

SUMMARY REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Date/Time/Location of Incident:	August 23, 2020 / 5:51 pm / 3804 W. Augusta Blvd., Chicago, IL 60651.
Date/Time of COPA Notification:	February 18, 2021 / 9:40 am.
Involved Member #1:	Lieutenant Neal McLoughlin / Star#293 / Employee ID# [REDACTED] / DOA: August 4, 1997 / Unit: 011 / Male / White.
Involved Member #2:	Lieutenant Kevin Keefe / Star#283 / Employee ID# [REDACTED] / DOA: May 5, 1997 / Unit: 011 / Male / White.
Involved Member #3:	Sergeant Nicholas Urban / Star#1762 / Employee ID# [REDACTED] / DOA: November 29, 2004 / Unit: 011 / Male / White.
Involved Member #4:	Officer Jonathan Ridgner / Star#5144 / Employee ID# [REDACTED] / DOA: June 25, 2018 / Unit: 716 / Male / Black.
Involved Member #5:	Officer Nicholas Abramson / Star#13605 / Employee ID# [REDACTED] / DOA: December 12, 2016 / Unit: 011 / Male / White.
Involved Individual #1:	[REDACTED] / Male / Black.
Case Type:	05A – Excessive Force.

I. ALLEGATIONS

Member	Allegation	Finding / Recommendation
Lt. Keefe and Sgt. Urban	1. Making or approving one or more false, misleading, inaccurate, incomplete, and/or inaccurate statements when approving the Tactical Response Report completed by Police Officer Jonathan Ridgner related to RD #JD342692. 2. Making or approving one or more false, misleading, inaccurate, incomplete, and/or inaccurate statements when approving the Tactical Response Report completed by Police Officer Nicholas Abramson related to RD #JD342692	Sustained / Separation. Sustained / Separation.

Lt. McLaughlin	1. Making or approving one or more false, misleading, inaccurate, incomplete, and/or inaccurate statements when approving the Arrest Report of ██████████ completed by Police Officer Jonathan Ridgner related to RD #JD342692.	Unfounded.
Officer Ridgner	1. Grabbing ██████████ by the throat without justification.	Sustained / Separation.
	2. Taking ██████████ to the ground without justification.	Sustained / Separation.
Officer Abramson	1. Stating words to the effect of, "I'm going to catch a body today."	Sustained / Separation.
	2. Failing to report the excessive force used by Officer Jonathan Ridgner against ██████████	Sustained / Separation.
Officers Ridgner and Abramson	3. Detaining ██████████ without justification.	Sustained / Separation.
	4. Arresting ██████████ without justification.	Sustained / Separation.
	6. Failed to activate his body worn camera in violation of S03-14 Body Worn Cameras.	Sustained / Separation.
Officer Ridgner	5. Making one or more false, misleading, inaccurate, incomplete, and/or inaccurate statement when completing the Arrest Report, Case Report, Tactical Response Report, and/or Investigatory Stop Report related to RD #JD342692.	Sustained / Separation.
Officer Abramson	5. Making one or more false, misleading, inaccurate, incomplete and/or inaccurate statements when completing the Tactical Response Report related to RD #JD342692.	Sustained / Separation.

II. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Mr. ██████████ was socializing with acquaintances on a public sidewalk when he observed Officers Jonathan Ridgner and Nicholas Abramson (collectively "the Officers") drive past in a marked Department vehicle. As the Officers passed ██████████ they observed him look in

their direction, his eyes widen, him sit up, and touch his waistband area.¹ Based on these observations the Officers determined that ██████ was possibly armed, and that further investigation was needed. The Officers parked their vehicle, exited, and approached ██████. As the Officers exited their vehicle, ██████ stood and began to walk away at a leisurely pace.² The Officers responded to ██████ action by running towards ██████.³ As the Officers closed the distance on ██████ Officer Ridgner blocked ██████ path and attempted to grab ██████ arms.⁴ ██████ responded to this action by moving his arms and rebuffing Officer Ridgner's attempts to physically control him.⁵ Officer Ridgner responded to this action by grabbing ██████ by the throat/neck with his left hand and attempting to forcefully take ██████ to the ground.⁶



Image 1.⁷

¹ Att. 3, pg. 8; Att. 7, pg. 3; Att. 10, pg. 2; Att. 17, pg. 2; Att. 18, pg. 2; Att. 26, pgs. 8 to 10; Att. 27, pgs. 10 to 12. (When providing a description of ██████ movement at his waist, Officer Ridgner likened it to moving a belt buckle that was pressing against the stomach.)

² Att. 4 at 00:45; Att. 5 at 00:41; Att. 27, pg. 14 (Officer Ridgner characterized ██████ walk as brisk.)

³ Att. 4 at 00:51; Att. 5 at 00:42; Att. 16 at 05:47:00.

⁴ Att. 4 at 00:49; Att. 5 at 00:46.

⁵ Att. 4 at 00:50; Att. 5 at 00:47; Att. 27, pg. 25 (Officer Ridgner recounted ██████ verbally expressing a desire to not be stopped.)

⁶ Att. 4 at 00:53.

⁷ Officer Ridgner's face displays a visible grimace. Additionally, the force causes ██████ glasses to fall from his face. Screenshot from Att. 4 at 00:53.

Officer Ridgner's actions forced [REDACTED] from a standing position to a squatted position.⁸ Officer Ridgner then grabbed [REDACTED] right leg and attempted to lift it off the ground, causing [REDACTED] to fall to a seated position.⁹ Once [REDACTED] was seated on the ground, Officer Ridgner grabbed [REDACTED] throat/neck with his left hand a second time.¹⁰



Image 2.¹¹

After releasing [REDACTED] throat/neck, Officer Ridgner escorted [REDACTED] to his feet by using his right arm to pull [REDACTED] right arm in an upward motion. Once [REDACTED] was on his feet, Officer Ridgner wrapped his arms around [REDACTED] torso, lifted [REDACTED] from the ground, and forced [REDACTED] back towards the sidewalk headfirst.¹² [REDACTED] head impacted the sidewalk, causing [REDACTED] to suffer injuries and resulting in [REDACTED] lying motionless for several seconds.¹³

⁸ Immediately prior to this, [REDACTED] is depicted holding Officer Ridgner's right wrist; however, this was after Officer Ridgner had grabbed [REDACTED] by the throat/neck and attempted to take him to the ground. Att. 5 at 00:58.

