use of racial profiling in all of its interactions with the Columbia Community. Racial profiling is defined as the use of race, color, ethnicity or national origin as the determinative factor for initiating action.

All interactions involving Public Safety personnel and those whom we serve will be conducted in accordance with the safeguards provided by the U.S. Constitution and University policies. Officers must be able to articulate the factors which led them to take action, in particular those factors leading to reasonable suspicion for stopping and questioning persons and for requesting identification from them. Officers are also reminded that the use of characteristics such as religion, age, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation as the determinative factor for taking action is prohibited.

While performing their duties, officers are reminded that this policy in no way precludes them from taking into account the reported race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation of a specific suspect in the same way the member would use pedigree information, e.g., height, weight, age, etc., about specific suspects.

If You Feel That The Officer Treated You Unfairly Or Inappropriately

Innocent individuals are often offered and/or agreed as a result of being intimidated by an officer for questioning. Although the delay might be inconvenient, the officer is justified in his actions if he or she believes that there is a reason (reasonable suspicion) to stop you and ask questions.

Examples of reasonable suspicion might include questioning about a specific suspect.

If A Police Officer Comes To Your Door

• First make sure that the individual is really a law enforcement official, by requesting to see a badge and/or identification card.
• Make sure the officer(s) are at the correct residence. They should have a warrant, be actively investigating a crime, or be in “hot pursuit” of an individual suspected of committing a crime and running into your residence. If the officers do not have a warrant or are not in hot pursuit, you can deny them entry.

If You Are Arrested

• You are entitled to know why you are being arrested.
• You have a right not to make incriminating statements which might be used against you at a later time.
• You have the right to an attorney; Therefore, you should always have an attorney on call or on site.
• You can deny them entry.

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First Impressions

Remember, the first words of any encounter, whether spoken by the officer(s) or the student/citizen(s) involved, may well determine the tone of an encounter and even the eventual success of the outcome. Law enforcement, by its very nature, is both a difficult and dangerous profession. Many police officers are killed each year and even more are injured. Public Safety Officers routinely find themselves in situations with very little useful information and very little time to react to potentially life threatening situations. Consequently, officers are routinely trained to place a great deal of emphasis on their safety and survival. This heightened sense of caution can sometimes create communication problems between officers and the public they serve. This communication gap can be even greater in a university environment.

At Columbia University, our Public Safety Officers have been trained and encouraged to interact with you in a professional manner and to treat you with respect. If you are stopped, questioned, or detained by a Public Safety Officer or other law enforcement official, it will help facilitate the encounter if you interact with him or her in a respectful and professional manner, as well.

We realize it is difficult to be calm when you feel you have been unjustly stopped or questioned. However, the following suggestions have proven very helpful in ensuring that a police encounter does not escalate into a more serious incident. Remember always to:

• Stay calm: control your words, body language and emotions
• Don’t argue, complain or “bad mouth” the officer
• Keep your hands visible and refrain from using hand gestures
• Don’t try to exit your vehicle

If these suggestions are followed, there is a much greater likelihood that the encounter will conclude expeditiously and successfully with a minimum of stress to all of the participants. It is our hope that every member of the Columbia Community.

Your Basic Rights

If You Are Stopped By A Police Officer

Law enforcement officers are trained to explain to you why you are being stopped. In most instances, the explanation may not be offered until after they have received pertinent information from you. If you are stopped or detained by an officer and you have a question, you should politely ask the officer why you are being stopped.

Don’t always assume that if you are stopped by an officer you are a suspect. The officer may simply be approaching you to have a conversation about an ongoing investigation. If the officer has a "reasonable suspicion" that you may be carrying a weapon, you may be subjected to a "pat-down" search. Officers are permitted by law to conduct a "pat-down" search for officer safety. In all cases, remember these key points:

• Be polite
• Stay calm: control your words, body language and emotions
• Answer all questions. Your answers should be factual and to the best of your knowledge
• Speak clearly
• Remember, you are not required to give testimony against yourself. You have Fifth Amendment rights, which protect you from incriminating yourself
• Don’t argue, complain or "bad mouth" the officer
• Keep your hands visible and refrain from using hand gestures
• Don’t touch the officer
• Don’t attempt to run or resist

We realize this is difficult, but it is necessary to ensure everyone’s safety during this stop. Please do not resist the search. Obey all requests made of you unless the request poses a risk to your personal safety or well-being. In that case, calmly ask the officer to request that his/her supervisor come to your location.

If You Are Stopped On Campus By Officers

While Driving Your Car

Slow down and pull over safely when you can. If the police vehicle is unmarked and you cannot identify the driver as a uniformed police officer, drive below the speed limit to a well-lit, populated spot and then pull over.

Stay in the driver’s seat with your hands on the steering wheel in sight of the officer. Do not try to exit your vehicle unless asked to do so by the officer. Getting out of your car can be perceived as aggressive behavior and a threat to the officer’s safety. Turn on your interior light if you are stopped at night.

Comply with the officer’s request to see your driver’s license and/or registration. If they are in the glove box or under the seat, tell the officer. Getting out of your car can be perceived as aggressive behavior and a threat to the officer’s safety.

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Please do not debate the reason for the stop with the officer. Police officers should provide specific reasons for the stop before or after they have received your license and registration.

If you are stopped, do so before the officer returns to his vehicle. The officer cannot void a ticket once it has been written. If you believe you have been treated unfairly during this stop, ask to speak to the officer’s supervisor or follow the procedures at the end of this pamphlet that show you where and how to file a complaint with the N.Y.P.D.

If the officer has "probable cause," your car may be searched without a court-issued warrant. If you are the driver and/or owner of the car and do not want your vehicle searched, you have the right to inform the officer clearly of your non-consent in a polite manner.

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