



June 13, 2025

Larry B. Snelling
Superintendent of Police
Chicago Police Department
3510 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60653

Re: CPD Policy Recommendation for a Warrantless Search Policy

Dear Superintendent Snelling,

Identification of gap in policy:

The Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) has identified a substantial gap in CPD policy regarding warrantless searches for exigent circumstances. CPD does not have a directive dedicated to the policy and procedures for CPD members when engaging in a warrantless search of a residence. The CPD directives only briefly address warrantless searches:

1. The current draft Search Warrants (S04-19) states when members can enter a residence due to exigent circumstances:

Nothing in this policy prohibits a Department member from entering the search warrant location (e.g., residence) for the purpose of responding to an emergency, helping minimize trauma or damage, or otherwise providing for the physical safety or well-being of any person.¹

2. The Consent to Search Incidents (S04-19-01) includes a brief section on “unusual and exigent circumstances” that states:

Department members will not unreasonably endanger themselves or another person to conform to the procedures or restrictions of this directive if circumstances exist that might pose an immediate threat or safety concern. Department members will be required to justify any actions taken during a consent to search incident.²

¹ See S04-19(III)(G)(3) Search Warrants, draft issued February 7, 2025.

² See S04-19-01(IV) Consent to Search Incidents, effective August 10, 2015.

Evidence supporting the need to address the policy gap:

COPA has identified a large number of cases regarding warrantless searches of residences with sustained misconduct allegations, including Fourth Amendment violations and improper notification and documentation of the incident. Specifically, CPD member misconduct included:

- a. entered residence without justification;³
- b. searched residence without justification;⁴
- c. seized property without justification;⁵
- d. stopped without justification;⁶
- e. detained persons without justification;⁷
- f. failed to give tenant notice of entry to residence;⁸
- g. caused damage without justification;⁹ and
- h. failed to complete proper documentation and notifications.¹⁰

Proposal of new policy:

To address this gap in policy and provide CPD members with a clear understanding of the requirements when conducting warrantless searches of residences, COPA recommends that CPD should develop a new directive specifically for warrantless searches.

Proposal for collaboration:

COPA acknowledges that the development of a new directive is complex and can involve significant time and resources. COPA proposes that CPD and COPA work collaboratively to understand the issues identified in this letter and develop a responsive directive together. For its part, COPA can provide valuable insight gained from investigations of misconduct cases that occurred during warrantless searches of residences, particularly Fourth Amendment violations that are under COPA’s jurisdiction. COPA is open and willing to engage with CPD staff in a collaborative discussion about the process for developing this new directive before a formal response to this policy recommendation is due in 60 days.

³ See COPA logs 2019-0000632, 2019-0001681, 2019-0004939, 2019-0005221, 2022-0001873, 2022-0002705, 2022-0003752, 2023-0001116, 2023-0001294, 2023-0001724, 2023-0003217, 2023-0004347, and 2024-0002537.

⁴ See COPA logs 2019-0000632, 2019-0001681, 2019-0005221, 2022-0004278, 2022-0004580, 2023-0001116, 2023-0001294, 2023-0001724, 2023-0003217, and 2023-0004373.

⁵ See COPA logs 2022-0004580 and 2023-0001724.

⁶ See COPA log 2022-0004637 (remained in the apartment longer than necessary).

⁷ See COPA logs 2019-0001681, 2022-0004580, 2023-0001724, 2023-0004347, and 2024-0002537.

⁸ See COPA log 2023-0001116.

⁹ See COPA logs 2019-0004939 and 2023-0004347.

¹⁰ See COPA logs 2023-0001116, 2023-0001724, 2023-0003217, 2023-0004347, and 2024-0002537.

Thank you for taking the time to review our recommendation. Although we hope to collaborate sooner, COPA requests a formal response to the above recommendation from the Superintendent of Police, or a designee, by August 13th, 2025, pursuant to Section 2-78-130(b) of the Municipal Code of Chicago.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LaKenya White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "W".

LaKenya White
Interim Chief Administrator
Civilian Office of Police Accountability

cc:

Yolanda Talley, First Deputy Chief, Chicago Police Department

Dana O'Malley, Chief of Staff, Chicago Police Department

Scott Spears, General Counsel, Chicago Police Department



Brandon Johnson
Mayor

Department of Police · City of Chicago
3510 S. Michigan Avenue · Chicago, Illinois 60653

Larry Snelling
Superintendent of Police

August 13, 2025

LaKenya White, Interim Chief Administrator
Civilian Office of Police Accountability
1615 West Chicago Avenue, 4th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60622

RE: COPA Policy Recommendation for a Warrantless Search Policy

Dear Interim Chief Administrator White:

The Chicago Police Department acknowledges and appreciates the Civilian Office of Police Accountability's recommendation that COPA and the CPD work collaboratively together regarding warrantless searches of residences. The CPD is interested in hearing COPA's suggestions on this issue and welcomes the opportunity to evaluate improvements that CPD could make to both policy and training.

We will coordinate with your staff to schedule a meeting to hear COPA's suggestions on this matter.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Spears".

Scott Spears
General Counsel