



PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN

*State Fiscal Years 2014 – 2017 (July 1-June 30)
Aug. 8, 2014*

Chairman
GERALD S. ROBINSON
Vice Chair
DR. RAQUELO O. YIENGST
Secretary
REV. DR. JAMES EARL GARMON, SR.
Executive Director
JOANN L. EDWARDS



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Human Relations Commission
333 Market Street, 8th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
(717) 787-4410 voice
(717) 787-7279 TTY
www.phrc.state.pa.us

Commissioners
DR. RADHESHYAM M. AGRAWAL
M. JOEL BOLSTEIN
HON. TERENCE FARRELL
VARSCVIA FERNANDEZ
PAMELA L. MCGAHA
J. WHYATT MONDESIRE
SYLVIA A. WATERS
MERON YEMANE

August 2014

Dear Friends, PA Leaders, Civil Rights Professionals and PA Citizens,

We are pleased to introduce to you the PA Human Relations Commission's Strategic Plan to continue serving the commonwealth with excellence, integrity and equity in the next three years.

The plan represents the culmination of a tremendous effort by our staff and partners to identify areas of challenge, needed growth and focus to take the agency into the second half of this decade. We are hopeful that you recognize our efforts to meet the challenges of changing technology, funding, staffing and demographics that make this strategic plan both a necessity and an accomplishment.

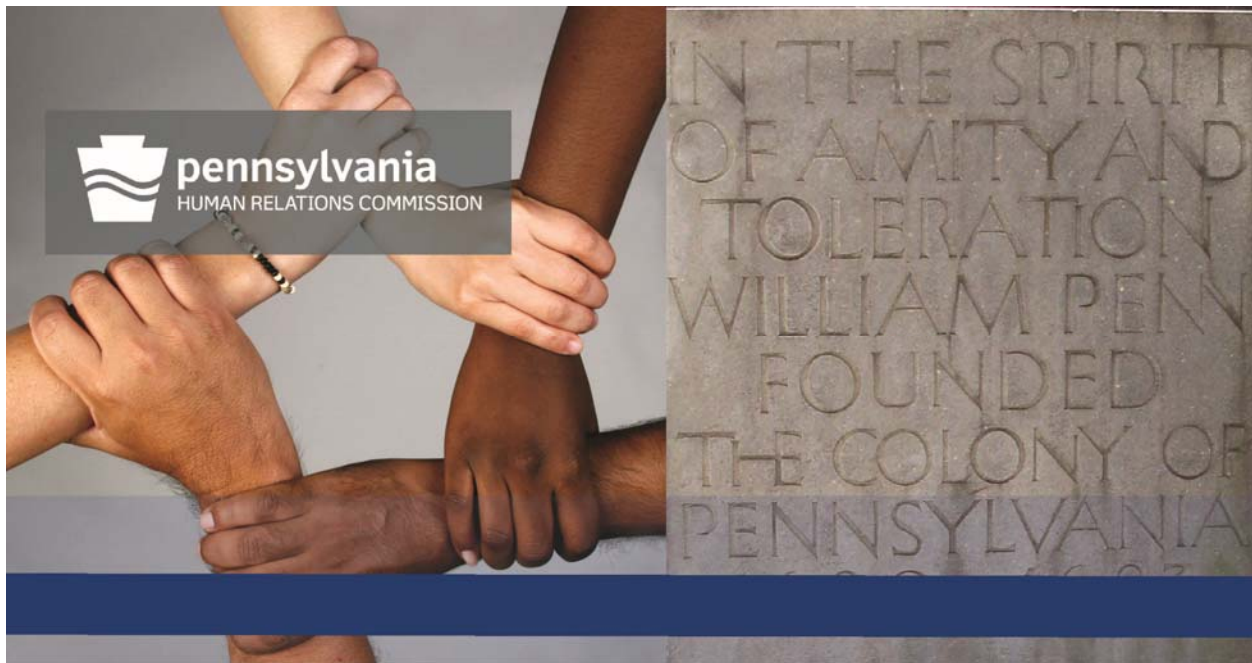
We are eager to continue meeting the challenges of public service while evaluating ourselves with a critical and constructive eye. We welcome your input in this venture and your partnership in ensuring equal opportunity for all in Pennsylvania!

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Gerald S. Robinson and JoAnn L. Edwards.

Gerald S. Robinson
Chairman

JoAnn L. Edwards
Executive Director



PHRC Vision, Mission & Values

VISION

As Pennsylvania's civil rights leader, it is our vision that all people in Pennsylvania will live, work and learn free from unlawful discrimination.

MISSION

The PA Human Relations Commission promotes equal opportunity for all and enforces Pennsylvania's civil rights laws that protect people from unlawful discrimination.