⁹ Att. 5 at 00:59.

¹⁰ Att. 5 at 01:01.

¹¹ [REDACTED] face displays a look of panic. Screenshot from Att. 5 at 01:01.

¹² While POD footage is partially obscured by a traffic light, [REDACTED] feet are clearly captured in the air as his body is directed towards the ground. Att. 16 from 05:47:16 to 05:47:18; *also see* Att. 37 at 04:44 (Officer Abramson discussing how Officer Ridgner "bearhugged" [REDACTED] during the takedown.)

¹³ It is unclear if [REDACTED] motionlessness was a result of a loss of consciousness or merely a delay in responding to the events as they unfolded. Att. 5 from 01:05 to 01:09. Officer Ridgner remarked about [REDACTED] head "violently" impacting the concrete. Att. 27, pg. 42.

Image 3.¹⁴Image 4.¹⁵

Once [REDACTED] began to move, Officer Ridgner assisted him to his feet and escorted him, unrestrained, to the Department vehicle. Upon arrival at the vehicle, Officer Ridgner searched [REDACTED] handcuffed, and then seated [REDACTED] in the rear seat.¹⁶

Simultaneous to Officer Ridgner's actions with [REDACTED] several bystanders approached the Officers and tried to intercede. This caused Officer Abramson to direct his attention to the bystanders. Officer Abramson physically redirected members of the increasingly agitated crowd while hurling profanities at them. As [REDACTED] was being secured in the vehicle, a male bystander approached the Officers vehicle holding a wooden furniture leg;¹⁷ however, prior to getting close to the Officers a second male and female bystander interceded and redirected the male away from the Officers.¹⁸ Officer Abramson responded to the male with the wooden furniture leg by exclaiming "I'll catch a fucking body today, bitch!"¹⁹

¹⁴ There is a welt on [REDACTED] forehead between his right eyebrow and hairline. Att. 12, pg. 7

¹⁵ Att. 12, pg. 8.

¹⁶ During this search Officer Ridgner did not seize any of [REDACTED] personal property. Att. 5 from 04:13 to 06:02.

¹⁷ Att. 4 at 04:11.

¹⁸ Att. 4 at 04:13.

¹⁹ Att. 4 at 04:19.

Once [REDACTED] was in placed in the rear seat of the vehicle, the Officers drove around the corner to await the arrival of the Chicago Fire Department (CFD). While awaiting the arrival of CFD, Officer Ridgner requested and obtained [REDACTED] identification but allowed [REDACTED] to retain his cellular phone and other personal property.²⁰ After completing a name check on [REDACTED] Officer Ridgner exited his vehicle and approached the supervisors on scene. One of the supervisors²¹ asked what [REDACTED] arrest was for, while Officer Ridgner indicated his BWC was still recording and paused speaking until the supervisors told him to wait.²² Officer Calhoun observed that [REDACTED] was still in possession of his cellular phone and attempted to seize it; however, Officer Ridgner intervened and again searched [REDACTED]²³ Officer Ridgner closed the vehicle door while [REDACTED] yelled at the members and at one point stated, "Watch this."²⁴ When CFD arrived at the scene, they evaluated [REDACTED] and loaded him into the ambulance.²⁵ Once inside the ambulance, Officer Ridgner again searched [REDACTED] and recovered credit cards and other personal effects.²⁶ [REDACTED] was transported to Norwegian American Hospital with blunt force injuries to the forehead and arms, and pain in this right hand.²⁷ As [REDACTED] was being transported to the hospital, the Officers returned to the station while keeping their In-Car Camera (ICC) activated.

The ICC²⁸ captured audio of the Officers discussing the interaction with [REDACTED]. Specifically, the ICC audio captured the Officers discuss their plan to describe Officer Ridgner's grabbing of [REDACTED] throat/neck as an attempt to grab and control [REDACTED] shirt collar.²⁹ Additionally, the audio captured Officer Abramson remarking how Officer Ridgner released [REDACTED] throat/neck and was not choking him once [REDACTED] was on the ground.³⁰ Further, the audio captured Officer Abramson remarking about seeing Officer Ridgner wrap his arms around [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] legs in the air during the takedown.³¹ The audio also captured Officer Ridgner remark to Officer Abramson that their actions were problematic because [REDACTED] was wearing glasses and hit his head, causing him to be dazed.³² The audio captured Officer Abramson remarking that bystanders remarked that he "need a psych eval," and that he agreed.³³ Finally, the audio captured Officer Ridgner apologizing to Officer Abramson for causing any professional trouble for him.³⁴

²⁰ [REDACTED] identification was intermixed with credit cards and other similar items. Att. 5 at 09:49.

²¹ Possibly Sgt. Thomas Herrick.

²² Att. 59 at 07:19.

²³ Att. 5 from 11:05 to 11:39

²⁴ There is no indication that [REDACTED] spat at or on Officer Ridgner after stating "watch this." Att. 5 from 11:39 to 12:06.

²⁵ Att. 5 at 12:07.

²⁶ Att. 5 from 13:58 to 14:05.

²⁷ Att. 43, pgs. 4 and 5.

²⁸ Atts. 6, 36, and 37. Atts. 36 and 37 are exact versions of Att. 6 but contain enhanced audio.

²⁹ Att. 37 from 03:56 to 04:09. This is, in fact, how Officer Ridgner detailed the throat/neck grab of [REDACTED] in his TRR. See Att. 18, pg. 6.

³⁰ Att. 37 at 04:11.

³¹ Att. 37 at 04:44.

³² While relaying this information the Officers appeared to laugh. Att. 37 at 04:20.

³³ In response to this remark, Officer Ridgner acknowledged the concern and explained that was the impetus for him telling Officer Abramson to "relax bro." Att. 37 from 05:21 to 05:27.

³⁴ Att. 37 at 06:05.

