



NEW PHILADELPHIA POLICE DEPARTMENT (PPD) DISCIPLINARY DIVERSION PROGRAM

What is PPD's New Disciplinary Diversion Program?

Philadelphia Police Department's (PPD) new Disciplinary Diversion Program allows certain minor departmental violations to be resolved through mandatory corrective training instead of formal discipline, when specific eligibility criteria are met. PPD began implementing the diversion program after the police employment contract was finalized in August 2025. The contract incorporated the new diversion program into the disciplinary framework. The policy was updated and finalized on October 28, 2025.

Citizens Police Oversight Commission (CPOC) contributed to the development of the diversion program. PPD drafted the program with the following goals: Lighten the load of minor violations seen at the Police Board of Inquiry (PBI) and decrease the disciplinary backlog; provide an opportunity for officers to learn, grow, and correct behavior in practice, and boost morale by creating an avenue for mistakes to be addressed and remedied before formal discipline.

How Was Low-Level Discipline Handled Before Diversion?

Before the diversion program, many lower-level sustained allegations, such as paperwork errors or body-worn camera violations, were handled through "training and counseling." Training and counseling is not discipline – PPD drafts a training memo about the misconduct that an officer's supervisors review with them. Because training and counseling was handled by many different police supervisors across the department, it allowed different supervisors to potentially use different approaches. Other low-level sustained allegations could proceed through the formal disciplinary hearing process, which could take many months or even years to be scheduled and resolved. The diversion program replaces and standardizes training and counseling, while also redirecting additional minor infractions away from the formal hearing process. Diversion also ensures that officers receive consistent training and are held to the same standards department-wide.

Note: "Sustained" allegations are investigation outcomes where the conduct both occurred and violated PPD policy.

How Does the Diversion Program Work?

Internal Affairs investigations are conducted in the same manner as before, using a preponderance of the evidence standard. The preponderance of the evidence standard means that the conduct most likely occurred based on the evidence. After an investigation, if an infraction is identified, an Internal Affairs Inspector reviews whether it is eligible for diversion. The officer's disciplinary history is reviewed to confirm eligibility.

If eligible and approved for diversion, the finding is changed from "SUSTAINED" to "COMPLETE" – meaning formal disciplinary action will not be taken. The case does not proceed to a discipline hearing at PBI, and the officer, instead, is required to complete remedial training within three months. The Chief Inspector at the Internal Affairs Bureau has final authority to approve or deny diversion after reviewing the totality of the circumstances. This means, eligibility for the diversion program does not automatically mean that an officer or allegation will be referred for diversion.

If an investigation also finds that an officer has engaged in **any non-divertible infraction**, such as physical abuse, the entire case is sent for discipline, and no allegations can be diverted. Misconduct related to sexual crimes, domestic, criminal allegations, physical abuse, civil rights complaints, drugs, falsification, and harassment is not eligible for diversion per the diversion policy.

Which Infractions are Eligible for Diversion?

The list of divertible infractions listed in the diversion policy is as follows:

1. Departmental Violation-Failure to Activate BWC
2. Departmental Violation-Missing Property Private (Not Theft)
3. Departmental Violation-Special Unit Operating Procedures.
4. Departmental Violation-Failure to Make Off-Duty Notification
5. Departmental Violation-Refusal to Provide Name and/or Badge
6. Departmental Violation-Sleeping on Duty
7. Departmental Violation-PPD Directive Violation (used for minor violations such as not filling out required paperwork or minor procedural violations)
8. Lack of Service-Failure to Provide Service/Take Police Action
9. Lack of Service-Delayed Response
10. Lack of Service-Failed Impartiality
11. Lack of Service-Failure to Arrest
12. Lack of Service-Failure to Investigate/Accurately Complete Investigation
13. Lack of Service-Failure to Prepare/Accurately Complete Report
14. Unprofessional Conduct-Derogatory/Offensive Communications
15. Unprofessional Conduct-Quarreling/Fighting On Duty (If there is any physical contact, the case must go to the PBI)
16. Unprofessional Conduct-Rude/Dismissive Behavior
17. Verbal Abuse Derogatory/Offensive Language
18. Verbal Abuse-Obscene/Profane Language
19. Verbal Abuse-Rude Language/Tone
20. Verbal Abuse-Other/Unspecified

Who is Eligible for Diversion?

