



KING COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT
2023 Annual Report

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Report Prepared By



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KING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT 2023 Annual Report

Message from Sheriff Patricia Cole-Tindall

It is an honor and pleasure to serve as your Sheriff. When I started this job in January of 2022, I highlighted several values I hold dear, including honesty and respect. It is the foundation for the high standards we hold ourselves to as Members of the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO). It is also what the residents of King County expect of us.

Over the last several years, KCSO has worked to create consistent Internal Investigations Unit (IIU) policies, procedures, and data sources. We've worked to simplify when and how complaints are investigated and continued to strive to meet reasonable performance outcomes. In March 2023, I implemented substantial enhancements to the policies and procedures that guide the misconduct complaint investigation process. These changes create efficiencies in the process, improve communication between the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight and the Sheriff's Office, reduce the time from initial complaint to final disposition, and help identify cases that may have better outcomes using the mediation process rather than the traditional complaint investigation process. This will affect how complaint and investigation information is tracked and will require a different approach when comparing data collected after 2022 with data collected between the years 2014 - 2022.



As in years past, KCSO has contracted with Police Strategies LLC to complete the 2023 Internal IIU Annual Report. Most of the data used to compile this report was generated after the March 2023 changes to IIU policy. Where possible, this report will compare the 2023 data with previous years' data to identify trends that could flag challenges and opportunities for improvement. As we move forward and gather more consistent data using the new standards, KCSO's ability to identify and understand trends will be enhanced.

This report shows that the majority of Sheriff's Office Employees who provided service to the community did so without receiving a complaint. In 2023 the Sheriff's Office had approximately 1,050 Employees. The department handled 320 complaint investigations, a decrease of 7% from 2022. For further perspective, in 2023 the Sheriff's Office Communications Center received 319,263 emergency calls (911) and 185,334 non-emergency calls. They dispatched deputies to 132,425 calls for service and deputies on-viewed 158,613 incidents, most of which involved contact with one or more people. Of the total 504,597 calls and 158,613 on-views in 2023, 320 incidents (.05%) resulted in a complaint.

This report and analysis is just part of our continuing effort to be a premier law enforcement agency known for integrity, transparency, and accountability.

Sincerely,

Patricia Cole-Tindall, Sheriff

King County Sheriff's Office Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals¹

MISSION

Why are we here?

The King County Sheriff's Office delivers compassionate and accountable police services to enhance public safety and community well-being.

VISION

Where are we going?

The King County Sheriff's Office is to be an innovative, trusted, and collaborative agency supporting safe, welcoming, and thriving communities.

VALUES

How do we do business?

Leadership:

- We are honest, direct, and transparent.
- We lead with grace through our diverse perspectives and experiences.
- We are a high-performing organization with a clearly articulated vision of our role in the community and contribution to public safety.
- We are committed to addressing the well-being of our communities.
- We promote positive change toward unity and racial equity through our community-centered initiatives.

Integrity:

- We are open and accountable to the public we serve.
- We foster a culture that actively identifies and acknowledges problems and welcomes them as opportunities for improvement.
- We take responsibility for our actions, celebrate successes, and address shortcomings.

¹ KCSO's statement on its Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals, can be found in its General Orders Manual (GOM) at: <https://public.powerdms.com/KCSO/tree/documents/1757664>

Service:

- We continually seek to improve how we operate through advances in technology, policy, and using change and performance management.
- We act with speed and persistence to help provide community safety for all.
- We embrace creativity, innovation, and transparency.
- We employ evidence-based, data-driven, and adaptive strategies.

Teamwork:

- We, as one team, work with our partners to deter crime and the fear of crime.
- We foster a respectful work environment.
- We work across boundaries and acknowledge the valuable contributions employees bring to our agency and communities.
- We work to learn, co-create, collaborate, and adjust our services for our diverse communities.

GOALS

How will we get there?

- **Develop Leaders:** Establish leadership continuity and focus on process and project management. Ensure accountability, transparency, and follow-through to better serve our employees.
- **Support our Workforce:** Improve workforce health, well-being, and morale through continued focused efforts to recruit, retain, develop, and support the highest quality employees that reflect the diverse communities we serve.
- **Build Partnerships:** Build and strengthen our public safety partnerships to deliver equitable outcomes, trauma-informed incident response, and effective crime fighting services.
- **Improve Engagement:** Increase support for the King County Sheriff's Office and enhance relationships with our communities by clearly and proactively sharing our mission, values, and achievements.
- **Increase Effectiveness:** Advance our effectiveness by encouraging innovation and by employing emerging technology and data-informed, evidenced-based strategies.

