This pamphlet has been prepared to acquaint you with the operation of the Meriden Police Department's citizen commendation and complaint processes. The mission of the department is really quite simple: **To earn and protect the public trust.**

In doing so, we have created a method for the public to officially recognize and praise the efforts of our employees, in addition to having a system to bring to our attention complaints and concerns about our performance and behavior.

The men and women of the department understand that our greatest resource and asset is the support and assistance given by the community we serve. Naturally, this relationship, or "partnership" as we think of it, with the citizens of Meriden is something we must constantly strive to protect. This is a responsibility shared by every member of the department and it is the primary task of the citizen complaint process.

HOW DO I COMMEND OR COMPLIMENT THE PERFORMANCE OF A MERIDEN POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE?

- Coming in person to the police station located Downtown at 50 West Main Street, or by calling the Meriden Police Department's non-emergency number (203) 630-6215, or
- Mailing comments directly to the Chief of Police at 50 West Main Street, Meriden, CT 06451

When a commendation is received verbally, it will be documented and forwarded through the chain of command to the Chief of Police.

Letters of commendation from citizens are posted for all department employees to view. The employees of the Meriden Police Department appreciate the effort and consideration of concerned citizens who take the time to commend our employees.

Here are some of the most common questions and concerns expressed by the public about the citizen's complaint process.

HOW DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE OR BEHAVIOR OF A MERIDEN POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE?

Complaints will be accepted from any source and may be made anonymously, in person, or by telephone. While the department does accept anonymous complaints, an investigation generally cannot proceed based solely on anonymous uncorroborated information, unless the allegation can be confirmed by an independent source. Preferably, complaints should be made in person by the individual directly making the allegation.

The department accepts complaints made against police officers, civilian employees, part-time and volunteer workers, and other agents of the department. A citizen can initially speak to any supervisor, or the Office of Internal Affairs, about an allegation or the complaint process, but the citizen will be referred to the immediate supervisor or the Internal Affairs Office, depending upon the seriousness of the allegation.

As part of the investigation, you may be asked to give a sworn statement. An appointment will be made for you, and you are free to bring with you anyone of your choosing. You will be treated courteously and need not fear any type of intimidation or other improper behavior.

When making a complaint, simply relate the facts as you know them. Don't attempt to add to or embellish your complaint.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I MAKE A COMPLAINT?

If the complaint is for a serious matter, such as unnecessary or excessive use of force, false arrest or violation of a specific criminal statute, the Internal Affairs Unit will investigate the complaint.

Less serious matters, such as rudeness, discourtesy, and minor infractions of the rules, regulations, policies or procedures will be investigated by the employee's immediate supervisor. Investigators then forward the findings to the Chief of Police, who will hold an administrative hearing on all disciplinary matters. Based on the results, the complaint can either be sustained or not sustained. If sustained, the Chief of Police will determine type of sanction to be imposed upon the employee. Sanctions may include retraining, counseling, reprimand, suspension without pay, transfer, reassignment, demotion, and/or dismissal.

IS SOMETHING DONE ON ALL COMPLAINTS?

Yes. All complaints are initially documented on a *Citizen Complaint Form* and thoroughly examined and investigated consistent with Departmental and City policy, labor agreements, and State law.

WHAT DOES THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICE DO?

Members of the Internal Affairs Unit report directly to the Chief of Police and have the responsibility of coordinating the investigations of serious allegations of misconduct; including:

- Allegations of unnecessary force used by an employee in the performance of duty.
- Any allegation of criminal conduct by a member of the department.
- Allegations of false arrest.
- Allegations of serious misconduct or misbehavior.

WHAT HAPPENDS AFTER AN INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETED?

After your complaint has been investigated, the investigating officer will notify you of the results. If you still disagree with the specific findings, you may request an interview with the Chief of Police. You may bring an advocate with you, however, this is an informal meeting and excessive numbers of persons tend to diminish effective communications.

You also have the right to ask another agency to conduct and/or review the investigation. These agencies include:

- Human Resources Director of the City of Meriden
- New Haven County State's Attorney's Office
- Connecticut State Police
- Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)

You should also know that making a complaint in no way limits your ability or right to pursue any other complaint forums if you feel that you have been wronged. Every complaint that involves a possible violation of a law is automatically forwarded to the State's Attorney for review.

WHAT RIGHTS DO POLICE OFFICERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES HAVE WHEN A COMPLAINT IS MADE AGAINST THEM?

Police employees are protected under their respective labor agreements, any applicable state and Federal statutes, and Department and City policy. These provisions provide that employees shall not be subjected to harassment, intimidation, and threats from supervisors, or unreasonable periods of interrogation. They also have a right to counsel or union representation during the investigation.

AM I AT RISK WHEN I MAKE A COMPLAINT AGAINST A POLICE EMPLOYEE?

Absolutely not! However, if you deliberately make a false complaint against an officer, you could be prosecuted criminally and/or be held civilly liable.

WILL THE POLICE REALLY BE IMPARTIAL WHEN THEY INVESTIGATE THEIR OWN OFFICERS OR EMPLOYEES?

Yes, the question goes right to the heart of what professional policing is all about. We strive to ensure quality performance from all our officers and employees who represent our department and the City of Meriden. We want the public to know that we do not tolerate misconduct. Even perceived tolerance of employee misconduct will lead to a breakdown of the public trust which would adversely effect the ability of the police department to function properly.

DOES MERIDEN GET MANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT ITS POLICE OFFICERS?

No. We respond to over 40,000 calls for service each year, handle over 100,000 telephone calls, and experience thousands of other service-related interactions with the public. Less than one-half of one percent actually result in complaints regarding employee's conduct and behavior.

The task of policing today's society is demanding and challenging. The Meriden Police Department will continue to demand the highest standards of service and performance from our employees. Realizing that it is not possible to enforce the rules of society without incurring some animosity, we will endeavor to protect our employees from unwarranted and false complaints, and protect our citizens from unwarranted and inappropriate mistreatment.

Through this entire process, we will work to maintain your trust and support and develop a real working partnership with our community. Input from citizens helps to ensure that these high standards are constantly being met.

The Meriden Police Department is sincerely interested in rewarding outstanding performance and taking immediate action in those instances where an employee fails to meet our high standards.

MERIDEN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Citizen Commendation and Complaint Procedures

William C. Abbatematteo
Chief of Police

Internal Affairs Unit
50 West Main Street
Meriden, CT 06451
(203) 630-6339

We are committed to providing a safe and orderly environment in our City through professionalism, dedication, and active partnerships with the community, and concern for individual dignity.