

OPEN Police Complaints

The Problem: Underreported Police Misconduct

The vast majority of police misconduct in the U.S. goes unreported. Thirty-one million adults in 2011 had an involuntary contact with police. Of those, 2.9 million said the police *did not behave properly*. But only 4.2% (122,000 people) filed a complaint. One challenge is police agencies don't offer useful online resources for filing complaints against police. The few, larger municipal departments that reliably collect such data [rarely share it with the public](#). For example, before he killed Laquan McDonald, the Chicago police buried Officer Jason Van Dyke's lengthy history of excessive force complaints. By failing to control his abusive behavior (and attempting to cover up his killing), the police destroyed trust — especially within the city's black neighborhoods.

The Solution: Open Police Complaints (OPC)

We developed an easy-to-use online tool for reporting police behavior. Like “TurboTax” for police oversight, OPC gives users straightforward, step-by-step guidance to build and file professional-quality incident reports. Online filing lets victims of police misconduct avoid paper forms and unhelpful police station staff. The consistent user experience covers 18,000 U.S. police agencies. Unique [among police transparency initiatives](#), OPC doesn't rely on hard-to-extract police agency data. And we enable users, in specific cases, to post individual officers' names to our database. Because we're an independent nonprofit, users trust us. And we protect at-risk users and ourselves from legal liability with a safety-first privacy architecture. OPC also highlights *positive* police behavior, so we encourage users to file *compliments* too.

Beta Launch & Growth

Four months after OPC's beta launch, our first 303 signups produced 29 unique incident reports. We plan to scale user growth through organic web traffic from our user-generated content. We will also leverage the social media network of our parent company, [Flex Your Rights Foundation \(Flex\)](#), a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit. For example, we will use Flex's 45-million-view YouTube channel to promote OPC to a nationwide audience. We will also offer OPC to police oversight and civil rights organizations as a case intake and management tool. By September 2020, we will collect 500 new user complaints and partner with five strategic organizations. In five years, we will grow to 50,000 complaints per year and become the go-to clearinghouse for transparent and reliable real-time national data on police conduct.

Team

[Steven Silverman](#) is co-founder and CEO of OPC. As the founder of OPC's parent company, Flex Your Rights, he produces and distributes the internet's top know-your-rights content. [Morgan Lesko](#) is co-founder and CTO of OPC. A longtime coder and activist, for the past 20 years he has developed custom content management systems for drug policy and youth activism nonprofits.

Request

The project cost for the next 12 months is \$250,000, and we have already received a \$60,000 challenge grant. We will use funds for software engineering and design (\$100,000), customer service and training (\$60,000), partnership development (\$60,000), and outreach (\$30,000).