Sheriff's Philosophy

Every King County Sheriff brings their own philosophy and approach to law enforcement and leadership to the King County Sheriff's Office. For Sheriff Patricia Cole-Tindall, this starts with policing with compassion and recognizing that King County is a dynamic and growing region, where diverse groups of people come together to live in community. Everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect.

While showing both compassion and grace, Sheriff Cole-Tindall recognizes that we are a nation and community of laws and rules. People should be accountable for their actions and community members of King County expect this of both fellow community members and law enforcement officers.

Both commissioned deputies and professional staff of the King County Sheriff's Office are held to the highest standards. Sheriff Cole-Tindall expects everyone working at the Sheriff's Office to abide by our laws and KCSO's policies and supervisor direction. While the vast majority of Sheriff's Office employees undertake their duties with professionalism, exceptions do occur. In these rare cases the King County Sheriff's Office has robust and professional internal investigation protocols designed to address both minor and major conduct issues.

Internal Investigations Unit Policy Statement

Reproduced below is a statement from the Sheriff Office's General Orders Manual regarding personnel conduct expectations.² The policy statement was updated in January 2024, with new language highlighted in blue font.

3.00.000 PERSONNEL CONDUCT

3.00.005 PURPOSE/POLICY STATEMENT: 01/24

A law enforcement agency must maintain a high level of personal and official conduct if it is to command and deserve the respect and confidence of the public it serves. Rules and regulations governing the conduct of members of the Sheriff's Office ensure that the high standards of the law enforcement profession are maintained. Issues of honesty and integrity are of paramount importance in the operation of the Sheriff's Office. The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines and instructions concerning employee conduct and responsibility for all members in all of their activities, whether official or personal. Members will be evaluated based on whether or not their actions assist the King County Sheriff's Office in fulfilling its stated mission that the King County Sheriff's Office is a trusted partner in fighting crime and improving quality of life and reaching its goals of:

- **Develop Leaders:** Establish leadership continuity and focus on process and project management. Ensure accountability, transparency, and follow-through to better serve our employees.
- **Support our Workforce:** Improve workforce health, well-being, and morale through continued focused efforts to recruit, retain, develop, and support the highest quality employees that reflect the diverse communities we serve.
- **Build Partnerships:** Build and strengthen our public safety partnerships to deliver equitable outcomes, trauma-informed incident response, and effective crime fighting services.
- **Improve Engagement:** Increase support for the King County Sheriff's Office and enhance relationships with our communities by clearly and proactively sharing our mission, values, and achievements.
- **Increase Effectiveness:** Advance our effectiveness by encouraging innovation and by employing emerging technology and data-informed, evidenced-based strategies.

² <https://public.powerdms.com/KCSO/tree/documents/1757974>

Members must conduct themselves at all times in a manner that brings a level of conduct in their personal and official affairs consistent with the highest standards of the law enforcement profession. These standards are outlined in the Core Values adopted by the King County Sheriff's Office:

- Leadership.
- Integrity.
- Service.
- Teamwork.

Violations of these standards will result in corrective action or discipline up to and including dismissal from the Sheriff's Office. In general, members shall:

1. Be honest.
2. Conduct themselves in a manner that creates and maintains respect for themselves, the Sheriff's Office and the County.
3. Avoid any actions which might result in adversely affecting confidence of the public in the integrity of the county government or the Sheriff's Office.
4. Perform all duties in a professional, courteous, competent and efficient manner.
5. Comply with all Sheriff's Office rules, policies and procedures.
6. Obey federal, state, county and municipal laws and regulations; and
7. Promptly report to their immediate supervisors' knowledge or reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or violations of any provision of this chapter.
8. Promptly report to their Precinct/Section Commander that their driver's license has been suspended (for whatever reason) and/or if they are ordered to have an interlock device on their vehicles.

