



CIVILIAN OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR



CCPSA
COMMUNITY COMMISSION FOR
PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY



THE CITY OF CHICAGO

As the nation's third-largest city, Chicago is a major cultural, financial, and transportation hub located along the southwestern shores of Lake Michigan. Home to 2.7 million residents, the city is celebrated for its deep-rooted history, rich architectural legacy, and diverse communities. Chicago offers world-class arts and culture, premier universities and medical centers, vibrant neighborhoods, and expansive lakefront parks and trails. Its identity is deeply tied to civic pride, innovation, and resilience—characteristics that shape the city's efforts toward equity and public service.

Chicago operates under a Mayor-Council form of government. The Mayor, elected citywide, oversees city departments and services with 50 alderpersons representing individual wards, serving as the legislative branch and providing checks and balances. As part of its reform-minded governance, the City prioritizes police accountability and transparency through agencies like the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA).

THE COMMUNITY COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CCPSA)

The Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA), made up of civilian leaders, has the authority to select the Chief Administrator and hold them accountable for carrying out COPA's core mission. It was established by way of Municipal Code 2-80 to strengthen civilian oversight of law enforcement in Chicago. As an independent body, the Commission plays a central role in ensuring that the city's public safety systems reflect the values of transparency, equity, and responsiveness. CCPSA has the authority to select and evaluate the leaders of police oversight agencies, including COPA, set police department policy, and conduct community engagement to address public safety concerns. Through its work, the Commission seeks to foster trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

BACKGROUND: COPA's HISTORY AND PURPOSE

COPA is an independent agency but is part of a broader system of public accountability shaped by community voice. COPA was established by the City Council on October 5, 2016, to replace the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) amid increasing public demand for stronger oversight of police, including more effective and transparent investigations of police misconduct. COPA was designed to be an independent civilian agency tasked primarily with investigating allegations of misconduct involving members of the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Its formation marked a shift in how the City approached civilian oversight, moving toward greater accountability, public trust, and systemic reform.

COPA's mission is fourfold:

- Provide a just and efficient means to conduct fair, timely, thorough investigations of matters within its jurisdiction, including many allegations of police misconduct;
- Determine whether allegations are well-founded;
- Identify and address patterns of police misconduct;
- Make policy recommendations to improve CPD and reduce incidents of police misconduct.

COPA investigates and makes disciplinary recommendations regarding all incidents in which an officer discharges a weapon, or someone dies or is seriously injured while detained or in custody, and the most serious allegations involving CPD members, including use of excessive force, sexual misconduct, improper searches, bias-based verbal abuse and unlawful denial of counsel.

THE OPPORTUNITY

COPA is seeking a transformational and principled leader to serve as its next Chief Administrator. The Chief Administrator oversees a staff of approximately 140 professionals and leads a complex investigative operation central to maintaining public trust and constitutional policing in Chicago. This is a four-year appointment, with the possibility of renewal pending City Council approval.

This moment demands a leader who combines unwavering integrity, investigative expertise, and a proven ability to manage organizational change. The next Chief Administrator must demonstrate a commitment to accountability, fairness, and community engagement, while leading internal organizational reforms, enhancing collaboration with CPD and other stakeholders, and navigating Chicago's unique political complexities.



Key Responsibilities:

- Lead COPA in fulfilling its mandate to investigate police misconduct fairly, thoroughly, and independently;
- Oversee COPA's day-to-day operations;
- Conduct investigations into complaints against members of the Police Department alleging excessive force, domestic violence, sexual misconduct, coercion, improper search or seizure of either individuals or property, unlawful denial of access to counsel, or verbal abuse;
- Conduct investigations into all incidents, including those in which no allegation of misconduct is made, in which a Police Department member discharges: (a) a firearm in a manner that could potentially strike another individual, (b) a stun gun or TASER in a manner that results in death or serious bodily injury, or (c) in the Chief Administrator's discretion, other weapons discharges and other use of Police Department-issued equipment as a weapon that results in death or serious bodily injury;
- Conduct investigations into incidents, including those in which no allegation of misconduct is made, where a person dies or sustains a serious bodily injury while detained or in Police Department custody, or as a result of police actions, such as during attempts to apprehend a suspect;
- Conduct investigations into all incidents of an "officer-involved death," as the term is defined in 50 ILCS 727/1-5;
- Recommend to the Police Superintendent, with respect to incidents within the jurisdiction of COPA, appropriate disciplinary or other remedial action against members of the Police Department found to be in violation of any applicable Police Department rules, including rules related to the duty to provide truthful information regarding the officer's own conduct and the conduct of others, and the duty to report the misconduct of others;
- Conduct investigations to determine whether members of the Police Department are engaging in patterns or practices of misconduct, and where such a finding is made, recommend revisions to the Police Department's policies, practices, programs, and training to address and eliminate such patterns or practices;
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with key stakeholders, including the State's Attorney's Office, CPD leadership, DOJ, FBI, and the public;
- Build internal cohesion by promoting a transparent, collaborative, and mission-driven culture;
- Strengthen infrastructure for pattern-and-practice investigations and policy recommendations;
- Serve as the public face of COPA, representing the agency in community forums, media engagements, and City Council hearings;
- Ensure compliance with the federal consent decree and support implementation of trauma-informed, equity-centered practices;
- Based on information obtained through COPA investigations and review of law suits and criminal proceedings involving allegations of police misconduct, recommend to the Police Superintendent, the Chair of the City Council Committee on Police and Fire, the Police Board, and the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability, revisions to the Police Department's policies, practices, collective bargaining agreements, programs, and training in order to improve accountability, effectiveness, integrity and transparency of the Police Department.

