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OIG Publishes Audit of Chicago Police Department Gun Turn-In Event

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG) has completed an audit of the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) 2012 Gun Turn-In Event. CPD's Gun Turn-In Program gives participants a gift card in exchange for turning in a gun. It is one of many initiatives to reduce crime in Chicago and has the stated intention of removing guns from the city's streets.

The audit found that CPD accurately and appropriately accounted for all the gift cards distributed to event participants. However, the department misclassified up to 6.52% of the replicas as firearms, which could have resulted in up to \$4,680 in overpayments.

To avoid future misclassification and address operational risks, the OIG recommends that CPD review its on-site weapon classification process and develop formally documented policies and procedures regarding the operations of the Gun Turn-In Program. In its response, CPD commits to reviewing its existing policies and ensuring standards are sufficient.

The audit was unable to determine how effective the program is at removing guns from the streets of Chicago due to CPD's "no questions asked" policy, under which CPD neither requests nor records identifying information, including proof of residency, from the individuals turning in guns. The risks of this policy came to light in a publicly reported incident in which people from outside the Chicago area turned in 'non-firing junk' and used the program gift cards to buy new guns and ammunition.

In addition, CPD did not conduct ballistics tests to determine if collected weapons had been used in a crime, stating that to do so would compromise participant anonymity. In its management response, CPD also notes that it considers any gun turned in through the program to be beneficial, regardless of where the gun originates or its owner resides.

Inspector General Joseph M. Ferguson states, "We appreciate the logic behind CPD's anonymity approach. However, the risk of abuse of the program and the absence of ballistics testing, which might serve to *solve* crimes, are in tension with the program's goal of making Chicago safer. We hope the unintended consequences of current practices revealed by our review will help CPD in bringing the program's policies into closer alignment with its important public safety goals."

The full audit, and City's response to the findings, can be found online at the OIG website: www.ChicagoInspectorGeneral.org.

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