Members are responsible for learning and abiding by the rules and guidelines in this chapter. Action may be taken against an employee due to a failure of the employee to meet the requirements of this chapter or of his/her position. Such action may be either disciplinary or non-disciplinary in nature. Examples of inappropriate conduct set out in this chapter are illustrative, and not exclusive, as it is impossible to anticipate every possible act of misconduct. Violations of this chapter will be considered misconduct.

Comparing the current version reproduced above to the conduct expectations statement previously in effect, The Sheriff's Office has aligned its summary of goals in this policy with the goals identified in its Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals statement. Such alignment allows the Sheriff's Office to send a consistent message, both internally and externally, about its overall objectives in serving King County. This approach is all the more important since the policy provides that Members will be evaluated based on whether or not their actions assist the Sheriff's Office in fulfilling its stated mission and goals.

IIU Complaint Tracking and Reporting

Increasing Accountability and Transparency

The Sheriff's Office originally engaged Police Strategies LLC to analyze IIU data using the same set of standards for all years reviewed to increase the reliability and consistency of information reported year to year.³ Because the King County Council has reporting requirements related to misconduct investigations, the Sheriff's Office also relied on Police Strategies' data analysis to ensure compliance with Council's mandates.⁴ In September 2019, Police Strategies submitted its first IIU report to the Sheriff's Office, with annual follow-up reports analyzing IIU data through 2022. In 2023, the Sheriff's Office, in partnership with the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight, implemented substantial enhancements to the policies and procedures that guide the misconduct complaint investigation process. The changes create efficiencies in the process, improve communication between the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight and the Sheriff's Office, reduce the time from initial complaint to final disposition, and help identify cases that may have better outcomes using the mediation process rather than the traditional complaint investigation process. This will affect how complaint and investigation information is tracked and

³ Inconsistencies likely resulted from multiple factors, including different approaches to processing and tracking complaints related, at least in part, to changes with the Sheriff's Office's administration, policy and procedures, IIU Command, and thoroughness with data entry. These and other factors all can influence the reliability of the data year to year. Also, over the years, KCSO has changed how it categorizes different types of IIU incidents in the IAPro system. While Police Strategies has corrected data where earlier mischaracterizations have been discovered, undiscovered issues are likely to continue to exist particularly with older data.

⁴ Metropolitan King County Council Motion 14002 (2013).

requires a different approach when comparing data collected after 2022 with data collected between the years 2014 - 2022.

Because the changes in policy affect how complaint information is tracked, it is difficult to effectively compare the data collected prior to 2023 with the data collected after the policy change. In this report, Police Strategies has stepped back from its approach of comparing this year's data with previous years, and focused on the reporting requirements for KC Council Motion 14002. In future reports, Police Strategies will again complete a comparative analysis of the current year data against previous years going back to 2023.

The Sheriff's Office recognizes the importance of promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigating misconduct allegations and has made a number of revisions aimed at enhancing the process to ensure that complaints are appropriately categorized, investigated, and documented. Policies related to personnel conduct expectations and misconduct investigations are outlined in GOM 3.03.000, with further information related to complaint processing found in the Internal Investigations Unit (IIU) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual, with the primary changes that have been made found in one or both of these documents.

One factor related to the reliability of data that was being entered, analyzed, and reported prior to 2023 had to do with identifying the appropriate allegation(s) to use when a complaint was received. When IIU receives a verbal or written statement of misconduct concerning a Member of the Sheriff's Office, an IIU Sergeant reviews the submission to determine if the stated facts, if true, would be a violation of any Sheriff's Office policies compiled in the GOM. In past years, IIU has included allegations from throughout the GOM, which is over 925 pages, resulting in confusion about which and how many policies should be cited when identifying allegations. To eliminate duplicate allegations, where similar policy violations relate to the same alleged misconduct involved in a single complaint, Police Strategies made the recommendation in earlier reports that the Sheriff's Office reduce the overall number of potential allegations. IIU's SOP was revised in May 2022 to clarify that only the most appropriate allegations should be included, and only those incorporated into GOM 3.00.00. However, IIU and Police Strategies recognized that as long historical investigation data included overlapping and duplicate allegations, data reliability issues would be perpetuated, particularly when data analysis involved multiple variables and

more complex analysis. In the current report, though data dating back to 2020 is included, allegation categories are used to help ameliorate the problem with individual allegations that duplicate or overlap with those listed in 3.00.000. Over time, IIU has moved towards only using allegations listed in GOM 3.00.000. Also, by providing 2023 data analysis that meets Motion 14002 reporting requirements, problems associated with more complex data analysis are avoided.