Additional details about duties and responsibilities are outlined in the COPA ordinance, MCC 2-78-120, Office and Chief Administrator - Powers and duties.



PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Based on extensive stakeholder input, the following priorities have been identified for the next Chief Administrator to accomplish:

- **Enhance Investigative Excellence:** Maintain a focus on impartial, thorough, and timely investigations.
- **Build Public Trust and Community Engagement:** Chicago residents must understand COPA's role and believe in its independence. The Chief Administrator should be committed to earning the trust of those who bring allegations to COPA and those who are the subject of COPA investigations. The Chief Administrator should also expand outreach efforts, and deepen partnerships with community organizations.
- **Strengthen Internal Culture and Operations:** The agency has faced instability and morale challenges. The Chief Administrator must unify staff around a shared mission, implement systems to ensure fair, thorough, and timely investigations, enhance communication, mitigate internal conflict, and uphold equitable management practices.
- **Advance Pattern and Practice Analysis:** Develop a robust approach to identify systemic misconduct trends and provide policy recommendations that improve CPD practices.
- **Navigate Political and Institutional Complexity:** Ensure productive relationships with CPD, CCPSA, Office of Inspector General, labor unions, and City Council, while maintaining COPA's independence and credibility.
- **Lead with Integrity and Vision:** COPA's leader must embody transparency, ethical rigor, and a commitment to justice that transcends public pressure or political winds.

IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE

The next Chief Administrator of COPA will be a courageous, principled, and collaborative leader—someone whose moral compass is unwavering and who has the professional reputation and skills to command trust across constituencies. They will remain steady despite political headwinds, confident in their vision, and deeply committed to the dual imperatives of police accountability and public safety.

This individual will embody the highest levels of integrity, fairness, and impartiality, with proven ability to oversee complex, high-pressure investigations with objectivity and rigor. In making disciplinary recommendations, they will be guided by facts and a resolute sense of justice rather than by headlines or public opinion. As a sophisticated communicator, the Chief Administrator must clearly explain complex processes, and maintain respectful and productive relationships with the Superintendent of Police, the State’s Attorney’s Office, the FBI, community leaders, and oversight bodies such as the CCPSA and City Council. The candidate will have excellent judgment and discernment in balancing competing needs for transparency and confidentiality.



The ideal candidate will have a staff leadership style that is equitable, transparent, and inclusive—able to unify and motivate a diverse team of investigators, analysts, and attorneys. They will know how to boost morale, address concerns about workplace inequalities, and foster a culture of excellence, care, and accountability. They will have a proven ability to assemble a senior leadership team with hands-on experience in all key aspects of COPA's work.

The next Chief Administrator will also be a strategic systems thinker who embraces innovation and enhances COPA’s capacity by maintaining internal systems to ensure that investigations are fair, thorough, and timely, consistent with the organization’s mission, and allow for the identification of patterns and practices of misconduct, using data to inform future-focused policy recommendations. They will be comfortable with complexity and open to alternative approaches—including restorative practices in appropriate contexts.

The ideal leader will have an exemplary record of working effectively with diverse communities. They will be known for their trauma-informed, culturally competent approach and deeply dedicated to building trust across the city. As one community member said, the next Chief should be “mission-driven, people-focused, and able to see those harmed not just as cases, but as humans.”

Above all, the successful candidate will possess the personal courage to lead COPA with independence and vision—anchoring their leadership in justice, transparency, and unwavering service to the public good.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

- An attorney with substantial experience in criminal, civil rights, and/or labor law, or corporate and/or governmental investigations; or an individual with substantial experience in law enforcement oversight or investigating employee or other wrongdoing;
- Knowledge of law enforcement, particularly of internal investigations of wrongdoing and use of force;
- A commitment to and knowledge of the need for and responsibilities of law enforcement, as well as the need to protect basic constitutional rights of all affected parties;
- Demonstrated integrity, professionalism, sound judgment, and leadership; and
- The ability to work with diverse groups and individuals.

In accordance with the COPA Ordinance MCC 2-78-115, the Chief Administrator shall not be a current or former sworn employee of the Police Department, a non-sworn employee of the Police Department within the last five years, or an employee of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office within the last five years.

COMPENSATION

The Chief Administrator is appointed to a four-year term with a competitive salary of **\$203,532** and a benefits package.

HOW TO APPLY

The Chief Administrator search is being conducted on a nationwide basis by The Byers Group. First consideration will be given to applications received by **October 3, 2025**. To apply for this exciting opportunity, please electronically submit your resume and letter of interest to The Byers Group at: copa.chief@byersgroupca.com. The letter of interest should outline why you are interested in the role, your relevant accomplishments, and your vision for the position. The position will remain open until filled.

The Chief Administrator is selected by the CCPSA and confirmed by the City Council.



THE BYERS GROUP

EXECUTIVE SEARCH AND C-SUITE CONSULTING

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