

# HOW TO FILE A CITIZEN'S COMPLAINT



Police officers are trained to:

1. Protect and serve you.
2. Treat you with respect.
3. Not use profanity or racial slurs.
4. Not use excessive force.

If you believe the officer has not treated you in this manner, you have a right to file a complaint - as well as consult with an attorney.

## STEP #1

Write down details as soon as possible, such as:

- Incident number
- Time and location of the incident
- Details of the incident
- Name and badge # of the officer(s)
- Name of the police department
- Police car number

## STEP #2

Call the police department and ask what their procedure is for filing a Citizen's Complaint.

## STEP #3

You also have the right to file a complaint with:

Dauphin County District Attorney  
Address: Dauphin County Courthouse, 2nd Floor  
101 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101  
Phone: (717) 780-6767

If you are not in Dauphin County, contact the District Attorney for your county.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



**Dauphin County Public Defender's Office**  
Legal representation for low-income people.  
[www.dauphincounty.org](http://www.dauphincounty.org) (717) 780-6370

**Dauphin County Bar Association**  
Lawyer Referral and Pro Bono programs assist people to overcome unmet legal needs.  
[www.dcba-pa.org](http://www.dcba-pa.org) (717) 232-7536

**ACLU of Pennsylvania**  
Legal services on a limited basis for cases of civil liberties and civil rights violations.  
[www.aclupa.org](http://www.aclupa.org) (215) 592-1513

**PA Immigration Resource Center (PIRC)**  
Legal services for immigrant victims of domestic violence/sexual assault, & immigrants in detention.  
[www.pirclaw.org](http://www.pirclaw.org) (717) 600-8099

**PA Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)**  
Responds to hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims.  
<http://pa.cair.com> (267) 515-6710

**PA Human Relations Commission**  
Enforces the state's anti-discrimination law.  
[www.phrc.pa.gov](http://www.phrc.pa.gov) (717) 787-4410

State Representative Patty Kim



# GUIDELINES ON WHAT TO DO WHEN STOPPED BY THE POLICE

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW SO WE CAN ALL GET HOME SAFE



**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**



**STAY CALM**



**COOPERATE WITH THE OFFICER**

**DO NOT RUN!**



eliminating racism  
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Greater Harrisburg

Disclaimer: The content contained herein is not intended to constitute legal advice. Rather, it merely serves as a guide on what to do during a police encounter.

# DRIVING



1. Slow down, pull over safely on the right, and put on your hazard lights.

If the police vehicle is unmarked and you cannot identify the driver as a uniformed police officer, put your hazard lights on and drive below the speed limit to a well lit, populated location. You can also call 911 to verify whether it is a police vehicle or not.

2. Turn the car off, keep your seatbelt on, and turn on the inside light (if stopped at night).
3. Keep both hands on the steering wheel. Passengers, keep your hands still & visible.

Getting out of your car can be perceived as aggressive. Stay put and DO NOT RUN!

4. Stay calm, and be polite and respectful.
5. When asked, provide your driver's license, registration and proof of insurance - it is a violation not to carry these while driving.

If they are in the glove box or under the seat, state that and retrieve them slowly. Keep your hands visible at all times!

6. After you provide your identification, you have the right to ask the reason for the stop. The officer is obligated to answer you.

Do not get into an argument with an officer. If you feel that you have been treated unfairly, you have a right to file a Citizen's Complaint and/or consult with an attorney.

7. Answer the officer's questions truthfully, or respectfully decline to answer the questions.
8. If you are issued a ticket, you may sign it or respectfully decline to sign it.

The ticket is valid whether you sign it or not.

# WALKING



1. If approached by police, DO NOT RUN.
2. Stay calm, and be polite and respectful.
3. Be prepared to provide photo ID and cooperate.
4. Do not leave until the officer tells you that you are free to go.

# SEARCHES

You have the right to know WHY you are being searched. DO NOT resist the search.



## "Pat-Downs":

These occur regularly for officer and community safety, and if an officer has "reasonable suspicion" that you may be carrying a weapon.

Reasonable Suspicion = Police officers have the right to stop and briefly detain a person if, based upon the officer's training and experience, there is reason to believe that the individual is engaging in criminal activity. (thelawdictionary.org)

## Vehicle Searches:

If the officer has "probable cause", your car can be searched without a court-issued warrant.

Probable Cause = requires that an officer has sufficient facts and circumstances as would lead a reasonable person to believe that evidence or contraband relating to criminal activity will be found in the location to be searched. If an officer cannot articulate the facts forming the basis for probable cause, the search and seizure will not hold up in court. (thelawdictionary.org)

# FILMING/RECORDING



You may film or record police in a public place as long as you do not interfere with the performance of their duties.

# AS A BYSTANDER



If you have concerns about what you observe, you may file a Citizen's Complaint (see back).

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# IF YOU ARE ARRESTED



1. DO NOT RESIST ARREST, even if you believe you are innocent or have been subject to an improper search.
2. You will be informed of the reason for your arrest once you are in police custody.
3. You can ask to call someone to get your vehicle.
4. Your Miranda rights are not required to be read until you are under arrest, in custody and being questioned about a specific crime.

## Miranda Rights:

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak to an attorney, and to have an attorney present during any questioning. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for you at government expense.