Another change made in IIU's 2023 Annual Report relates to terminology. The misconduct complaint data analysis conducted by Police Strategies and presented in its previous reports used some terms that were unique to the analytic approach that had been developed based on IPro, a software program used to record and track use of force and misconduct complaints.⁵ CI Technologies, the company that created IPro, developed scripts for Police Strategies to extract data directly from the Sheriff's Office's IPro system.⁶ Police Strategies then built a relational database and interactive dashboards to facilitate analysis of the complaint data, making it easier to present complex information about misconduct allegations, findings, discipline, and other matters related to the work of the IIU. However, this approach led Police Strategies to use some terminology that was IPro related, but different than that used in the GOM or by IIU when processing misconduct allegations, resulting in potential miscommunication. As more complex analysis of the data was conducted, there was potential for exacerbating the impacts of any underlying misunderstandings. This insight provided IIU and Police Strategies with another reason to use a scaled back approach with the 2023 data, focusing the data analysis on ensuring a shared use and understanding of basic terminology and processes.

In addition to Police Strategies sometimes using investigation processing terminology different than that used by the Sheriff's Office, Motion 14002 uses terms that are not defined or commonly used by IIU. To promote data consistency and facilitate a shared understanding of terms and processes related to misconduct investigations, where terminology used in Motion 14002 or IPro data processing differs from that used by the Sheriff's Office, annual IIU reports beginning

⁵IPro is the records management software created by CI Technologies. IPro also is used for recording and tracking commendations, section level discipline, use of force, first level discipline, vehicle collisions and pursuits, and early intervention issues. GOM 14.00.015.

⁶ Police Strategies appreciates the collaborative relationship it has with CI Technologies and the assistance provided on this project, which allowed Police Strategies to extract raw data from IPro's proprietary system.

in 2023 will use the lexicon familiar to Sheriff's Office Members and incorporated into GOM policies and IIU procedures. Using a shared language approach will also support the statistical analysis central to Motion 14002 requirements. However, when relevant to the data reported below, historical differences in terminology are noted.

Metropolitan King County Council - Motion 14002 and 2020 - 2023 Complaint Investigation Data

In 2013, the Metropolitan King County Council passed Motion 14002, "requiring that the Sheriff's Office provide to the Council annually a report with data on the results of its internal review of complaints and investigations of employee misconduct." The Motion acknowledged that, "although the overwhelming majority of deputies and employees of the sheriff's office serve with honor and distinction," even isolated or infrequent misconduct can damage the reputation of the Sheriff's Office and negatively impact community trust. While recognizing there is "a well-defined system for receiving, documenting, investigating and resolving complaints of misconduct for its employees," the Motion noted that publicly reporting information on complaints, investigations, and outcomes would increase transparency of Sheriff's Office operations. The Motion also notes the Council's interest in identifying any systemic issues in the Sheriff's Office and opportunities for reform.

The specific topics to be addressed in the annual reports required by the Motion are identified below, with misconduct investigation data provided for the years 2020 - 2023. For reasons discussed above, Police Strategies cannot make reliable comparisons to data analyzed in reports for years earlier than 2020, as it has done in the past.⁷ The data that is reported only includes closed cases, avoiding the problems of potentially including a complaint attributed to more than one reporting cycle or counting cases in one category that are re-categorized before the matter is closed. There are five broad categories of information required by Motion 14002 (along with some subcategories), and the remainder of this report provides data and discussion in response.

⁷ Earlier IIU Annual Reports included comparative data dating back to 2014.

