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OIG RECOMMENDS NOPD USE SOFTWARE TO CONTINUE DECREASING POLICY VIOLATIONS WITHOUT SACRIFICING OFFICER WORK HOURS

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) today released a public letter recommending the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) begin using payroll integration software to continue preventing secondary employment violations while saving officer work hours.

Today's letter includes findings of an OIG review of policies and procedures used by the NOPD and the Office of Police Secondary Employment (OPSE) for work outside of regular police shifts, such as details. The OPSE manages and coordinates secondary employment for NOPD officers.

Law-enforcement officers often perform off-duty details to supplement their incomes. These details can have positive impacts, such as strengthening ties to a community and promoting public safety by assisting with crowd control. However, details can create potential risks, including officer injury or insufficient rest and opportunity for fraud. Law enforcement agencies must mitigate these risks by providing proper oversight of secondary work through effective policies and procedures.

According to NOPD policy, secondary employment violations include: working overlapping shifts for the NOPD and an off-duty detail, working more than 16 hours and 35 minutes within a 24-hour period (also known as the "16:35 rule"), and starting details less than 15 minutes after an on-duty shift.

Between 2020 and 2022, several media outlets reported that NOPD officers were potentially committing payroll fraud by working overlapping shifts, as in working regular shifts while also working off-duty details. In response, the NOPD conducted internal investigations, strengthened and clarified secondary employment violation policies, and implemented a payroll comparison analysis in 2023 to identify officers who potentially committed violations.

The OIG conducted a review of the NOPD and OPSE policies and procedures for secondary employment. The review, which covered June 2023 through December of 2023, found that NOPD and OPSE policies aligned with the NOPD's federal Consent Decree, and the payroll comparison analysis resulted in a downward trend in violations.

However, this progress came at the expense of workforce hours and was not without error.

The NOPD and OPSE manually performed the payroll comparison analysis, which used significant work hours from an agency already contending with significant officer shortages. OIG evaluators learned that NOPD and OPSE manually performed the payroll comparison analysis because the systems used by the two departments were incompatible, and finalized payrolls on alternate weeks.

The OIG recommends the NOPD obtain a software add-on to integrate both payroll systems, which would significantly reduce work hours needed for payroll comparison analysis.

Use of software could also improve the agencies' ability to identify and mitigate potential violations in real time. According to a 2023 memorandum to NOPD Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick, the NOPD found that violation of the 16:35 rule was a primary contributor to overall possible violations. However, many instances of overlapping shifts were due to time being entered incorrectly by either the officer, supervisor, or OPSE. The OIG believes use of integration software could aid in preventing and identifying of these issues.

To address this finding, the OIG recommends the NOPD and the OPSE prioritize efforts to obtain funding from the New Orleans City Council to integrate payroll systems. This will allow them to identify potential violations in a timely manner, optimize the NOPD workforce, and further reduce opportunities for fraud, waste, and abuse.

Inspector General Ed Michel stated:

“Efficient and effective policing is essential to improving safety in the City of New Orleans. As the NOPD continues to decrease rates of secondary employment policy violations, it is incumbent upon the agency to obtain and use technology in an effort to conserve officer hours, ensuring effective operations.”

To view the letter, visit nola.ig.gov.

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