



# LEGAL DEFENSE TRUST

MICHAEL P. STONE, GENERAL COUNSEL

21800 Cactus Avenue, Riverside, CA 92518

Phone (951) 653-0130 Fax (951) 656-0854

## LEARNING POINTS



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## PUBLIC ACCESS TO YOUR DISCIPLINARY RECORDS— THE IMPACT OF SENATE BILL 1421

*By Robert Rabe, Esq.*

With the signing of Senate Bill 1421 by Governor Brown, California will join almost every other state and allow, on a limited basis, public access to public safety officer disciplinary records. Effective January 1, 2019, SB 1421 will allow members of the public, (which includes the press), to obtain certain law enforcement agency personnel records that were previously available only through the *Pitchess* procedure, (if at all), by making a request under the California Public Records Act (“CPRA”). The new law will apply to both “peace officer” and “custodial officer” members of the RSA.

With this change in the law, a deluge of CPRA requests is anticipated after the new year. All RSA members should be informed about this new law, so they will not be surprised if records relating to an incident that they were involved in are released.

SB 1421 amends *Penal Code* § 832.7 to require disclosure of records and information relating to the following types of incidents in response to a request under the CPRA:

Records relating to an incident in which a sustained finding was made by any law enforcement agency that a peace officer or custodial officer engaged in **sexual assault** involving a member of the public. “Sexual assault” is defined for the purposes of §832.7 as the commission or attempted initiation of a sexual act with a member of the public by means of force, threat, coercion, extortion, or offer of leniency or any other official favor, or under the color of authority. The “propositioning for or commission of any sexual act **while on duty** is considered a sexual assault” - even if the sexual act was found to be consensual.

Records relating to an incident in which a sustained finding of **dishonesty** by a peace officer or custodial officer directly relating to the reporting, investigation, or prosecution of a crime, or directly relating to the reporting of or investigation of misconduct by another peace officer or custodial officer, including, but not limited to, any sustained finding of perjury, false statements, filing false reports, destruction of evidence or falsifying or concealing of evidence.

Records relating to the report, investigation, or findings of an incident involving the **discharge of a firearm** at a person by a peace officer or custodial officer. Records relating to the report, investigation or findings of an incident in which the **use of force** by a peace officer or custodial officer against a person results in death or great bodily injury. [Note: The disclosure of such records may occur even if there is no sustained finding of misconduct by any peace officer or custodial officer.]

The records disclosed pursuant to SB 1421 will be redacted only to remove personal data or information, such as a home address, telephone number, or identities of family members, to preserve the anonymity of complainants and witnesses, or to protect confidential medical, financial, or other information in which disclosure would cause an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, or where there is a specific, particularized reason to believe that disclosure would pose a significant danger to the physical safety of the peace officer, custodial officer, or others.

Stay Safe!

**Robert Rabe** is Stone Busailah, LLP's writs and appeals specialist. His 40 years practicing law include 16 years as a Barrister, Supreme Court of England and Wales, practicing in London, England.