During a statement to COPA,³⁵ ██████ asserted that he was never armed and was merely speaking with acquaintances. ██████ did acknowledge that he made eye contact with the Officers as they drove past but explained that he routinely looks at the occupants of passing vehicles.³⁶ ██████ relayed that after observing the Officers pass by he decided to walk to the corner store. He stood up and began walking towards the store while lifting his pants.³⁷ As ██████ was walking, he heard footsteps and turned to see the Officers quickly approaching him without saying anything.³⁸ Once Officer Ridgner reached ██████ he grabbed ██████ by the throat/neck, pushed him against a wall, and took him to the ground on two occasions. ██████ explained that while he did not think he lost consciousness, he did feel woozy, lightheaded, and suffered mental confusion.³⁹ ██████ added that at no time did he do anything that would have caused the Officers to stop him, nor did he resist the Officers or spit at anyone.⁴⁰ Finally, ██████ explained that his understanding of “catch a body” means to kill someone.⁴¹

During statements to COPA,⁴² Officer Ridgner explained, in addition to what is cited above, that his intent was to reach for ██████ collar and that any contact with ██████ throat/neck was unintentional.⁴³ Officer Ridgner also explained that when he took ██████ to the ground, he observed ██████ “violently” hit his head and his head “bouncing off the ground.”⁴⁴ Further, Officer Ridgner recalled that ██████ had difficulty standing on his own.⁴⁵ Officer Ridgner detailed how he is aware that there are tensions between the community and the Department.⁴⁶ Officer Ridgner acknowledged that he failed to activate his BWC prior to his interaction with ██████⁴⁷ Finally, Officer Ridgner explained that the conversation captured by the ICC was his attempt to express what he and Officer Abramson observed or did during the incident.⁴⁸

During statements to COPA,⁴⁹ Officer Abramson explained, in addition to what is cited above, that he turned his attention to the crowd once they began to encroach upon Officer Ridgner and ██████ which limited his ability to see the interaction between Officer Ridgner and ██████. Additionally, Officer Abramson claimed he was not aware that the common definition of “catch a body” is to cause the death of a person, but rather asserted he meant he was going to

³⁵ ██████ statement was taken at COPA by a COPA Investigator, a Detective from the Bureau of Internal Affairs, and an Investigator from the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office. Atts. 40 and 45.

³⁶ Att. 45, pg. 16.

³⁷ Att. 45, pg. 54.

³⁸ ██████ explained he was not aware the Officers exited their vehicle or were approaching him until he turned around. Att. 45, pgs. 17, 47,

³⁹ ██████ also explained that when Officer Ridgner grabbed his throat/neck, he felt pain. Att. 45, pgs. 27, 53, and 73.

⁴⁰ Att. 45, pgs. 49, 57 and 58.

⁴¹ ██████ relayed that Officer Ridgner grabbing his throat/neck caused him to reactively pull away. Att. 45, pgs. 38, 49, and 63.

⁴² Atts. 25, 27, 53, 60 and 68.

⁴³ Att. 27, pg. 33.

⁴⁴ Att. 27, pgs. 37 and 42.

⁴⁵ Att. 27, pg. 37.

⁴⁶ Att. 27, pg. 49.

⁴⁷ Att. 60, pg. 7.

⁴⁸ Att. 68 at 03:37 to 03:50.

⁴⁹ Atts. 23, 26, 54, 61 and 67.

affect an arrest.⁵⁰ Officer Abramson acknowledged that he failed to activate his BWC prior to his interaction with ██████████⁵¹ Finally, Officer Abramson explained that the conversation captured by the ICC was his attempt to decompress.⁵²

During a statement to COPA,⁵³ Sgt. Urban explained that upon arrival at the incident location, he observed a growing crowd and a chaotic scene.⁵⁴ Based on these observations he determined it was not safe to look for witnesses or third-party footage, and that the members should move to a different location to await CFD's arrival.⁵⁵ Once the members had relocated, Sgt. Urban spoke to the Officers and learned more detail about the incident.⁵⁶ Upon returning to the District Station, Sgt. Urban explained that he reviewed the Officers' TRRs and BWC footage, and he completed his review based on the footage and what the Officers verbally relayed to him. Sgt. Urban explained that his review was for completeness, and that while watching the BWC he was multitasking and not "actively sitting and listening to everything."⁵⁷ Sgt. Urban added that his narrative portion of the TRR contains a typo, and the reports should indicate the Officers' ICC was not facing the direction of incident.⁵⁸ Finally, Sgt. Urban explained that the reviewing lieutenant was responsible for completing the investigation of the force.⁵⁹

During a statement to COPA, Lt. Keefe⁶⁰ explained that he was the Watch Operations Lieutenant (WOL) responsible for reviewing the Officers' TRRs, and that prior to reviewing the TRRs he had only reviewed between two and five other TRRs.⁶¹ Lt. Keefe added that his review of the BWC occurred on a small computer monitor and was limited to the Officers' physical interaction with ██████████⁶² After reviewing the BWC footage with COPA, Lt. Keefe acknowledged that he failed to appreciate the placement of Officer Ridgner's hand around ██████████ throat/neck, and with more experience he would have noticed Officer Ridgner's hand placement and sent the TRR to the Force Review Unit and possibly would have registered a complaint with COPA.⁶³ Lt. Keefe remarked several times that he erred in his review of the TRR, and after obtaining more experience with the duties of a lieutenant he would have not made those errors.⁶⁴

⁵⁰ Att. 26, pgs. 15 and 23.

⁵¹ Att. 6, pgs. 7 and 8.

⁵² Att. 66 at 04:05.

⁵³ Atts. 42 and 48.

⁵⁴ Att. 48, pgs. 8 and 9.

⁵⁵ Att. 48, pg. 9.

⁵⁶ Att. 48, pg. 9.

⁵⁷ Sgt. Urban also explained that, at the time, the computer system was antiquated and had poor audio and buffering. Att. 48, pgs. 17 and 18.

⁵⁸ Att. 47, pg. 25.

⁵⁹ Att. 47, pg. 14.

⁶⁰ Lt. Keefe obtained his rank on April 16, 2020, less than 6-months prior to this incident.

⁶¹ Lt. Keefe also explained that as both an officer and a sergeant, he had very few instances in which he completed or reviewed a TRR. Att. 33, pg. 12 and 15.

⁶² Lt. Keefe acknowledged that his decision to limit his review of the BWC resulted in his failure to hear Officer Abramson's verbal threats, and had he reviewed that portion of the footage, he would have registered a complaint. Att. 33, pg. 18 and 35.