Under Council Motion 14002, IIU annual reports are to include, at a minimum, for each year and the three years prior:

- 1. The number of complaints and allegations received, including information on the origin of the complaint, be it either from a community member or internal.**

Inquiries and Allegations Received For the Years 2020 - 2023				
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Inquiries	599	465	344	320
Allegations	954	807	602	540

Motion 14002 uses the terms "complaint" and "allegation" without defining their intended meaning. The Sheriff's Office uses the term "inquiry," and for purposes of complying with Motion 14002, assumes it is synonymous with "complaint" and will use "inquiry" instead of "complaint" for reporting purposes. The GOM defines "inquiry" as, "An entry into Blue Team that documents a personnel complaint directed to a member of the department which, if true, alleges misconduct by any member of the Sheriff's Office."⁸

Neither Motion 14002 nor the GOM define the term, "allegation." In conducting and reporting on data analysis for this and future IIU reports, Police Strategies understands that "allegation" is taken to mean, "A claim that a Member has engaged in an act in violation of a Sheriff's Office directive, rule, policy, or procedure." This aligns with how the term has been used by IIU. When IIU receives a verbal or written statement of misconduct concerning a Member of the Sheriff's Office, an IIU Sergeant reviews the statement to determine if any Sheriff's Office policies are implicated by the statement of complaint, and then lists as an "allegation," the specific policy at issue. Numerous allegations may be made against a single Member who is the subject of an inquiry, and a single allegation may be made against more than one Member.⁹

Each inquiry that is reported contains one or more allegations against one or more Members of the Sheriff's Office. Thus, an inquiry is a single and comprehensive IIU case which may include

⁸ GOM 3.03.010 (04/23).

⁹ Note that the misconduct data reported can involve a Sworn Member or a Civilian/Professional Member working for the Sheriff's Office.

numerous complaints (related to the same incident), involve multiple Members who are the subjects of the complaints, and one or more specific allegations of misconduct.

The total number of both inquiries and allegations received by the Sheriff's Office has steadily decreased over the past four years. The decreasing number of inquiries could be attributable to a number of factors, including fewer misconduct claims filed during the COVID pandemic and policy and training changes taking place in response to enactment of Washington State's Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act (LETSCA). Because an inquiry contains one or more allegations, it follows that the total number of allegations each year would decrease, along with the decreasing number of inquiries. Also, in past years, inquiries have included allegations from throughout the GOM, which is comprised of over 925 pages, resulting in confusion about which and how many policies should be cited when identifying allegations. As previously discussed, IIU's SOP was revised in May 2022 and clarified that only the most appropriate allegations should be included, and only those outlined in GOM 3.00.00.

Origin of Inquiries Received For the Years 2020 - 2023				
Origin	2020	2021	2022	2023
Community Member	325	192	137	148
Internal	200	185	176	135
OLEO	13	6	16	25
Other Agency	7	8	3	12
Unknown	54	74	12	0

Inquiries received from King County community members and from members inside the Sheriff's Office have both decreased over the four years considered, though the proportion of internal inquiries as compared to those submitted by community members has grown since 2020. The number of complaints received from OLEO and outside agencies has also increased since 2020. OLEO has been increasing their budget and staff and expanding their operations for the past several years so they have more capacity for community outreach, complaint intake, and general oversight operations. Also, part of the recent legislative changes focused on law enforcement included laws creating a duty to intervene and report misconduct. This may have had an impact on other agencies reporting perceived misconduct by KCSO Members. Finally, KCSO began rolling

out the use of body-worn cameras (BWCs) in 2023, which may have resulted in more inquiries being filed as potential misconduct was flagged by those viewing BWC footage.

IIU should be commended in that it was able to identify the origin of all inquiries in 2023, after listing the origin of many inquiries as "Unknown" in previous years. This likely reflects data quality control efforts previously discussed.

2. The number of complaints, allegations, or incidents¹⁰ in the following areas:

- a. **Minor misconduct.**
- b. **Major misconduct.**
- c. **Use of force.**
- d. **Criminal investigations.**

Number of Inquiries with Allegations of Serious Misconduct or Misconduct & Number of Allegations of Excessive Use of Force or Criminal Conduct	
Inquiries	2023 Total
Inquiries - Serious Misconduct	56
Inquiries - Misconduct	264
Allegations	2023 Total
Allegation - Excessive Use of Force*	38
Allegations - Criminal Conduct*	15

*Both Excessive Use of Force and Criminal Conduct are subsets of Serious Misconduct and Misconduct.

