



BUDEGET HEARING 2022 - OPENING STATEMENT: CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR ANDREA KERSTEN

I want to first begin my opening statement today by first acknowledging the chair of the budget committee, Alderwoman Dowell, and all members of City Council--it is a privilege to be able to speak before you today and answer your questions.

I consider it an honor and privilege to serve as Chief Administrator of COPA for the City of Chicago. COPA's mission is to be the agency that conducts fair and timely investigations within our jurisdiction; identifies and patterns and practices of police misconduct; makes policy recommendations to improve the Chicago Police Department; ensures there is consistent transparency on issues of policing; and engages with the communities we serve to build trust in both law enforcement and our oversight system.

While this work has been the focus of the agency for the past five years, there is yet more we can and will do to deliver on this mandate fully.

During the 2022 calendar year COPA has:

- Received 4,000 complaints, 1,728 pending cases under investigation, and concluded investigations in nearly 820 cases through Q3 2022.
- Made critical enhancement to COPA's Case Management System, to increase the efficacy of our data collection, and increase the agency's ability to make evidence-based policy recommendations to the Department.
- Continued to develop the COPA Academy, which will offer members of the public the opportunity to attend an abridged version of COPA Academy.
- Collaborated to launch the community-based mediation pilot program, along with Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, the Chicago Police Department, and the Center for Conflict Resolution, to resolve select misconduct complaints.
- Robust community engagement of nearly 7,000 residents through participation in ward, community, and townhall meetings as well as an increased focus on Latino and African American community organizations aimed at keeping stakeholders informed.
- Established and operationalized a Video Release and Transparency Unit that positions COPA and the City of Chicago to deliver on its obligations well in advance of the current 60-day release mandate of the Video Release Policy, manage requests for materials under Mayor Lightfoot's Executive Order 2021-1, and fulfill COPA's FOIA requests.
- Saw professional development of staff through multiple internal promotions and reduced the overall number of vacancies in our agency, while increasing in size.
- Achieved 98% preliminary compliance in COPA's Consent Decree mandates.



- Created a unit within Investigations to focus on improving operational efficiencies and achieving greater consistency in our investigative outcomes

The progress made within the agency this year speaks to the continuity and stability of COPA's leadership team and the unparalleled talent and enthusiasm of COPA's amazing staff. Their commitment and dedication give me great confidence in our agency's future and I am very proud of each of them as they represent their neighborhoods and city government, to the residents we serve; civilian and sworn.

I also want to take a moment to share our Vision Statement, which speaks to COPA's future. "Our vision is to be the leader in police accountability by conducting thorough investigations to advance the culture of policing and build trust in civilian oversight."

Our vision allows us to look out into the distance, to that fixed point on the horizon that we are striving to reach, while aligning our actions and efforts to the work we do today.

I am happy to say that COPA, is a national leader in police accountability. This was abundantly clear during our participation at the NACOLE Conference in Fort Worth Texas in September where we were selected to present on our training methodology and our approach to critical incident response, both of which serve as a national model. This is further demonstrated by the outreach we receive from civilian oversight agencies around the country, as well as federal and local law enforcement agencies, that seek our insight and expertise. This speaks to our expertise and legitimacy around the country.

But even more important than COPA's individual accomplishments, is the recognition that police accountability does not exist in isolation. COPA is an integral part of the City's broader public safety system, working alongside CPD, City Hall, CCPSC, CFD, PSA, OEMC, and now CCPSA. This year, COPA answered the City's call to further imagine the ways in which our work contributes to increased public safety for all Chicagoans. This led to new partnerships with and connection to the work of City agencies such as Streets and Sans, DFSS, data sharing and collaboration through CDPH's Data Academy, and an increased awareness among of our staff as to how police oversight contributes to broader public safety, beyond the outcome of any individual investigation.

As we look to 2023, COPA will focus its efforts on:

COPA's Policy, Research and Analysis Division to make policy and other reform recommendations to CPD, as informed by COPA's investigative outcomes and data. I also am excited to announce that we have recently hired a Deputy Chief of PRAD who will lead these efforts.



- Build and strengthen our Policy, Research and Analysis Division to be able to conduct pattern and practice investigations and leverage data science to make evidence-based policy recommendations to the Department and to improve our internal operations.
- Work to achieve secondary and operational compliance with essential Consent Decree mandates.
- Continue to reduce the average length of our investigations and our overall investigative caseload.
- Launch the first annual COPA Community Training Academy.
- Prioritize and support the wellness of our staff and the people we interact with in our work.

I would like to end my remarks by also thanking City Council for your continued partnership. Your input on matters of policy and legislative amendments; your willingness to grapple with the complexity of these issues; your communication with our office as we address the concerns and issues raised by your constituents; and your commitment to holding COPA accountable for the fulfilling the mandate you have given us as agency.

While COPA's work remains challenging and often polarizing, we are guided by the powerful message of city leaders that have come before us "Chicago is one city. We shall work as one people for our common good and our common goals" – Mayor Harold Washington. Let us continue that work together.

I thank you for this time and look forward to answering your questions.