



Research Fellow – Special Project

The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, is the nation's only non-profit organization of police oversight agencies, practitioners, and supporters. It has worked to legitimize law enforcement oversight as a professional field of study and practice and facilitated the development of professional standards, including a Code of Ethics, as well as core competencies and training guidelines for oversight practitioners. NACOLE works collaboratively with oversight practitioners, communities, academics, and law enforcement interested in oversight and is now engaging in a two-year project to develop a state-by-state directory of the legal obstacles that impede or limit independent civilian oversight of law enforcement.

Project Description

Throughout the United States, state statutes, municipal laws, and/or collective bargaining agreements restrict efforts to improve law enforcement transparency and accountability. These legal obstacles place limits on civilian oversight agencies' authorities and processes in ways that undermine agencies' capacity to effectively carry out their mandates, provide transparency, and restore community trust in law enforcement through independent oversight. Such obstacles often restrict civilian oversight agencies' ability to conduct independent investigations or review internal investigations, limit their role in disciplinary processes, deny them access to law enforcement agency records and/or the use of subpoenas, prevent these agencies from releasing information to the public, and curb their ability to influence department policies, procedures, and training.

Specific statutory and contractual provisions illustrate some of the legal impediments that preclude implementation of effective civilian oversight of law enforcement practices. For example, in Kentucky and Rhode Island, the states' Officer Bills of Rights stipulate that civilians are not permitted to participate in the investigative process. In Tennessee,

House Bill 658/Senate Bill 1407, which went into effect in May 2019, prohibits local community oversight agencies from possessing the power to issue subpoenas for obtaining documents or compelling witness testimony. In Fort Worth Texas, the meet and confer agreement between the city and the Fort Worth Police Officers Association, states that interviewing officers who are the subject of administrative hearing takes place “whenever practical,” a provision that leads to critical investigative delays.

Responsibilities and Essential Skills

NACOLE is seeking a research fellow to collect and compile relevant data, distill and concisely summarize data, and conceptualize and develop a comprehensive report, searchable database, and/or directory, and draft relevant reports with supporting documentation and analysis. Candidates should possess knowledge and understanding of civilian oversight and law enforcement accountability issues; the ability to identify and comprehend state and municipal statutes and collective bargaining contracts; and have excellent written and oral communication, organizational, and critical-thinking skills. Candidates should also be capable of working independently and as part of a team.

Preferred Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor’s degree in criminal justice, political science, public policy, sociology, or a related field
- Familiarity with law enforcement oversight or government accountability mechanisms
- Previous experience with research, data collection, data analysis, and report writing
- An equivalent combination of education, training, and experience may be considered

Interested candidates should send an initial application to Cameron McElhiney at mcellhiney@nacole.org by October 22, 2021 and should include the following:

1. Cover letter containing research interests and career goals
2. Current CV or resume
3. Name and contact information for three (3) references

Questions may be directed to Cameron McElhiney at (317) 721-8133 or by email at mcellhiney@nacole.org. Qualified candidate materials will be reviewed and candidates scheduled for an interview at a later date.