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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2018

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Civilian Complaint Review Board Issues 2017 Annual Report

Report Notes Rise in Public Interaction with CCRB, Ongoing Emphasis on Outreach Efforts

New York, NY – Today, the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) released its 2017 Annual Report. The report outlines investigations, mediations, and prosecutions from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31 of 2017. In addition to offering data on complaints of police misconduct filed with the Agency, the report reflects a continued commitment to improving community outreach and an increase in civilian contact with the CCRB.

The Agency received 4,487 complaints from civilians regarding allegations of Force, Abuse of Authority, Discourtesy, or Offensive Language by members of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) during 2017. This is a 5 percent increase from the previous year. While there is no way to know for sure whether this increase represents higher rates of misconduct or higher rates of reporting, it is notable that the CCRB Outreach staff conducted more informational events each year in 2016 and 2017 than in the prior three years combined.

Of the allegations closed in 2017, the majority (58 percent) were allegations of Abuse of Authority, such as unlawful searches of premises, refusals to provide a name or shield number, and threats to arrest a civilian. The substantiation rate for complaints of all types of police misconduct—20 percent—falls within the range of substantiation rates from the last five years, which spans from 15 percent (2013) to 24 percent (2015).

Among the Agency’s continued priorities in 2017 was making data on complaints and investigations accessible and transparent through the Data Transparency Initiative (DTI). The Agency launched the DTI in 2016, and 2017 represented the first complete year of the effort.

“In addition to conducting investigations as the nation’s largest independent civilian oversight agency, the CCRB is one of few entities that provide data on complaints of police misconduct to the general public,” said CCRB Acting Chair Fred Davie. “As our city continues seeking ways to improve police-community relations, clear data that provides insight into the current state of affairs is essential.”

For the first time since the Agency’s Administrative Prosecution Unit (APU) began prosecuting NYPD officers, the annual report distinguishes the concurrence rate for APU cases from the rate of concurrence for all other CCRB cases. While the NYPD imposed some form of discipline on officers in 73 percent of non-APU cases, the concurrence rate for these cases—or the rate at which the discipline the NYPD imposed matched or exceeded the CCRB’s recommendation—was 42 percent. For cases closed by the APU, this rate was 27 percent. The most frequent reason for a lack of concurrence in APU cases was a not guilty verdict by the assigned trial commissioner (36 percent of cases in 2017).

Making the CCRB more accessible to everyday New Yorkers and increasing the public’s understanding of the complaint process also was among the Agency’s priorities in 2017 and will continue to be a focal point going forward, noted CCRB Executive Director Jonathan Darche, Esq.

“With the implementation of the Right to Know Act this fall, our investigations into police sexual misconduct, and the continuing rollout of the NYPD body-worn camera program, it’s important that the CCRB be proactive in building public understanding of these changes,” said Darche. “The Agency can investigate allegations of misconduct only if people know how and where to file a complaint. Greater awareness and understanding of the CCRB among the public better enables the Agency to investigate misconduct, identify trends, and ultimately, increase accountability and improve police-community relations.”

The report also notes the recent expansion of the CCRB’s Outreach and Intergovernmental Affairs Unit. The unit—previously made up of one employee—is responsible for the public education of millions of New Yorkers. In 2017, this six-person team conducted more than 800 presentations throughout all five boroughs and established partnerships with community organizations, elected officials, and other City agencies. The unit presented information about the CCRB before diverse audiences in various settings, including community events, schools, libraries, and senior centers.

This is the Agency’s first annual report issued since the City announced that all New York City patrol officers will have body-worn cameras by the end of 2018. The report notes that the Board was able to make a definitive determination about the majority (55 percent) of allegations for which there was video evidence in 2017, whereas it could do so for just 38 percent of allegations without video evidence. Furthermore, the rate of substantiation of complaints accompanied by video (31 percent) was double that of complaints without video (14 percent).

“A factor in whether the Board is able to make a clear determination about the facts of a case is the presence of video evidence,” said Darche. “Providing every NYPD patrol officer with a body-worn camera is a major step forward for accountability when misconduct is found. We must continue working with the Department to ensure CCRB obtains footage in an expeditious, efficient manner which will enable the Agency to investigate allegations quickly and thoroughly.”

The complete report is available here: www.nyc.gov/ccrbreports.

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The New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) is the largest police oversight entity in the nation and is empowered to investigate, mediate, prosecute, and recommend disciplinary action for complaints alleging misconduct by NYPD officers. See NYC Charter § 440(c)(1). The agency's jurisdiction includes excessive and unnecessary force, abuse of authority, discourtesy, and use of offensive language. To further this mission, CCRB issues monthly, biannual, and special statistical and qualitative reports analyzing trends and recurring issues arising from the many thousands of civilian complaints it receives each year.