VALUES

- **Equality** - We believe strongly in the equality and dignity of all individuals. We uphold the principles of justice and fairness through our work, conduct and communication.
- **Service** - We subscribe to the highest standards of responsiveness, quality, timeliness and professionalism.
- **Integrity** - We uphold the highest standards of honesty and transparency. We are candid, trustworthy, credible and unbiased.
- **Excellence** - We strive to excel in our work. We endeavor to ensure a highly prepared, diverse, competent and committed workforce.
- **Teamwork** - We build and sustain strong, constructive and collaborative relationships.



BACKGROUND & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discrimination denies families the earnings necessary for maintaining a decent standard of living, and increases dependency on public welfare. It increases school dropout rates and juvenile delinquency. It intensifies group conflict and robs individuals of productivity and self-esteem. The damaging effects to our society and economy are far-reaching and passed from generation to generation.

For almost 60 years, the PA Human Relations Commission, or PHRC, has investigated illegal discrimination in employment, housing, education and public accommodations, and worked to repair resulting harm to Pennsylvania citizens. We have provided Pennsylvanians with community and educational services with the hope that their knowledge of civil rights would prevent future discrimination. This mission is at the heart of the work we do to ensure that Pennsylvania is a civil, peaceful and prosperous place to live, work and learn.

Throughout 2013, PHRC evaluated agency performance, assessing trends in Pennsylvania's demographic landscape, in order to re-imagine how the agency can best fulfill its vital mission in changing times. PHRC worked with the Dering Consulting Group to conduct this comprehensive review, incorporating candid feedback from all levels within the agency. We held executive-level workshops and three regional office sessions across the state to obtain comments and suggestions from commission staff and their union representatives. Finally, we will welcome comments from state and federal stakeholders to ensure our actions align with partners who address illegal discrimination on many fronts. The resulting Strategic Plan is a product of multiple interests and individuals, grounded in fiscal reality, setting agency priorities for the next three years.

In order to achieve **PHRC's vision that all people in Pennsylvania will live, work and learn free from unlawful discrimination:**

- We will, first and foremost, work to speed relief to victims of illegal discrimination via fair, thorough and accelerated investigations
- Second, we will intensify our commitment to ensuring that Pennsylvania children receive equal access to learning
- And finally, knowing that commission employees are its most important asset, we will invest more in career development, training opportunities and technology that enables successful work performance

The commission will continually measure this plan's effectiveness in preventing illegal discrimination in Pennsylvania, and will re-evaluate performance each year to determine the best ways to improve public services, enhance programs, grow our workforce and allocate resources most effectively.

PHRC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL ONE: To ensure responsive, timely resolution of discrimination complaints

PHRC's ability to deliver responsive service to Pennsylvanians is central to our mission and mandate. With this in mind, our two priority enforcement goals are: first, to eliminate the almost 2,000-case backlog of older cases; and second, to enable agency staff to resolve substantially more cases within a year of receipt. Newly formed investigator-attorney teams are central to fast-tracking aged* cases to bring relief to victims of discrimination and those unjustly accused. We are committed to fairness, objectivity and professionalism in all aspects of our work. A new Quality Assurance Program will further assure the public of the highest quality investigation possible. Finally, to protect more Pennsylvanians from unlawful discrimination, PHRC will proactively monitor statewide trends and, when warranted, initiate investigations of systemic discrimination.

*Aged cases are those filed more than one year ago.

Objective A.1: Improve Public Service by Eliminating Aged-Case Backlog:

2014-2015: Complete* 80% (1,721) of the agency-wide 2,142 aged cases by June 30, 2015.

Philadelphia Office: 739

Harrisburg Office: 739

Pittsburgh Office: 243

2015-2016: Complete 85% (1,292) of the agency-wide 1,520 aged cases by June 30, 2016.

Philadelphia Office: 504

Harrisburg Office: 504

Pittsburgh Office: 284

2016-2017: Complete 90% (704) of the agency-wide 782 aged cases by June 30, 2017.

Philadelphia Office: 275

Harrisburg Office: 275

Pittsburgh Office: 154

Re-evaluate every four months and adjust numbers as needed. No baseline is available due to new procedures and staff changes.

****The term complete includes mediation, investigation, conciliation, adjudication and litigation.***

Objective A.2: Improve Public Service by Resolving New Cases within First Year:

2014-2015: Complete 43% (788) of current-year cases within one year of filing.

Philadelphia Office: 246

Harrisburg Office: 246

Pittsburgh Office: 296

2015-2016: Complete 69% (1,258) of current-year cases within one year of filing.

Philadelphia Office: 490

Harrisburg Office: 490

Pittsburgh Office: 278

2016-2017: Complete at 90% (1,630) of the current-year cases within one year of filing.

Philadelphia Office: 636

Harrisburg Office: 636

Pittsburgh Office: 358

Objective B: Ensure fair and objective investigations through an agency Quality Assurance Program

2014-2015: Establish a program by which to measure the quality of PHRC intake processes, investigations, settlements, conciliations, litigation, public hearings and overall public service.

All Regional Offices: Receive baseline quality measures that will be used to benchmark annual progress.

2015–2016: Improve commission work quality by decreasing error rates by 5% from the baseline period of FY 2014-2015.