⁶³ Lt. Keefe explained that the lieutenant training he received was largely virtual. Att. 33, pg. 14, 15 and 47.

⁶⁴ Lt. Keefe admitted he erred by approving the TRRs that detailed "movement to avoid attack" and "additional members" as force mitigation efforts. Lt. Keefe also acknowledged that he made a typo in his narrative on Officer Ridgner's TRR in which he mistakenly referenced Officer Abramson. Att. 37, pgs. 24, 30, 43 and 47.

During a statement to COPA,⁶⁵ Lt. McLaughlin explained that in this instance he was approached by a detective and asked to complete the WOL approval of [REDACTED] arrest report.⁶⁶ Lt. McLaughlin reviewed the arrest report, noted that an Assistant State's Attorney had approved the felony charges, and read the narrative of the report to ensure all the required elements were present to establish probable cause.⁶⁷ Finally, Lt. McLaughlin explained that the 011th District consistently has the most number of arrests and it is not uncommon for him to have numerous reports to review and approve at any given time, and he does not always speak to the arresting officers or review their BWC footage in approving probable cause.⁶⁸

III. LEGAL STANDARD

For each Allegation COPA must make one of the following findings:

1. Sustained - where it is determined, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the allegation in fact occurred;⁶⁹
2. Unfounded - where it is determined, by clear and convincing evidence, that an allegation is not supported by the facts;⁷⁰
3. Exonerated - where it is determined, by clear and convincing evidence, that the conduct described in the allegation occurred, but it is lawful and proper; or
4. Not Sustained - where there is insufficient evidence to sustain, unfound or exonerate the allegations.

IV. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

a. Detention / Arrest Allegations

COPA finds that Allegation #3 against Officers Ridgner and Abramson, that they detained [REDACTED] without justification, is **sustained**. Department members are permitted to detain a person when there is reasonable articulable suspicion that person is about to commit, is committing, or

⁶⁵ Atts. 28 and 34.

⁶⁶ Att. 34, pg. 9.

⁶⁷ Att. 34, pg. 9.

⁶⁸ Lt. McLaughlin explained that due to a lack of proper staffing, the arrest report was authored at 5:51 pm but he did not start working until 12:00 am, some 6 hours later. Att. 34, pg. 11.

⁶⁹ **Preponderance of evidence** is described as evidence indicating that it is more likely than not that the conduct occurred and violated Department policy. If the evidence gathered in an investigation establishes that it is more likely that the misconduct occurred, even if by a narrow margin, then the preponderance of the evidence standard is met. *See Avery v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co.*, 216 Ill. 2d 100, 191 (2005).

⁷⁰ **Clear and convincing evidence** is described as more than a preponderance of the evidence but lower than the beyond-a-reasonable doubt standard required to convict a person of a criminal offense. Clear and convincing is described as a "degree of proof, which, considering all the evidence in the case, produces the firm and abiding belief that it is highly probable" there was no misconduct. *See People v. Coan*, 2016 IL App (2d) 151036 (2016).

has committed a criminal offense.⁷¹ Reasonable articulable suspicion is defined as “an objective legal standard that is less than probable cause but *more substantial* than a hunch or general suspicion.”⁷²

Here, both Officers Ridgner and Abramson detailed rather innocuous actions by ██████ as the reasons they believed he was armed and the basis for their decision to stop him. Specifically, both Officers explained that as they passed ██████ he looked at them, appeared shocked or surprised, sat up while moving clothing at his waist, and walked away from them as they approached. However, the Officers did not provide any information as to why they believed ██████ was possibly armed.⁷³ The actions ██████ took are a common reaction to observing a marked police vehicle pass by, especially in a community with known tensions between law enforcement and citizens. The fact that the Officers relied upon ██████ innocuous actions as the basis for believing he was armed and stopping him support the conclusion that the Officers’ decision to detain ██████ was based on a “hunch or general suspicion,” not reasonable articulable suspicion. Additionally, the description provided by the Officers would not lead a reasonable officer to believe that ██████ was about to, in the process of, or had committed a criminal offense that warranted further investigation. In fact, COPA finds the Officers’ interaction with ██████ was a consensual encounter that ██████ was permitted to rebuff at any time.⁷⁴ It is for these reasons that COPA finds Officers Ridgner’s and Abramson’s decision to stop ██████ was in violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, and 6.

COPA finds that Allegation #4 against Officers Ridgner and Abramson, that they arrested ██████ without probable cause, is **sustained**. A Department member must have probable cause to arrest a subject.⁷⁵ “Probable cause to arrest exists where the police have knowledge of facts that would lead a reasonable person to believe that a crime has occurred and that the subject had committed it.”⁷⁶ The reasonable basis of any arrest “should be considered from the perspective of a reasonable officer at the time” of the arrest.⁷⁷

Here, Officers Ridgner and Abramson relied on the fact that ██████ pushed Officer Ridgner’s hands away as they attempted to unlawfully detain him. While the act of pushing a peace officer can be a criminal act, the totality of the circumstances must be used to properly assess if the action is in fact criminal. As discussed above, the Officers’ decision to detain ██████ based on a mere hunch or general suspicion is a key component of determining probable cause in this instance. Since ██████ was not engaged in any criminal activity, and the Officers detained him based on a mere hunch, it was reasonable for ██████ to rebuff Officer Ridgner’s attempts to grab him. While ██████ response was not ideal, it would not have caused a reasonable person to

⁷¹ S04-13-09 II (A), Investigatory Stop System (effective July 10, 2017 to current).

⁷² S04-13-09 II (C), Investigatory Stop System (effective July 10, 2017 to current) (emphasis added).

⁷³ For example, the Officers did not observe a bulge at ██████ waistline, there were no reports of an armed person matching ██████ description in the area, ██████ did not run from the Officers, and he did not have a known history of being armed.

⁷⁴ Even if COPA agreed that the observations by the Officers established reasonable articulable suspicion that ██████ was armed, once ██████ lifted the front of his shirt revealing an absence of a firearm, the Officers’ suspicion ██████ was armed was dispelled and the detention should have ended. See Att. 4 at 00:49; Att. 5 at 00:47.

⁷⁵ *People v. Johnson*, 408 Ill. App. 3d 107 (citing *Beck v. Ohio*, 379 U.S. 89, 91, (1964)).