Number of Inquiries of Excessive or Unnecessary Use of Force or Criminal Conduct For the Years 2020 - 2023				
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Excessive or Unnecessary Use of Force	65	35	33	38
Criminal Conduct	16	23	16	15

Number of Allegations of Excessive or Unnecessary Use of Force or Criminal Conduct For the Years 2020 - 2023				
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Excessive or Unnecessary Use of Force	121	62	64	73
Criminal Conduct	21	29	21	17

¹⁰ While Motion 14002 asks for data on the number of complaints, allegations, or incidents in the areas listed, the term "incidents" is not defined. As it also is not a term used by IIU or in analyzing misconduct data, there is no data separate from that regarding inquiries and allegations related to "incidents."

Allegations and inquiries involving Excessive or Unnecessary Use of Force decreased by approximately 50% between 2020 and 2021 and 2022, though there was a slight uptick in 2023. The higher number of allegations and inquiries in 2020 is most likely attributable to the widespread protests that took place in the summer of 2020 following the murder of George Floyd, with the decrease in 2021 and 2022 at least partly related to the COVID pandemic.

Previous reports have not included data on inquiries and allegations involving criminal conduct because they are not tracked through IPro, the case management system IIU uses and Police Strategies relies on for analyzing and reporting on misconduct complaints. However, IIU gathered this data from other sources back to 2020, allowing for inclusion in the current report, as required under Motion 14002. Other than a slight spike in 2021, the number of inquiries alleging criminal misconduct has remained fairly steady.

3. The number of complaint, allegation, and incident resolutions by classification, to include data on the types of personnel actions taken when complaints are sustained, and data on the administrative actions taken when the investigation results in recommendations for changes in Sheriff's operations, such as training or policies.

When an investigation is complete, Sheriff's Office policy sets out the steps to be taken to ensure that further investigation is not necessary and includes review by the IIU Commander, the Precinct/Section Commander, Division Commander, and others depending on the nature of the allegations involved.¹¹ Following these steps, the case is sent to the Undersheriff for review and to recommend discipline when appropriate. Finally, the Sheriff receives the investigation, findings, and recommended discipline and, if required, conducts a due process hearing (called a "Loudermill hearing") for the named Employee.¹² The Sheriff can change the discipline recommendation made by the Undersheriff.¹³ Following the investigation and review process, one of six potential findings is made for each allegation raised:

¹¹ GOM 3.03.190.

¹² The Supreme Court's decision in *Loudermill v. Cleveland Board of Education*, 470 U.S. 532 (1985), and subsequent cases established that Fourteenth Amendment due process rights mandate that a public employee be given the opportunity to be heard and to review evidence supporting the outcome prior to termination or the imposition of other significant discipline, such as demotion or suspension without pay.

¹³ GOM 3.03.200.

1. Unfounded: The allegation is not factual and/or the incident did not occur as described.
2. Exonerated: The alleged incident occurred but was lawful and proper.
3. Non-Sustained: There is insufficient factual evidence either to prove or disprove the allegation.
4. Sustained: The allegation is supported by sufficient factual evidence and was a violation of policy.
5. Undetermined: The completed investigation does not meet the criteria of classifications 1 through 4. This may involve the following: The complainant withdraws the complaint; the complainant cannot be located; the complainant is uncooperative; or the accused Member separates from the Sheriff's Office before the conclusion of the investigation and the investigator cannot reach another classification.
6. Performance Related Training: Complaints where the accused member admitted to the conduct and counseling and/or training was provided.¹⁴

Disposition of Inquiries				
Finding	2020	2021	2022	2023
Exonerated	201	125	120	100
Unfounded	86	70	63	70
Sustained	88	67	44	39
Non-Sustained	67	45	41	30
Performance Related Training	0	1	14	59
Undetermined	18	11	14	9
Mediated	1	1	0	3
No Finding/Info Only	244	223	109	45

¹⁴ GOM 3.03.190. The sixth finding was added during the Sheriff's Office's comprehensive 3.03.000 policy changes in 2023.

