



**OFFICE OF
POLICE OMBUDSMAN**
808 W. SPOKANE FALLS BLVD.
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON 99201
509.625.6742
FAX 509.625.6748

October 15, 2019

Chief Craig Meidl
Spokane Police Department
1100 W. Mallon Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99260

RE: R19-3 – Reportable Uses of Force

Dear Chief Meidl,

We appreciate Spokane Police Department's (SPD) collaboration with the Office of Police Ombudsman's (OPO) initiative on the Police Force Analysis System (use of force dashboards). One of the services included with the consultant, Police Strategies LLC, is that they are able to analyze SPD's use of force compared to the other law enforcement agencies in their network.

Police Strategies LLC provided its assessment and recommendations in its Use of Force Summary Report from 2013 to 2018.¹ In reviewing how data is tracked from use of force incidents, it became clear that pursuant to the Use of Force Policy, §300.5 Documenting Force, officers have been tracking uses of force in police reports, including lower levels of force. However, as these lower level uses of force were not considered a "reportable use of force," they are not being properly counted as uses of force by the Spokane Police Department (SPD). Currently, only the cases which fall under the categories of §300.5.1 Notification to Supervisors trigger a use of force review and are counted as a use of force for reporting purposes.

One of the report's recommendations that we wish to endorse to SPD is to count use of physical force the same as the other agencies in the Police Strategies LLC network, and other policing agencies around the country. The report says that SPD's policy on physical uses of force is more limited than other agencies. SPD's current policy only requires officers report physical uses of force when the subject is injured or complains of an injury. Most other agencies require an officer[s] to report on any physical force that was used to overcome any level of resistance. This would include pulling a resistant subject's arms back for handcuffing, the use of joint manipulation and pain compliance techniques, physical strikes, pushes, and takedowns using body weight to hold a subject to the ground and wrestling with a subject.

¹ See <https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/opo/analysis/spd-use-of-force-summary-report-from-2013-to-2018.pdf> (last accessed on October 14, 2019).

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Email: SPDOmbudsman@spokanecity.org

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Updating the tracking of these uses of force would make for a more accurate comparison of force across agencies. More importantly, SPD would be more accurately reporting back to the community the actual uses of force which are occurring. Thus, I recommend SPD update its use of force reporting methodology to include reporting on any physical force that was used to overcome any level of resistance.

Sincerely,



Bart Logue
Police Ombudsman
Office of the Police Ombudsman, City of Spokane

cc: Director Jacqui MacConnell