⁷⁶ S04-13-09 II(D), Investigatory Stop System (effective July 10, 2017 to current).

⁷⁷ S04-13-09 II(D), Investigatory Stop System (effective July 10, 2017 to current).

believe he had committed a crime, even when considering the facts from the perspective of a reasonable officer. Instead, a reasonable person and/or officer would believe that ██████ did not wish to engage in the consensual interaction with police and was trying to go about his daily activities; therefore, COPA finds ██████ arm movements were akin to a physical manifestation of his desire to not participate in the consensual encounter and could not reasonably be considered a criminal act. It is for these reasons COPA finds the Officers' decision to arrest ██████ violated Department policy and Rules 2, 3, and 6.

b. Force Allegations

COPA finds that Allegations #1 and 2 against Officer Ridgner, that he grabbed ██████ throat and used a takedown on ██████ without justification, are **sustained**. Department members are permitted to use force to overcome resistance.⁷⁸ When members encounter a citizen who is complaint, that citizen is a cooperative person.⁷⁹ Members are permitted to respond to a cooperative person with mere presence and verbal directions.⁸⁰

As discussed above, the Officers engaged ██████ in a consensual encounter, which made ██████ a cooperative person who was permitted to rebuff or ignore the Officers' requests to comply with their authority. Since the encounter was consensual, Officer Ridgner's attempts to grab ██████ were improper and violated Department policy. Additionally, even if ██████ did push Officer Ridgner's hand away, his action was a reasonable response to an improper intrusion.⁸¹ Because ██████ was merely a cooperative subject, Department policy limited Officer Ridgner's response to officer presence and verbal direction. Officer Ridgner, however, responded to ██████ hand motion by grabbing ██████ by the throat/neck⁸² and attempting to take him to the ground. Once ██████ returned to his feet, Officer Ridgner's reaction was to grab ██████ around his torso, lift his feet off the ground, and direct him – headfirst – into the pavement, causing injury to ██████ head.⁸³ It is for these reasons COPA finds that Officer Ridgner's uses of force on ██████ including his initial attempt to grab ██████ his grabbing of ██████ throat/neck, and the use of a takedown, violated Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 10.⁸⁴

COPA finds that Allegation #2 against Officer Abramson, that he failed to report excessive force by Officer Ridgner, is **sustained**. Department members are required "to report to the Department any violation of Rules and Regulations or any other improper conduct which is

⁷⁸ See G03-02-01 generally.

⁷⁹ G03-02-01 IV(A), Force Options (effective February 29, 2020 to April 14, 2021).

⁸⁰ G03-02-01 IV(A)(1-2), Force Options (effective February 29, 2020 to April 14, 2021).

⁸¹ No reasonable officer, aware of all the facts, would have perceived ██████ action as an attempt to evade control (active resistance) or an aggressive act (assailant action). As discussed above, ██████ arm movements were akin to a physical manifestation of his desire to not participate in a consensual encounter.

⁸² See Image 1 above.

⁸³ See Images 3 and 4 above.

⁸⁴ Members are obligated to use the least amount of force to overcome resistance. Thus, even if the facts were viewed in the light most favorable to Officer Ridgner, ██████ actions would have been the minimal active resistance possible. As such, Officer Ridgner's decision to grab ██████ by the throat and lift him from the ground, only to direct him to the ground headfirst, would still be an excessive, unnecessary, and impermissible use of a control technique and takedown. See G03-02-01 generally.

contrary to the policy, order or directives of the Department.”⁸⁵ This includes instances in which excessive force is used or suspected.

Here, Officer Abramson asserted to COPA that he did not observe Officer Ridgner engage in excessive force, specifically by grabbing [REDACTED] by the throat/neck and the form of the takedown. However, there is direct evidence to contradict this assertion. The ICC audio clearly captures the Officers discussing and laughing at the force Officer Ridgner used on [REDACTED]. In fact, the Officers discussed that they would characterize Officer Ridgner’s action as an attempted front collar grab. Additionally, the ICC audio shows that during the Officers’ discussion, Officer Abramson was keenly aware that Officer Ridgner had grabbed [REDACTED] throat/neck, as demonstrated by Officer Abramson stating that once [REDACTED] was on the ground Officer Ridgner immediately released him and did not choke [REDACTED]. Further, the ICC audio details the Officers discussing Officer Ridgner’s take down of [REDACTED] to include [REDACTED] head “violently” hitting the ground.⁸⁶ The totality of the evidence shows that any reasonable officer would have perceived Officer Ridgner’s use of force as excessive, or at the very least warranting additional investigation. It is for these reasons that COPA finds Officer Abramson’s failure to report the force used by Officer Ridgner was a violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6, 10 and 22.

c. False Report Allegations

i. Violations of Rule 14

1. Officers Ridgner and Abramson

COPA finds that Allegation #5 against Officers Ridgner and Abramson, that they made false, misleading, inaccurate, and/or incomplete statements when they authored reports related to this incident, is **sustained**. When completing Departmental reports, members are required to detail the facts and circumstances of an incident accurately and fully.⁸⁷

a. Throat/Neck Grab

Here, COPA finds that Officer Ridgner failed to accurately detail the facts and circumstances of his use of force on [REDACTED]. Specifically, Officer Ridgner’s reports omit the fact that he grabbed [REDACTED] by the throat/neck. The omission of this key fact was material to the incident and COPA’s investigation.⁸⁸ In fact, when specifically asked why the throat/neck grab was omitted from the reports, Officer Ridgner explained that his reports are a “summary” of what occurred.⁸⁹ COPA finds that when viewing the evidence in the totality, Officer Ridgner’s omission can only be characterized as knowingly and willful. The determination is based on (1) Officer Ridgner’s own acknowledgement that he reviewed his BWC prior to authoring the reports; (2) the clear depiction of Officer Ridgner’s hand on [REDACTED] throat/neck on the reviewed BWC; (3)

⁸⁵ Article V, Rule 22 of Rules and Regulations of the Chicago Police Department.

⁸⁶ Att. 27, pg. 42.

⁸⁷ G03-02 VI(E), Use of Force (effective February 29, 2020 to April 14, 2021); G03-02-02 (II)(A), IV(B)(1)(c)(1), Incidents Requiring the Completion of a Tactical Response Report (effective February 29, 2020 to April 14, 2021); S06-01-11 IV(A)(3), CLEAR Automated Arrest System (effective November 8, 2011 to current.)