Disposition of Allegations				
Finding	2020	2021	2022	2023
Exonerated	424	290	222	176
Unfounded	140	148	118	115
Sustained	127	101	91	54
Non-Sustained	87	78	60	40
Performance Related Training	0	1	20	72
Undetermined	24	13	18	12
Mediated	1	1	0	3
No Finding/Info Only	151	175	73	68

Number of Sustained Allegations and Action Taken				
Action Taken	2020	2021	2022	2023
Written Reprimand	51	16	19	14
Suspension	22	25	20	16
Corrective Counseling	31	15	18	16
No discipline	6	23	22	3
Termination	10	12	7	7
Performance Related Training	5	12	4	7
Transfer	9	0	10	8
Other	3	13	1	0
EAP	11	5	1	0
Unknown	2	1	6	1
Demotion	2	0	5	0
Resignation	0	2	0	0

In 2020, there were over three times as many Written Reprimands resulting from a Sustained allegation as compared to 2023, and twice as many Corrective Counseling outcomes. There also was a spike in the number of Members referred to EAP in 2020, as far fewer and ultimately none were referred in 2021 - 2023. In 2023, the most common action taken on a Sustained allegation involved a Suspension and/or Corrective Counseling, followed closely by a Written Reprimand.

Number of Members with Sustained Findings and Action Taken				
Action Taken	2020	2021	2022	2023
Written Reprimand	40	14	11	12
Corrective Counseling	30	13	17	15
Suspension	12	16	12	8
No Discipline	4	14	13	2
Performance Related Training	5	10	4	4
Termination	3	5	3	3
Other	1	9	1	0
Transfer	3	0	3	4
EAP	4	3	1	0
Demotion	1	0	1	0
Resignation	0	1	0	0

4. The number of individual Employees that have accrued three or more complaints (inquiries) in the reporting year or eight or more complaints (inquiries) total in the reporting year and the three prior years. The Sheriff shall identify the outcome of the complaints and note whether any personnel or administrative action resulted from the complaints (inquiries) for these Employees.

Number of Employees with 3+ Inquiries in 2023 or 8+ Inquiries for 2020 - 2023		
	Employees with 3 or More Inquiries within Reporting Year (2023)	Employees with 8 or More Inquiries within Reporting Year and Three Prior Years (2020 - 2023)
All Dispositions	36	65
Sustained Dispositions ¹⁵	2	2

¹⁵ Personnel actions taken can have more than one entry per employee, so the numbers below do not equal 2.

Personnel Actions for Employees with 3+ Sustained Inquiries in 2023¹⁶	
Personnel Action	Number
Corrective Counseling	3
Suspension	2
Training	3
Written Reprimand	1

Personnel Actions for Employees with 8+ Sustained Inquiries for Years 2020 – 2023¹⁷	
Personnel Action	Number
Corrective Counseling	1
Employee Assistance Program Referral	2
Suspension	14
Written Reprimand	3

In 2023, there were 36 Sheriff's Office Members with three or more inquiries, with two Members in this group receiving a sustained disposition on 3 or more inquiries. Of the two employees with 3 or more sustained dispositions, one was a Deputy who failed to complete required reports or adequately investigate criminal complaints on multiple occasions, while the second Member had three driving related complaints over a five month period. Both received progressive discipline ranging from remedial training up to suspensions. In the years 2020 - 2023, there were 65 Members with eight or more inquiries, with two Members receiving a sustained disposition on 8 or more inquiries. Both were civilian employees. The two civilian employees each received multiple complaints involving tardiness or work attendance and related allegations. They both received progressive discipline and referral to the Employee Assistance Program.

For those with three or more sustained inquiries in 2023 or eight or more sustained inquiries during 2020 - 2023, a suspension was the most frequent personnel action, providing an indication of how seriously the Sheriff's Office takes repeated findings of misconduct.

¹⁶ Personnel actions taken can have more than one entry per employee, so the numbers below do not equal 2.

¹⁷ Personnel actions taken can have more than one entry per employee, so the numbers below do not equal 2.

The great majority of inquiries filed with the KCSO IIU do not result in a finding of misconduct by the members named in those inquiries or are addressed through counseling and training. As noted in previous reports, many factors can influence whether a member is more likely to receive a complaint, such as whether the member is Sworn or Professional, whether the member regularly interfaces with community members, the member's specific job and shift assignment, and work location, among others. While some or all of these factors may result in more inquiries filed against some KCSO Members, the low rate of Sustained dispositions should provide reassurance that members receiving more 3+ inquiries in a year or 8+ over four years do not necessarily or likely represent a trend of employees engaging in problematic conduct.

