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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES PLAN TO LAUNCH COMMUNITY-POLICE MEDIATION PILOT TO ADDRESS SELECT POLICE MISCONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The program would allow some COPA and BIA complaints to be referred to a community mediation program

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Police Department (CPD) today announced a plan to launch a pilot program with the Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) to provide mediation of select police misconduct complaints filed with the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and the CPD Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA). Chicago residents, community leaders and stakeholders have called for an alternative to the traditional complaint investigation, which this pilot program will provide.

“Creating a community-based mediation program for reporting police misconduct complaints has been at the forefront of our mission to foster an environment that builds trust within the community and instill confidence that every voice is heard,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “This pilot program gets us closer to our goal of improving the standard for resolving misconduct complaints and represents another step towards compliance with the federal Consent Decree requirements.”

Guided by research and analysis gathered from public forums, surveys, focus groups, social media platforms, and other community engagement efforts, the City and CCR are developing a mediation model that will be used to address select complaints with the intention of finding resolution in a more expedited manner. The types of complaints to be mediated will include allegations related to perceived bias in policing or failures to provide appropriate service. The pilot mediation model will be conducted with specific outcomes in mind, including efficiency, transparency, procedural justice, and restorative justice, and will incorporate continuous opportunities for community involvement.

With the assistance of a highly trained impartial mediator, the complainant and CPD member will meet at a neutral location convenient for both parties and discuss the alleged misconduct with the goal of addressing the complaint in a mutually agreeable way. Research shows that, through mediation, complaints are usually



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resolved after the parties have heard and explained their points of view and have had an opportunity to explore where different perspectives may have led to miscommunication or disagreement. The program was developed to improve relations and build a better understanding between CPD members and the communities they serve.

“Building trust and cooperation between our officers and the communities they serve is at the heart of everything our Department does every day,” CPD Superintendent David O. Brown said. “This mediation model, based on abundant research and with specific and measurable goals, will go a long way toward fostering better communication between officers and the people we serve.”

“As the agency responsible for receiving complaints from the public alleging police misconduct, COPA fully supports this effort by the city that will not only bring quick resolution but also builds bridges in community and police relations,” said COPA Interim Chief Andrea Kersten. “With the addition of the mediation pilot, Chicago continues its reform efforts and has the potential to reduce the number complaints COPA receives which totals nearly 4000 each year.”

The 2019 Consent Decree entered into by the State of Illinois and City of Chicago requires the City to undertake certain reforms including developing a program for community mediation of complaints. The City’s work over the last year to move in a deliberate and community- informed manner has opened the door to this collaboration.

CCR, who the City will be working with to administer the program, has provided free mediation services to Cook County residents for more than 40 years, serving 4,500 clients and mediating over 1,500 cases a year. CCR will also be working with Marcia Thompson, an expert who has conducted significant research on mediation best practices and has advised the City on the development of the program.

Cassie Lively, CCR Executive Director, notes, “Community-police mediation programs across the country have demonstrated the potential for one-on-one dialogue to transform perceptions for both civilians and officers, and to create connections that repair harm and build trust. Chicago’s program will be a model for other jurisdictions looking at creating similar initiatives.”

“Selecting the right organization to support the development of the pilot has been critical” said Thompson, who worked with the City to select CCR as the City’s collaborator on the program. “CCR supports the vision for this program and has the right skills to help the program become successful and sustainable,”



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CCR uses a corps of 180 trained volunteer mediators to provide conflict resolution services using a facilitative model. Mediators participate in a 40-hour basic skills training followed by a 3-month mentorship program and skills-based assessment before being certified to mediate cases. Once mediators are certified, they are peer reviewed semi-annually in order to assess performance. Additionally, CCR provides monthly continuing education opportunities and trainings to its volunteer community to ensure continued mediator skill growth. Under CCR's facilitative model, mediators do not provide advice or opinion, but create an opportunity for parties to have productive conversations about the incident that brought them to mediation with an eye toward realistic resolutions.

This community mediation pilot program, set to launch this fall, is yet another step towards building trust between CPD members and the communities they serve, and providing opportunities for restorative justice to Chicago residents who have had negative interactions with the police.

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