⁸⁸ As evidenced by the allegations served.

⁸⁹ This is a misstatement of Department policy. Att. 27, pg. 59.

Officer Ridgner's declaration that he planned to characterize his actions as a "collar grab" as captured on the ICC footage; (4) the fact he did characterize his action as a "collar grab"; and (5) Officer Ridgner's own admission to COPA that he grabbed ██████ throat/neck. It is for these reasons, COPA finds that Officer Ridgner knowingly and willfully failed to detail the facts and circumstances of the incident accurately and fully, in violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6 and 14.

b. Force Mitigation

COPA also finds that Officer Abramson failed to accurately detail the facts and circumstances of the force mitigation efforts he used. Specifically, Officer Abramson's TRR states that he used verbal commands to de-escalate the growing crowd but omits the fact he used the phrase "catch a body" as his method of "verbal commands." However, in his statement to COPA, when specifically asked about his "de-escalation," Officer Abramson pointed to his use of the phrase "to catch a body." The fact Officer Abramson characterized his death threat, as discussed below, as "de-escalation" was a material fact related to the incident and COPA's investigation.⁹⁰ COPA finds that when viewing the evidence in its totality, Officer Abramson's decision to deem "catch a body" as "de-escalation," and to omit the phrase from his TRR, was knowingly and willfully misleading. This determination is made based on (1) Officer Abramson's assertion the phrase was "de-escalation;" (2) the Officers' conversation about Officer Abramson being in need of a psychological evaluation as captured by the ICC; (3) the common definition of the phrase "to catch a body" meaning to cause a death; and (4) the increase in tension between the crowd and Officer Abramson after he used the phrase, as captured by the BWC. It is for these reasons that COPA finds Officer Abramson knowingly and willfully elected to select the "verbal command" box on his TRR, when he in fact knew he made no attempts to control the crowd with verbal commands, and that he knowingly and willfully omitted the phrase "catch a body" from his TRR narrative in violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6 and 14.

c. Battery

Both Officers' TRRs indicate that ██████ actions were an "imminent threat of a battery – no weapon" and "physical attack without weapon ... push/shove/pull," and that he committed a battery upon a Department member. The fact the Officers detailed ██████ as having committed a battery is material to the incident and COPA's investigation.⁹¹ Additionally, COPA finds that when viewing evidence in its totality, the Officers' characterization of ██████ as having committed a battery were knowingly and willfully misleading, if not outright false. This determination is based on (1) the Officers' knowledge they did not have reasonable suspicion to conduct an investigatory detention and rather were engaged in a consensual encounter; (2) consensual encounters do not require citizens to heed to the authority of officers; (3) ██████ actions were rooted in his desire to not cooperate with the improper intrusion; (4) the Officers did not sustain any injuries caused by ██████ and (5) Officer Ridgner's reluctance to inform a responding supervisor as to why ██████ was arrested while being recorded, as captured on the BWC footage. It is for these reasons that COPA finds the Officers knowingly and willfully

⁹⁰ As evidenced by the allegations served.

⁹¹ As evidenced by the allegations served.

mischaracterized ██████ as having committed a battery, in violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6 and 14.

d. Reports in Totality

Here, both Officers' reports go to great lengths to justify their initial attempts to detain ██████. The Officers' efforts to justify their decision to detain ██████ is problematic in that they each used highly descriptive verbiage to detail the innocuous actions of ██████. When viewed in the broader context of the entire incident, COPA finds the Officers' word choices were rooted in a knowing and willful desire to justify, after the fact, the stop of ██████ and resulting force. This determination is based on the facts discussed above and the clearly improper detention of ██████. It is for these reasons that COPA finds the totality of the Officers' characterization of ██████ and their documentation of the incident were knowingly and willfully misleading and in violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6, and 14.

2. Lts. McLaughlin and Keefe

COPA finds that Allegation #1 against Lt. McLaughlin, that he made or approved false, misleading, inaccurate, incomplete and/or inaccurate statements, is **unfounded**. Watch Operations Lieutenants (WOLs) are required to review all the "required arrest documentation" and make an initial determination if probable cause is present.⁹² Here, it is undisputed that Lt. McLaughlin was the WOL and that he reviewed and approved ██████ Arrest Report, though more than six hours after it was authored. Lt. McLaughlin explained that he reviewed the Arrest Report and confirmed it contained sufficient information to establish probable cause for the arrest of ██████. While COPA finds that reviewing only the Arrest Report complies with the letter of the WOL's duties, it does not comply with spirit of the WOL's duties. However, considering Lt. McLaughlin's review of the Arrest Report, combined with the ambiguity of Department policy regarding the definition of "required arrest documentation," COPA finds that Lt. McLaughlin did comply with the policy as written.

COPA finds that Allegations #1 and 2 against Lt. Keefe, that he made or approved false, misleading, inaccurate, and/or incomplete statements when he approved the TRRs related to this incident, are **sustained**. WOLs are tasked with investigating an officer's use of force. Department policy requires WOLs to attempt to interview the person(s) subjected to force, perform a visual inspection of the person(s), and review all reasonably available information.⁹³ Additionally, WOLs are responsible for reviewing the portions of the TRR completed by the involved member(s) and the reviewing supervisor for "sufficiency and completeness," identifying other member(s) who may have reasonably observed the use of force, and attesting to compliance with the WOLs duties. WOLs must also evaluate the use of force "to determine whether the member's use of force response was in compliance with Department policy and directives," and if appropriate provide

⁹² Arrests can occur where the only "required arrest documentation" is an Arrest Report (i.e., a traffic related arrest). The policy does not define what the "required arrest documentation" is, and therefore creates ambiguity as to what materials are required to be reviewed. G06-01-01 (II)(G)(2)(a), Field Arrest Procedures.