5. Narrative information on any trends identified through its internal investigations and complaint process, and recommendations of any potential legislative changes that the Sheriff's Office has identified in its evaluation of complaint data that, if implemented, could improve public trust in the law enforcement.

In 2023, the Sheriff's Office collaborated with the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO) to implement substantial changes to policies and procedures related to the misconduct complaint investigation process. The changes are aimed at increasing efficiency, improving communications between the Sheriff's Office and OLEO, reducing the time associated with resolving complaints, and identifying cases appropriate for referral to mediation. Also, in 2022, KCSO revised its IIU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to identify a limited list of appropriate potential allegations to review when identifying which fits the facts stated in a complaint of misconduct, rather than relying on the entire GOM. This SOP revision is pivotal in assuring allegation data reliability in comparing information year to year and will allow for more complex analysis moving forward, though the more limited 2023 data analysis meets the reporting requirements of Motion 14002. As important as these many policy and procedure changes are for process improvements, they impacted how data is collected and tracked, making it difficult to compare 2023 misconduct complaint data with that from earlier years using the wide range of variables considered in earlier reports. Nonetheless, a number of trends from the 2023 misconduct complaint processing information are detailed in the current report and summarized below.

- The total number of both inquiries and allegations of misconduct received by the Sheriff's Office has steadily decreased over the past four years. The decrease might represent increased training and professionalism among Sheriff's Office Members and improved relationships with the community. As observed following the increase in complaints related to the 2020 protests surrounding the murder of George Floyd and the decrease in complaints the next two years, with COVID restrictions in place part of the time, fluctuations in complaint numbers are not unusual and do not necessarily reflect an increase or decrease in actual findings of misconduct.¹⁸ For example, given the potential for civil unrest related to the election in November 2024 and events such as the FIFA World Cup that will be held in Seattle in 2026, the Sheriff's Office likely will face new challenges in the near future with the potential for an increase in complaints filed.
- The proportion of internal inquiries and referrals from other agencies relative to complaints from the community has increased since 2020. This trend might be related to legislative changes creating a duty to intervene and report when law enforcement officers observe potential misconduct and/or result from the Sheriff's Office's roll-out of body worn cameras in 2023. Again, such changes are not necessarily indicative of an increase in Sustained misconduct allegations and instead, in many cases, result in Performance Related Training or other interventions reflective of supervisory engagement and monitoring of Sheriff's Office Members.
- Inquiries and allegations involving criminal conduct are not tracked through IAPro, the case management system IIU uses and Police Strategies relies on for analyzing and reporting on misconduct complaints. However, for the 2023 report, IIU gathered this data from other sources back to 2020, as required under Motion 14002. Other than a slight spike in 2021, the number of inquiries alleging criminal misconduct has remained fairly steady.

¹⁸ Nonetheless, the number of Sustained allegations was over twice as high in 2020 as compared to Sustained dispositions in 2023.

- The number of inquiries and allegations involving excessive or unnecessary use of force have decreased since 2020 and have generally leveled off.
- In 2023, there were 39 Sustained inquiries involving 54 Sustained allegations (a single inquiry can include one or more allegations). The most common action taken on a Sustained allegation involved a Suspension and/or Corrective Counseling, followed closely by a Written Reprimand.
- In 2023, there were 36 Sheriff's Office Members with three or more inquiries, with two Members, both of whom were Deputies, receiving one or more Sustained dispositions. Similarly, in the years 2020 - 2023, there were 65 Members with eight or more inquiries, with two Members, both of whom were civilian employees, receiving multiple Sustained dispositions.

In addition, as Police Strategies has noted in all of its reports, Motion 14002 and the Sheriff's Office do not use the same terminology in reference to some aspects of misconduct complaint processing. To promote data consistency and to facilitate a shared understanding of misconduct complaint related terms and processes, annual IIU reports beginning in 2023 use lexicon found in the GOM and IIU SOP that is familiar to Sheriff's Office Members and many in the King County community, though makes note of some differences.

- It is recommended that King County Council consider making legislative changes to Motion 14002 to align its terminology to that used by IIU, which would foster transparency and communication in evaluating misconduct complaint data and serve the goal of improving public trust in law enforcement.