23-01-Information Notification for Officers and Recurrent-Witness Materials (INFORM)

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
NEWSLETTER
Field Operations Support Services

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INFORMATION NOTIFICATION FOR OFFICERS AND RECURRENT-WITNESS MATERIALS (INFORM)

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (LADA) created a database referred to as the Officer and Recurrent Witness Information Tracking System (ORWITS) to maintain impeachment and potential impeachment information concerning law enforcement officers and other recurrent witnesses. Since that time, ORWITS has expanded to include other categories of information, including publicly available material.

In September 2025, ORWITS was renamed the Information Notification for Officers and Recurrent-Witness Materials (INFORM).

This informational Newsletter describes the INFORM system utilized by the LADA. The LADA is an independent Department within the Los Angeles County justice system. The policies and practices described herein which were established by the LADA's office are not under the purview of the Department and, as such, the Department does not facilitate grievances or appeals on these topics.

WHAT IS INFORM?

INFORM is maintained to protect the integrity of a criminal case being prosecuted. It is separate from any *Brady* database maintained by the LADA.

INFORM is an informational system used to track recurring witnesses, including deputies who **may,** but do not necessarily, have exculpatory or impeachment information in their personnel files. INFORM is not limited to sworn personnel, and can also include non-sworn witnesses, such as civilian employees.

INFORM may include information from publicly available sources such as news reports, the internet, public records, court rulings, testimony, police reports, lawsuits, or civil settlements alleging misconduct. It may also contain information disclosable under Senate Bills (SB) 1421 and 16, including records related to deputy-involved shootings at a person, uses of force resulting in great bodily injury or death, and sustained findings of dishonesty, sexual assault, unreasonable or excessive force, prejudice or discrimination, and unlawful arrests

or searches.

Importantly, **information stored in INFORM does not necessarily constitute misconduct or wrongdoing, nor does it require an administrative investigation.** Additionally, because information in INFORM can come from public sources, entry of information into INFORM is not an endorsement of the validity of the information contained therein.

HOW IS INFORM INFORMATION OBTAINED BY LADA?

The LADA will notify the Department when a Department member has been identified as a witness in a filed criminal case. The Department then responds with one of two letters indicating the following:

1. There is ***no*** potential exculpatory or impeachment information in the Department member's personnel file; or

2. There ***may be*** potential exculpatory or impeachment information in the Department member's personnel file.

In the latter case, the Department simply advises the LADA such information potentially exists and the earliest date of the conduct. The Department **does not** provide the LADA with any specific information from the Department member's personnel file. Having learned exculpatory or impeachment information **may** exist, the LADA's office enters the involved Department member's name into INFORM.

To obtain additional information that is not already subject to public disclosure under SBs 1421 and 16, the prosecuting Deputy District Attorney (DDA) or defense attorney must file what is known as a *Pitchess* Motion to request access to an employee's personnel records. If the attorney shows good cause to believe a Department member engaged in misconduct relevant to the pending case, the judge will conduct a private, in-camera review of the relevant portions of the personnel file. The judge then determines whether any of those portions contain information relevant to the case for exculpatory or impeachment purposes. Only if the judge makes that finding is the information released, and even then, it is provided to the attorney solely for use in that specific matter.

Additionally, the LADA learns of potentially exculpatory or impeachment information through open-source material, such as lawsuits, news releases, social media, etc.

If the prosecuting DDA is aware of this information before trial, they can move to have that information excluded from trial and prohibit its use by a defense attorney.

WHY DOES LADA USE INFORM?

INFORM is used to alert the prosecuting DDA of information that **may** discredit the testifying Department member for their use in case evaluation, preparation, and disclosure to the defense when required by their legal or ethical duties. Compiling this information in advance allows the prosecutor to evaluate the case and prepare for a potentially aggressive cross-examination.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM IN INFORM?

When the LADA places a Department member into INFORM, they provide the Department with a letter of their findings. Upon receiving the letter, Risk Management Bureau forwards the INFORM letter to the concerned Department member via their unit commander.

Letters will have language informing Department members on how to proceed should they have any questions, believe the letter was received in error, or would like to provide rebuttal information.

WHAT IS THE BRADY DATABASE?

The LADA's Brady database contains exculpatory or impeachment information about a Department member that is known to prosecutors and must be disclosed under Penal Code Section 1054.1, and the United States Supreme Court decision in Brady v. Maryland (1963) 373 U.S. 83.

"Brady" information includes criminal convictions, false statements, and administrative investigation findings regarding dishonesty or other serious misconduct. Department members affected by these disclosure requirements are notified through a letter from the LADA, commonly known as a "Brady Letter."

If you have any questions regarding the information contained in this newsletter, please contact Field Operations Support Services Unit, at (323) 890-5411, or foss@lasd.org.

REFERENCES

https://da.lacounty.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/DCS-120921.pdf

https://da.lacounty.gov/sites/default/files/policies/Brady-Chapter14-2020.pdf