

Securing the Handoff

September 1, 2026: what happened when a request entered the police-response system, did not reach me the first time, and later reached officers who closed the loop.

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OPENING

The event did not end when the door closed

On September 1, 2026, I experienced a forced-entry incident at my home arising from a rental-vehicle dispute. I woke to loud banging and the words “Police, open up.” My door was damaged. An unfamiliar man accompanied a person I knew. Personal property was left outside, some property remained missing, and the entrance to my home no longer secured normally. I documented the scene, preserved photographs, wrote a first-person narrative, and tried to move the event into an institutional process rather than create another confrontation.

That decision matters to this paper because the police response itself became part of the case study. The first time I called, the request entered the system, but no officer reached me. The second time, officers arrived, listened, took the written record, asked follow-up questions, and gave me a traceable path into the next stage of the process. The difference between those two outcomes is the subject here.

CALL ONE

Information moved. The handoff did not close.

I called for police assistance after the incident. Dispatch received the request and, based on what I was told and understood, put the call into the police-response process. No officer arrived following that first call.

That is the part I can state confidently. I do not know what happened inside the system after intake. I do not know whether the call waited in a queue, whether available units were handling higher-priority events, whether the call was assigned and later redirected, whether the priority changed, whether a software or communication problem occurred, or whether some other explanation accounts for the gap. Those are research questions, not facts I should manufacture.

Known: I called. The request entered the response system. No officer reached me after the first call.

Unknown: the precise internal point at which continuity broke and why.

This is why I describe the first response as an unsecured handoff rather than simply assigning blame to a dispatcher, an officer, or a department without evidence. A handoff is not secure merely because information leaves one person's screen and appears on another. From the human endpoint, the handoff is secure when responsibility is accepted, the next action is executable, the person can reasonably understand what happens next, and the loop either closes or

produces a traceable disposition.

THIN MARGIN

Why a missed handoff can matter more when a person has almost no margin

At the time, my phone service was out. I was already operating with very little financial and logistical margin. My front door had been damaged. I was trying to secure the residence, preserve evidence, account for my belongings, keep my cat safe, and make deliberate decisions after being awakened into a confrontation. My available modes of communication were constrained.

That changes the meaning of a failed handoff. A person with multiple working phones, reliable transportation, cash, nearby support, secure housing, and several ways to re-enter a system can absorb a missed connection differently. When those buffers are thin, one unclosed loop can consume a much larger share of the person's remaining capacity.

HRJS uses the image of the **human against the wall** to describe what can happen when options, time, resources, and recoverability narrow faster than institutional processes recognize. The danger is not that every missed response automatically creates catastrophe. The danger is that a person with very little remaining margin can be pushed toward a point where one more gap removes the ability to recover cleanly.

In that kind of environment, a missed police response is not merely an inconvenience. In a worst-case scenario, the person waiting could come to harm, could be forced into another unsafe encounter, or could react badly under pressure and harm someone else. That did not happen here. But the fact that it did not happen is not a reason to ignore the architecture that could allow it to happen elsewhere.

CALL TWO

The second response showed what a secured handoff can look like

I followed up and called again. This time, two officers responded to my home. The difference was immediate: the process had a human endpoint.

I had already written a detailed first-person narrative. The officers listened to me, accepted the written report, and asked questions rather than treating the document as complete simply because it was organized. They identified information I had not included, including contact information for the other party, and gave me an opportunity to supply what I could.

I also explained why the words "Police, open up" had affected me so strongly. My brother died during a police encounter, and the person involved in the September 1 incident knew that history. I was careful to tell the responding officers that I was not blaming them for what happened to my brother. They were not the officers involved in that event. They were standing in my home dealing with a different one.

They listened anyway. They did not have to surrender their authority or investigative responsibilities in order to hear the context. They could ask questions, preserve professional distance, and still treat the person in front of them as a human being.

That behavior connects directly to an existing HRJS leadership principle: **Receptivity Without Pacifism**. Receptivity does not require surrender, agreement, or the abandonment of authority. It means remaining capable of receiving information, context, and another person's humanity without becoming passive.

Before they left, I shook each officer's hand. They gave me the incident number and business-card information with their badge identifiers so that I could monitor the case. They told me the matter would be referred to a detective because the situation was cross-jurisdictional and involved events across state lines.

The second response did more than receive information. It created traceability: I had a case identifier, officer identifiers, a stated next investigative layer, and a way to re-enter the process if the next handoff did not close.

COMPARISON

Same institution. Different continuity outcome.

First contact	Second response
Request received.	Officers arrived.
No field response reached me.	Written narrative received and discussed.
Internal cause remains unknown.	Missing information identified and clarified.
No visible closure from my side.	Incident number and officer identifiers provided.
Handoff not traceable from the human endpoint.	Detective referral described; follow-up path created.

The first failed response and the later good response belong in the same record. If I preserved only the failure, I would be collecting exhibits for a conclusion I had already chosen. If I preserved only the successful response, I would erase a real continuity gap. Accountability requires both.

RESEARCH QUESTION

I want to know where the first handoff broke

I believe the first handoff deserves further research. The purpose is not to identify a villain in advance. It is to reconstruct the process closely enough to understand what happened between dispatch intake and the absence of a completed response.

That investigation matters for more than my own case. I do not know how often people experience the same pattern: a call is made, the caller assumes help is in motion, and the institutional chain does not produce a visible response. A single event cannot establish prevalence. It can, however, identify a mechanism worth testing.

The question becomes especially important when the caller has constrained communication options. If a person has one functioning channel and that channel does not produce closure, the system may have technically received the request while the human being effectively loses access to the process.

That is the kind of shadow gap HRJS is interested in: not necessarily dramatic misconduct, but the space between formal process and lived outcome where responsibility can become difficult to see.

RESEARCH AND REPAIR AGENDA

What I want to examine next

Research area	Question
Intake to assignment	What happens to a call after dispatch receives it? What records show the transfer of responsibility?
Assignment to arrival	How is ownership accepted, deferred, reprioritized, redirected, or closed?
Constrained communication	What happens when the caller's phone is disconnected, intermittent, borrowed, Wi-Fi-only, or otherwise unreliable?

Research area	Question
Traceability	What information can a caller reasonably obtain to know whether the request remains active and where responsibility sits?
Non-response closure	If no unit arrives, what mechanism detects that the human endpoint has not been reached?
Vulnerability and margin	Should the system account for damaged housing, immediate safety concerns, isolation, transportation limits, disability, or other factors that reduce a caller's ability to keep re-entering the process?
Pattern testing	How often do comparable handoff gaps occur, and what characteristics distinguish calls that close from calls that disappear from the caller's perspective?

CLOSING

The point is not to make institutions smaller. It is to make handoffs stronger.

My goal is not to turn one missed police response into an ideological conclusion about policing. My goal is to understand the continuity problem precisely enough to reduce the chance that another person, especially someone operating with almost no margin, is left believing help is moving toward them when the handoff has not actually been secured.

The second response showed that a better outcome is possible. The officers who came to my home listened, questioned, documented, provided traceability, and preserved their authority while remaining receptive. That is worth keeping.

The first response showed that information entering a system is not the same thing as a human being reaching the other side of it. That is worth investigating.

The research question I want HRJS to carry forward is therefore simple: **When responsibility moves, what makes continuity move with it?**

If we can answer that question with enough precision, the result should not be a slogan. It should be a repair mechanism: clearer ownership, better traceability, stronger closure, and fewer people disappearing into the space between “your call was received” and “someone actually came.”