



Civil Rights Program

Chinook Building
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104
206-263-2446 TTY Relay: 711

www.kingcounty.gov/civilrights

PARALLEL INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

The King County Civil Rights Program, part of the Office of Equity and Racial and Social Justice (OERSJ), works to ensure all individuals in King County (KC) have equal access to County facilities, programs, and services, free from discrimination. Our Civil Rights Investigators act as neutral fact-finders, reviewing complaints impartially and at no cost to the parties involved.

We aim to resolve complaints at the lowest level possible, including those involving County government, employers, housing providers, and businesses in Unincorporated King County (UKC).

Sometimes individuals file complaints with multiple agencies, including other KC departments. Our intake form asks whether a complaint has been filed elsewhere or if another investigation is ongoing. If so, we follow the *parallel investigation procedure* outlined below.

PURPOSE

This procedure ensures a coordinated, efficient, and fair response to civil rights complaints, avoiding duplication while maximizing opportunities for resolution.

DEFINITIONS

- 1. Civil Rights Program Investigation:** Conducted by OERSJ staff.
- 2. External Investigation:** Conducted by agencies outside of KC government, including other federal, state, or local governments or independent organizations not affiliated with KC.
- 3. Internal County Investigation:** Conducted by KC staff in departments that operate independently of OERSJ's Civil Rights Program, such as Human Resources or Metro.
- 4. Parallel Investigation:** An investigation involving the same facts or allegations conducted at the same time or in succession, by agencies, departments or investigative units other than OERSJ.

COORDINATING WITH INTERNAL KC AGENCIES

When a complaint is submitted to both OERSJ and another KC agency, OERSJ will coordinate efforts to determine who will lead the investigation.

INTERNAL REFERRAL PROCESS

OERSJ will **defer the investigation** to the agency with the appropriate subject matter authority unless the complaint includes claims outside that agency's investigative scope (for example a discrimination complaint filed with the Ombuds Office which does not investigate such claims).

Referrals covered by this procedure may include, but are not limited to, the following agencies or departments, based on the nature and subject matter of the complaint:

1. **Law Enforcement Complaints:** Referred to the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO).
2. **Correctional Facility/Jail Complaints:** Referred to Dept. of Adult & Juvenile Detention (DAJD) Internal Investigations Unit (IIU).
3. **Internal Employee Complaints:** Referred to Human Resources (HR) or Workforce Equity (WFE)¹.
4. **Metro Transit Complaints:** Referred to the relevant department within King County Metro (e.g., EEO).
5. **ADA Complaints:** Referred to departments with ADA-specific procedures (e.g., King County Metro Transit, Public Health, DAJD).

DURING ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS BY OTHER AGENCIES

If another agency or department is already investigating discrimination allegations involving the same facts or allegations:

1. OERSJ will accept a signed complaint from the Charging Party (CP) within filing deadlines.
2. OERSJ will notify the respondent(s) of the King County Code procedures. However, OERSJ will inform the Charging Party and Respondent that OERSJ is **deferring its investigation** until the other agency's investigation concludes.

¹ In cases where a conflict of interest exists (e.g., the complaint involves an HR Manager or another conflict within the HR or leadership structure), or if the complainant expresses a preference for OERSJ review, OERSJ will assume lead responsibility for the investigation. In such instances, OERSJ will also inform the complainant of all available alternative pathways for resolution, including internal and external options.

3. OERSJ will regularly check-in with the Charging Party to obtain status updates on ongoing investigation(s).
 - a. If the Respondent Party is the County agency or department conducting an internal County investigation, they will notify the Office of Equity and Racial and Social Justice (OERSJ) of the investigation's conclusion.
 - b. In cases of external investigations, OERSJ will collaborate with both the Charging Party and the external investigative body to determine when the investigation is complete and to obtain the final findings report.
4. OERSJ will also notify the Respondent that they have up to 20 days following the conclusion of its investigation to provide a written response to OERSJ regarding the allegations.

Note: For complaints filed under K.C.C 12.20, Open Housing Ordinance, the response deadline is 10 days.

OERSJ'S RESPONSE AFTER INTERNAL COUNTY AND EXTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

After the conclusion of an Internal County Investigation or an External Investigation, OERSJ will take one of the following steps:

ADMINISTRATIVE CLOSURE BASED ON RESOLUTION

If the agency's investigation ***provides relief*** to the Charging Party and the issue is deemed resolved:

1. OERSJ will ***close its case administratively***.
2. The Charging Party and Respondent will be notified of the resolution and closure.

OERSJ FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION

If the Charging Party raises concerns about an Internal County or External Investigation, or if OERSJ determines that discrimination allegations were not fully addressed by the investigating agency, OERSJ may:

1. **Review the agency's findings**, including all relevant documentation and key evidence.
2. **Continue, with a limited scope, the Civil Rights Investigation** into any remaining discrimination allegations that were not addressed.
3. **Proceed with a full Civil Rights Investigation** if new material facts, changes in circumstances, or previously unaddressed discrimination allegations emerge.

GROUNDS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CLOSURE

An OERSJ case may be closed administratively for the following reasons:

1. **Relief Provided Elsewhere:** A parallel investigation resulted in findings and appropriate relief for the CP.
2. **Civil Lawsuit Filed:** The CP has filed a claim in court.
3. **Unable to Contact Charging Party:** Repeated and documented attempts to contact the CP are unsuccessful.
4. **Violation of Code of Conduct:** The CP engages in behavior that violates OERSJ's Charging Party Code of Conduct.
5. **Withdrawal of Complaint:** The CP formally withdraws their complaint.

Note: This is not a comprehensive list. Additional circumstances not outlined here may also warrant closure on a case-by-case basis.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Complaint Acceptance:** OERSJ will accept a complaint even when another agency is handling a related matter.
2. **Collaboration:** In cases where no investigation has been initiated, OERSJ may collaborate with the CP and the internal County or External agency to determine which body is best positioned to lead.
3. **Timeliness and Discretion:** OERSJ reserves the right to initiate, continue, or decline an investigation based on statutory deadlines, conflicts of interest, or internal capacity. In all cases, individuals will be informed of alternative avenues for filing their complaint and advised of any applicable statutory filing deadlines.