⁹³ This includes reports, Department footage (ICC, POD, and BWC), third party accounts and footage, and documented complaints of excessive force. G03-02-02 (VI)(B)(1).

feedback or make recommendations to the involved member(s) and reviewing supervisor.⁹⁴ Finally, WOLs are to review completed TRRs to ensure members have accurately and fully detailed the facts and circumstances of an incident.⁹⁵

Here, as discussed above, COPA has found that Officers Ridgner's and Abramson's reports failed to detail the facts and circumstances of their interaction with [REDACTED] accurately and fully. It is undisputed that Lt. Keefe was the WOL responsible for reviewing the TRRs authored by Officers Ridgner and Abramson, that he failed to address the false reports, and that his failure was material to COPA's investigation.⁹⁶ Lt. Keefe acknowledged, several times, that he did not appreciate the entirety of the force used on [REDACTED] during his review of the TRRs. However, COPA finds it unreasonable that any WOL reviewing the BWC footage that clearly captured Officer Ridgner's excessive force and Officer Abramson's death threat could simply miss the misconduct or attribute the failure to inexperience as a newly promoted lieutenant.⁹⁷

COPA can think of no reason for Lt. Keefe's failure to identify and address the TRRs' falsehoods other than a willful attempt to either: (a) remain ignorant of the incident by ignoring the falsehoods contained in the reports, or (b) actively seek to obscure the falsehoods contained in the reports. Regardless of Lt. Keefe's motivation for failing to address the false reports, it is clear that he had access to and/or was in possession of sufficient information to determine the TRRs contained misleading, inaccurate, and incomplete statements and/or omissions of key facts. Despite this, Lt. Keefe chose to approve the Officers' TRRs. It is for these reasons that COPA finds Lt. Keefe's approval of the false TRRs was knowingly willful and in violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6, and 14.

3. Sgt. Urban

COPA finds that Allegations #1 and 2 against Sgt. Urban, that he made or approved false, misleading, inaccurate, and/or incomplete statements when he approved the TRRs related to this incident, are **sustained**. When responding to uses of force, sergeants are tasked with responding to the scene, ensuring proper medical attention is requested, requesting photographs be taken, ensuring the appropriate notifications to OEMC have occurred, and attempting to locate evidence and witnesses if possible.⁹⁸ Additionally, when reviewing a use of force, the responding sergeant will ensure the involved member completes a TRR and any required case reports before the end of the work shift. The sergeant will then review the TRR, attach any relevant reports, document injuries to the involved parties, detail any additional information or observations that are not already included in the TRR, and attest to complying with the supervisory requirements.⁹⁹ Finally, supervisory members are required to review completed TRRs to ensure members have accurately and fully detailed the facts and circumstances of an incident.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ G03-02-02 (VI)(B)(2).

⁹⁵ G03-02-02 (VI)(B).

⁹⁶ As evidenced by the allegations served.

⁹⁷ Lt. Keefe explained that part of his failure was rooted in his relatively new role as a lieutenant, and his general lack of exposure to the completion and review of TRRs.

⁹⁸ G03-02-02 (V)(A) and (B).

⁹⁹ G03-02-02 (V)(C).

¹⁰⁰ G03-02-02 (V)(C).

Here, as discussed above, COPA has found that Officers Ridgner's and Abramson's TRRs failed to detail the facts and circumstances of their interaction with ██████ accurately and fully. It is undisputed that Sgt. Urban was the supervisor responsible for reviewing the TRRs authored by Officers Ridgner and Abramson, that he failed to address the false reports, and that his failure was material to COPA's investigation.¹⁰¹ Further, during his statement to COPA, Sgt. Urban admitted that he reviewed the BWC video capturing Officer Ridgner's use of force, but he failed to watch the footage in its entirety. He explained that he was "doing other things," and this resulted in him missing Officer Abramson's verbal threats. Sgt. Urban's explanation strains credulity. Even if Sgt. Urban did not watch the footage capturing Officer Abramson's death threat, the video he did review clearly and unmistakably captured Officer Ridgner using excessive force.

COPA can think of no reason for Sgt. Urban's failure to identify and address the TRRs' falsehoods other than a willful attempt to either: (a) remain ignorant of the incident by ignoring the falsehoods contained in the reports, or (b) actively seek to obscure the falsehoods contained in the reports.¹⁰² Regardless of Sgt. Urban's motivation for failing to address the false reports, it is clear that he had access to and/or was in possession of sufficient information to determine the TRRs contained misleading, inaccurate, and incomplete statements and/or omission of key facts. Despite this, Sgt. Urban chose to approve the Officers' TRRs. It is for these reasons that COPA finds Sgt. Urban's approval of the false TRRs was knowingly willful and in violation of Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6, and 14.

d. Body Worn Camera Allegations

COPA finds that Allegation #6 against Officers Ridgner and Abramson, that they failed to activate their body worn cameras, is **sustained**. Department members are required to activate their BWCs at the beginning of an incident or "as soon as practical" for "all law-enforcement-related activities."¹⁰³ Here, the evidence is clear that Officers Ridgner and Abramson actively engaged in law-enforcement-related activities, specifically the detention of ██████ and subsequent force, prior to activating their BWCs. This failure violates Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 5, and 6.

e. Verbal Abuse Allegations

COPA finds that Allegation #1 against Officer Abramson, that he stated, "I'm going to catch a body today," is **sustained**. Department members are required to "treat all persons with courtesy and dignity which is inherently due every person as a human being," and to do so while "speak[ing] ... in a professional manner and maintain[ing] a courteous attitude in all contacts with

¹⁰¹ As evidenced by the allegations served.

¹⁰² Sgt. Urban admitted that he made a typographical error in the portion of the TRRs he authored, demonstrating at best carelessness on his part.

¹⁰³ "Law-enforcement-related activities include but are not limited to:" "calls for service; investigatory stops; traffic stops; traffic control; foot and vehicle pursuits; arrest; use of force incidents; seizure of evidence; interrogations; searches, including searches of people, items, vehicle, buildings, and places; statements made by individuals in the course of an investigation; requests for consent to search; emergency driving situations; emergency vehicle responses where fleeing suspects or vehicle may be captured on video leaving the crime scene; high-risk situations; any encounter with the police that becomes adversarial after the initial contact; arrestee transports; any other instance when enforcing the law." S03-14 III(A)(2)(a-r), Body Worn Cameras (effective April 30, 2018 to current).

the public.”¹⁰⁴ Additionally, members are prohibited from “engaging in any public statements... which reasonably can be foreseen to impair the discipline, efficiency, public service, or public confidence in the Department or its personnel by... the use of defamatory language, abusive language, invective, or epithets.”¹⁰⁵

Here, it is undisputed that Officer Abramson stated words to the effect of “I’m going to catch a body today.” While Officer Abramson asserted his intent was to convey that he planned to make an arrest, his word choice was open to wide interpretation, to include killing a citizen.¹⁰⁶ While it is understandable that Officer Abramson was attempting to convey the seriousness of the interaction, his word choice inflamed the tensions of the already volatile scene and caused bystanders to perceive a threat of bodily harm. COPA can think of no reasonable instance in which Officer Abramson’s language would have been acceptable. It is for these reasons that COPA finds that Officer Abramson’s language violated Department policy and Rules 2, 3, 6, and 32.