According to the diversion policy, an officer or non-sworn professional staff member may be eligible if:

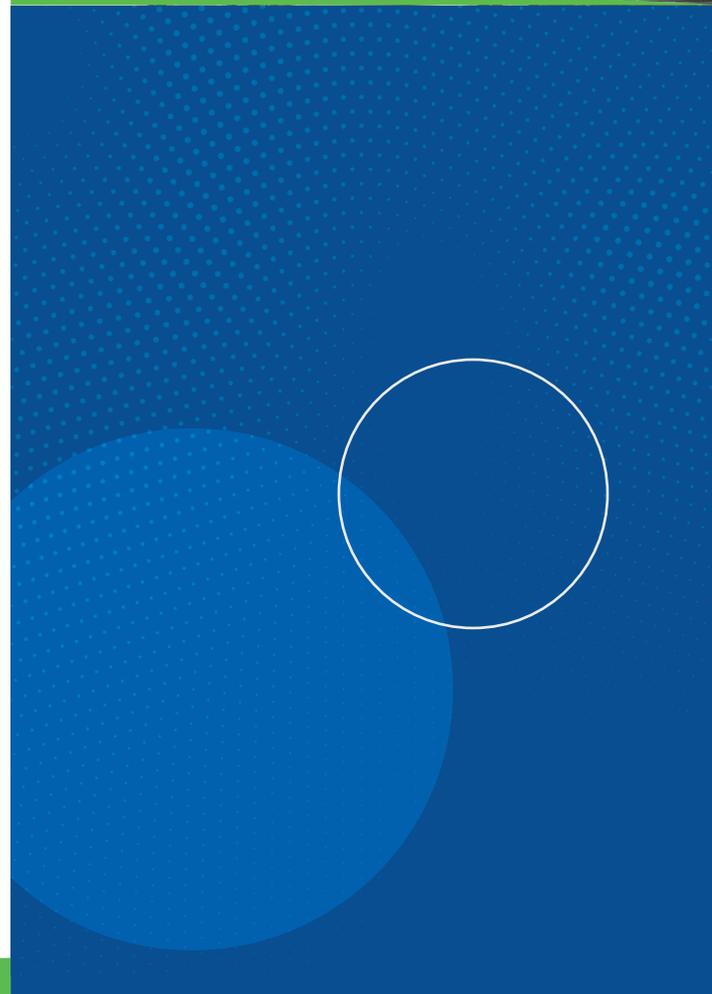
- All sustained allegations connected to the officer in the case are diversion-eligible
- The employee has not been sustained for the same offense in the prior six months
- The employee has not completed remedial training within the prior year
- The totality of the circumstances supports remedial training rather than discipline

Note: Eligibility is assessed individually, even when multiple employees are involved in the same investigation.

What Does Diversion Training Look Like?

It is a mandatory in-person remedial training session, created and facilitated by PPD's Internal Affairs Division, rather than formal discipline. CPOC was able to observe a diversion training session on site at the police academy in early 2026 and found it to be comprehensive and impactful. The training covers common policy violations related to diversion-eligible conduct, uses realistic scenarios and interactive discussion, and reviews proper procedures and alternative responses. It seeks to ensure officers are trained on all misconduct topics covered, not only their specific violation. Towards the end of training, officers receive a community resource packet, and it is reviewed so that they know how to use the included resources effectively. Finally, following the training presentation, officers meet with one of the captains at Internal Affairs to review their specific case and work through how to prevent the incident from occurring again in the future. Failure to attend the training, without a valid excuse, results in the case being sent to the PBI for formal discipline.

Officers are also asked to complete a post-training survey to document feedback on the program.



Where Does CPOC's Oversight Come In?

During the drafting of the diversion policy, CPOC staff was invited to review and provide feedback on the proposed diversion program. Some of the feedback that was incorporated into the final version of the policy includes setting a timeline for completion of the remedial training, listing consequences in the policy for an officer's failure to appear for scheduled training, and establishing remedial training as a "one and done" outcome (meaning officers will proceed to discipline if they have violations for divertible infractions within the year after their training).

A potential positive aspect of the diversion program is that it re-trains officers on a variety of policies and addresses all low-level misconduct. In the session observed by CPOC, the feedback from the officers present was positive; however, there are still areas to be monitored for further understanding of this new program. To assess the effectiveness and fairness of the diversion policy, CPOC has identified research questions such as:

- Did any repeat offenders attend diversion again after the 1-year reckoning period?
- How are the goals of the program measured?
- Is a measurable behavioral change happening or does the program provide additional chances for misconduct to occur?
- Is the program positively impacting the backlog at PBI?

The answers to these questions will require longer-term observation and can be assessed as the dataset related to the program grows. CPOC will continue to monitor any updates made to the policy, as well as the long-term outcomes and impacts.