
Policing Reform

Anti-Discrimination

Law enforcement agencies across the United States face increasing scrutiny from the government and the public. Baltimore, Chicago and other jurisdictions both large and small have turned to WilmerHale for counseling as they seek to reform their policing policies and practices in response to Department of Justice (DOJ) policing investigations. Clients trust our deep experience in assessing the issues from every vantage point. Our team blends law enforcement, civil rights, policy, strategic response and communications experience, and is committed to understanding the priorities and challenges of all stakeholders, from communities to police departments to investigating agencies. We strive to help cities and their police departments bolster public safety by embracing best practices and meeting their obligation and commitment to constitutional policing.

Police Department Counseling: When cities and law enforcement agencies seek to examine their practices and make changes that will lead to better service for their communities—whether in the context of an investigation or not—we can provide guidance at every step of the way. We take a broad approach that includes analyzing current police practices and developing guidance on policies including those relating to use of force, de-escalation and mental health.

Responding to DOJ Investigations: Major police departments have relied on our lawyers to counsel them through DOJ investigations of their policing practices. WilmerHale has leading anti-discrimination lawyers and more than 50 former DOJ lawyers, including Jamie Gorelick, who served as deputy attorney general between 1994 and 1997, the period during which the DOJ first instituted police “pattern or practice” investigations. This depth of experience with the department allows us to help cities and police departments view their policies through the eyes of the DOJ, and to facilitate cooperation that leads to real reform but also minimizes disruption to the essential services provided by law enforcement.

University Police Counseling: We advise local law enforcement authorities as well as college and university administrators regarding collaborative efforts to respond to sexual violence on campus, including the negotiation of memoranda of understanding between local and campus police departments. We also advise college and university administrators regarding campus policing practices and reform efforts, including appropriate responses to officer-involved incidents.