



OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW

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When was OIR established?

The Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance in February of 2008 that created the Office of Independent Review for Orange County. The ordinance was the culmination of a long process, led by the Board, which was dedicated to choosing a workable model of civilian oversight for the Sheriff's Department.

What is the purpose of the OIR?

OIR's role is to "monitor, assist, oversee and advise" the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department (OCSA) in its handling of critical incidents and allegations of employee misconduct. The fundamental responsibility of the OIR is to ensure that the OCSA response to these matters is thorough, fair, and effective.

About OIR staff

The Executive Director and professional staff of OIR are independent contractors – not employees of the County or part of the OCSA chain of command. This promotes the objectivity of OIR's findings and recommendations.

How does OIR "monitor" the Sheriff Department?

OIR reviews all complaint cases against the Sheriff's Department. OIR reviews initial routing of the complaints, and then follows the investigation process for those allegations that are substantive enough to warrant a formal administrative case. It meets with and advises investigators as cases are being handled, it reviews cases for completeness, and it makes recommendations to OCSA decision-makers as to final outcomes.

How does OIR work with OCSA?

OIR has full access to the Department's files, records, and decision-making process through an attorney-client relationship. Rather than conducting its own investigations, OIR monitors and contributes to OCSA's existing protocols. OIR's consulting relationship with the Department also includes helping to identify systemic concerns and gaps in policy or procedure.

Does OIR have authority over OCSA?

The Office of Independent Review does not have the power to force the Department to take action, and it does not seek to substitute its judgment for that of OCSA. Instead, it uses its access and factual understanding to help ensure that the Department's outcomes are reasonable and legitimate. OIR's ability to report its concerns or disagreements to the public also helps to give it influence.

How does OIR address critical incidents?

OIR responds in person to critical incidents, consults regularly with OCSA decision-makers, and has the unfettered ability to review OCSA operations, files, and records. OIR promotes the rigorous assessment of these events from the perspectives of individual accountability, risk management, and systemic effectiveness. Every critical incident provides learning opportunities that OIR helps the Department to pursue, from individual officer performance to tactics, training, and policy.