



Communities United Against Police Brutality™

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www.CUAPB.org

STARTING A POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ORGANIZATION

People contact us from around the country for help with their police brutality incidents. However, as an all-volunteer organization in Minneapolis, MN we are only able to help people in our local area. We strongly encourage people in other areas to get involved in their local groups but if there is no local group, please consider starting one in your own area. Here is some information on how to start a group in your area.

Assess the Local Scene

Before you start your own group, find out if there are others already doing the work in your area. No use reinventing the wheel! Google helps a lot with this—try searching under POLICE BRUTALITY or POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY and the name of your town or area. You can also try searching on COP WATCH, POLICE MISCONDUCT and other terms. Read media articles about policing issues in your community and notice if anyone is being quoted—that may be a person who is doing this work and can help you.

Starting a Group

If your search reveals that no one is doing this work in your area, you may want to start your own group. The easiest way to do this is to offer information that captures the interest of others. Once you start talking about this issue, you will be amazed at how many people are affected and how many people are willing to get involved.

- 1) Find a place to hold a meeting. Meeting rooms in public libraries are often free to use and offer the added benefit of being politically neutral.
- 2) Make a flyer inviting people to your meeting. Put it on bulletin boards at grocery stores, coffee shops, restaurants, etc. and ask the local media to add your meeting to their community calendar.
- 3) Figure out what you are going to talk about. One of the best ways to “break the ice” on this issue is to offer Know Your Rights training. The organization Flex Your Rights (flexyourrights.org) provides low-cost films you can use or you could ask a local attorney to provide this training (or just be available to answer questions after the film). We can also provide you with Know Your Rights handouts. Allow about 45 minutes to an hour for this part of the meeting.
- 4) After the Know Your Rights training, open up the floor for people to discuss their experiences with policing. Try to keep the story-telling brief and to the point so that interest doesn't fade and the meeting doesn't go on too long.
- 5) Make a sign-in sheet and have people sign in so that you collect their names, phone numbers, email addresses.

- 6) Ask people if they are interested in working on the issue. Set up a time, date and location for the next meeting within a few weeks. Ask people to bring others to the next meeting.
- 7) Set up an email list and send a reminder a day or two before the next meeting.
- 8) At your second meeting, come up with name for your group and decide on a regular meeting schedule. **Please note:** The name Communities United Against Police Brutality and the acronym CUAPB are trademarked so you cannot use them.

Build an Infrastructure

As your organization gets bigger and more well-established, you will need to build an infrastructure that can sustain the group. Many great organizations fall apart because they didn't take the time to build their infrastructure.

There are lots of ways to organize. Start by making a list of tasks. You can then decide how to make sure they get done. A few ways to organize are:

- Assign tasks to individuals willing to do them.
- Assign tasks to work groups. Each work group should have a person in charge who can hold people accountable for getting things done and who can report progress at meetings.
- Divide the tasks among officers such as president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer.

Typical tasks include:

- Scheduling meetings
- Running meetings
- Taking minutes at meetings
- Maintaining the email/ mailing list
- Writing newsletters, flyers and other documents
- Maintaining the bank account and financial records—this needs to be done by someone trusted by everyone in the group. Often it is wise to have two people as signatories on checks and receiving the bank statement.
- Media spokesperson (who can speak for the group?)
- Social media and website

In addition, come to agreement about how decisions will be made in the group—by majority vote, consensus, etc. Also determine how decisions will be made between meetings.

Decide What Work to Do

Police misconduct and brutality is somewhat unique to the community and even to populations of people within the community. If you are only familiar with your own incident, you may not have a clear idea about the needs in your community. You can learn about these needs by listening to the stories of others and looking for patterns, by reading local media articles about police conduct, or by observing court cases. You can also obtain a copy of your police department's policy manual and review it for areas that

are problematic or need improvement. Contact local attorneys who take police brutality cases (you can find them at <http://www.nlg-npap.org/find-an-attorney> or by calling the local bar association) and interview them to learn about the problems they see in the community. This is also a good way to start building relationships with local attorneys you can refer cases to later.

Work done by police accountability organizations general falls into a few categories:

- Advocacy—providing support for people dealing with the effects of police brutality such as lawyer referrals, jail support, going to court, etc. This also includes advocacy for whistleblower cops. Advocacy is important because it helps people regain their power but always ask people you help to get involved in your group.
- Policy work—going to the legislature to push for good legislation or to fight bad legislation, working with the city council to change ordinances, demanding changes in police budgets, pushing for a civilian review authority, etc.
- Political actions—protests, rallies, sit-ins, speaking at city council meetings, etc.
- Education—Know Your Rights training, cop watch training, other educational events. Also, learn how your state's data practices act works so that you can obtain information about police complaints and police operations and share it with the community.

In other words, there are lots of ways to take on this issue. For more ideas, see the Campaign Zero website at <http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#vision> and our website at www.cuapb.org.

For More Help Getting Started

Our organization has been around for more than 15 years and we are happy to help you with any questions you might have. We are also happy to share the literature we have developed over the years. Just ask!