V. RECOMMENDED DISCIPLINE FOR SUSTAINED ALLEGATIONS

a. Lt. Kevin Keefe

i. Complimentary and Disciplinary History

Lt. Keefe has received 125 various awards and no discipline in the last 5-years.¹⁰⁷

ii. Recommended Penalty

Lt. Keefe admitted his failures and explained that they were due, in part, to his inexperience with TRRs and as a WOL. However, despite this admission, COPA finds Lt. Keefe’s failure to identify the excessive force used by Officer Ridgner and the verbal threat hurled by Officer Abramson to be highly concerning. As discussed above, Lt. Keefe’s failure to address the falsehoods in the TRRs during his review is wholly unacceptable and not befitting the rank of a lieutenant. Additionally, his actions directly delayed the timeliness of required notifications related to this incident. Finally, COPA firmly believes that truthfulness is a cornerstone of the law enforcement profession and that any member who knowingly provides or allows the provision of false information is not suitable to properly enforce the law. It is for these reasons, combined with Lt. Keefe’s complimentary and disciplinary history, that COPA recommends Lt. Keefe be **separated** from the Department.

b. Sgt. Nicholas Urban

i. Complimentary and Disciplinary History

¹⁰⁴ G02-01 III (B), Human Rights and Resources (effective October 15, 2017 to current); G02-04 II (C), Prohibition Regarding Racial Profiling and Other Bias Based Policing (effective December 1, 2017 to current).

¹⁰⁵ Article V, Rule 32 of the Rules and Regulations of the Chicago Police Department.

¹⁰⁶ COPA determined this was the likeliest definition applied by the crowd when the threat was made. *See* <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=catch%20a%20body> for a common definition of “catch a body.” COPA searched for evidence of a definition similar to that provided by Officer Abramson but could not locate a single instance where “catch a body” means making an arrest.

¹⁰⁷ Att. 57.

Sgt. Urban has received 171 various awards and one Reprimand in 2021 for a preventable accident in the last 5-years.¹⁰⁸

ii. Recommended Penalty

Here, Sgt. Urban admitted to inattention to duty while completing his review of the Officers' TRRs. However, Sgt. Urban's admitted inattention is highly concerning. As discussed above, Sgt. Urban's failure to address the readily identifiable falsehoods contained in the TRRs is wholly unacceptable and not befitting the rank of a sergeant. Additionally, his actions directly delayed the timeliness of required notification related to this incident. Finally, COPA firmly believes that truthfulness is a cornerstone of the law enforcement profession and that any member who knowingly provides or allows for the provision of false information is not suitable to properly enforce the law. It is for these reasons, combined with Sgt. Urban's complimentary and disciplinary history, that COPA recommends Sgt. Urban be **separated** from the Department.

c. Officer Jonathan Ridgner

i. Complimentary and Disciplinary History

Officer Ridgner has received 30 various awards and no discipline in the last 5-years.¹⁰⁹

ii. Recommended Penalty

Here, COPA has found Officer Ridgner improperly sought to detain and arrest [REDACTED] and that to justify those actions he intentionally omitted key facts and used misleading language in his reports. Additionally, COPA has found that Officer Ridgner's grabbing of [REDACTED] throat/neck and his takedown of [REDACTED] were inexcusably excessive and wholly improper. Further, the injuries to [REDACTED] were significant and his headfirst impact on the concrete was totally unwarranted. COPA also takes note that Officer Ridgner seemed to find his actions with [REDACTED] humorous while he was trying to cover up the fact that he grabbed [REDACTED] throat/neck. In totality, COPA has grave concerns with Officer Ridgner's ability to properly understand the law and how to apply the law in a fair and just manner. Additionally, COPA has grave concerns with Officer Ridgner's lack of candor and forthrightness in his documentation of the incident. Finally, COPA firmly believes that truthfulness is a cornerstone of the law enforcement profession and that any member who knowingly provides false information lacks the required integrity to enforce the law. It is for these reasons combined with Officer Ridgner's complimentary and disciplinary history that COPA recommends that Officer Ridgner be **separated** from the Department.

d. Officer Nicholas Abramson

i. Complimentary and Disciplinary History

¹⁰⁸ Att. 56.

¹⁰⁹ Att. 55.

Officer Abramson has received 30 various awards and one 1-day Suspension and one Reprimand for a preventable accident.¹¹⁰

ii. Recommended Penalty

Here, COPA has found that Officer Abramson improperly sought to detain and arrest [REDACTED] and that to justify those actions he intentionally omitted key facts and used misleading language in his report(s). Additionally, COPA notes that Officer Abramson seemed to find the interaction with [REDACTED] humorous while discussing the incident with Officer Ridgner. Further, COPA finds Officer Abramson’s statement that he was going to “catch a body,” made in the presence of numerous civilians, to be highly concerning. In totality, COPA has grave concerns with Officer Abramson’s ability to properly understand the law and how to apply it in a fair and just manner to the community. Additionally, COPA has grave concerns with Officer Abramson’s lack of candor and forthrightness in his documentation of the incident. Finally, COPA firmly believes that truthfulness is a cornerstone of the law enforcement profession and that any member who knowingly provides false information lacks the integrity required to enforce the law. It is for these reasons combined with Officer Abramson’s complimentary and disciplinary history that COPA recommends that Officer Abramson be **separated** from the Department.

Approved:

[REDACTED]

Matthew Haynam
Deputy Chief Administrator

Date: 8/17/2022

[REDACTED]

Andrea Kersten
Chief Administrator

Date: 8/17/2022

¹¹⁰ Att. 58.