2016–2017: Improve commission work quality by decreasing error rates by 5% over the FY 2014-2015 score.

Objective C: Strengthen protections for Pennsylvanians through advocacy, persuasion, conciliation or litigation, including commission-initiated complaints where patterns of discrimination exist

2014–2015: Gather and analyze statistics in instances in which workforce, housing or public accommodation characteristics or repeat complaints resulting in probable cause findings suggest that patterns of discrimination may be creating barriers to equal opportunity.

2015–2016: Establish a structure and plan, including a timeline, for responding to identified instances of discriminatory patterns. Identify staffing, funding and partner resources necessary to accomplish the plan.

2016–2017: Implement action plans – including, but not limited to commission-initiated litigation – designed to end any identified patterns of discrimination.

GOAL TWO: To promote Equal Opportunity and prevent unlawful discrimination by providing relevant training, reliable information and targeted outreach

While prosecuting illegal discrimination is essential, it is just as important to prevent it from happening. To strengthen a preventative approach to illegal discrimination, we aim to expand our reach through a new Training and Development Institute that will deliver low- or no-cost anti-discrimination training to schools, employers, housing providers and other professional groups.

We are especially committed to addressing Pennsylvania's education crisis and improving equal access to learning for minority children and those with disabilities. To this end, the commission is working with key partners such as the Departments of Education, Corrections and the U.S. Department of Justice to keep kids in school, reduce dropout rates and help ensure a bright future for our youth. These prevention efforts rely heavily on expanding our current network of local advisory councils and ensuring that Pennsylvanians are informed and aware of PHRC services.

Objective A.1: Prevent discriminatory practices in employment, housing and public accommodations through formal training

2014–2015: Establish and promote a Training and Development Institute to train organizations subject to the PHRA on how to prevent illegal discrimination. Conduct a minimum of seven training sessions by June 2015, as follows:

Hold one training session for employer audiences in each region; one training session for housing providers, realtors or lenders in each region; and one training session for students or educators in a school district in any region.

We will measure training effectiveness by conducting pre- and post-training tests that demonstrate trainees' level of understanding and awareness of equal opportunity and illegal discrimination.

By November 2014, determine which groups, organizations or industries need our training services.

2015–2016: Hold at least fourteen institute training sessions by June 2016, as follows: two training sessions for employer audiences in each region; two training sessions for housing providers, lenders or realtors in each region; and at least two training sessions for students or educators in school districts in any region.

2016–2017: Provide at least fourteen Institute training sessions by June 2017. Training session breakdown remains the same as 2015-2016.

Objective A.2: Prevent discriminatory practices in education through monitored conciliation measures

2014–2015: Analyze best practices and produce a data-driven model conciliation agreement to address discriminatory practices in education. Produce a summary document by June 2015.

2015–2016: Develop and implement a monitored conciliation agreement or action plan to expedite the removal of barriers to equal opportunity in at least one school district by June 2016. Services delivered to school districts will be in conjunction with our public and private education equity partners.

2016–2017: Execute a model conciliation agreement to correct illegal discrimination practices with at least two entities by June 2017.

Objective B: Prevent unlawful discrimination in Pennsylvania's school systems through targeted outreach

2014–2015: Re-establish the commission's Education Equity Initiative, a partnership of organizations committed to increasing access to educational opportunities for all Pennsylvania children. This outreach program seeks to identify patterns of discrimination in school systems and respond with PHRC and partner services designed to ensure equal access to learning. The initiative seeks to address the school-to-prison pipeline – the well-established connection between low academic achievement and incarceration that results in devastatingly high social and economic costs to Pennsylvania communities, families and taxpayers.

By January 2015, secure a letter of agreement with partners who wish to work on the initiative.

By March 2015, working with initiative partners, identify the school district in each PHRC region with the highest dropout rate and corresponding incarceration rate. Work with each identified district to:

- 1) establish an internal discrimination complaint process where absent,
- 2) train students, parents, school personnel and community members on their civil rights,
- 3) recommend and facilitate the Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together (SPIRIT) Program,
- 4) train school personnel in nondiscriminatory methods of discipline, and
- 5) work with school personnel, parents and community members to review policies to eliminate those which may have discriminatory impacts.

2015–2016: Identify three additional school districts (one per region) with the highest dropout and corresponding incarceration rates and provide one or more of the above five services to each school by June 2016.

2016-2017: Identify three additional school districts (one per region) with the highest dropout rates and corresponding incarceration rates, and provide one or more of the above five services to each school by June 2017.

Commission Objective C: Raise public awareness of PHRC services and their impact on Pennsylvanians

2014-2015:

1. By October 2014, survey a broad sample of advocacy groups and individuals representing various protected classes under the PHRA to determine their awareness of their nondiscrimination rights in the workplace, housing, education and public accommodations and where to turn when those rights are violated. Include questions to determine discrimination topics of greatest interest or concern.
2. Determine content and features most visited on current website, including time spent on each page and source of visit by September 2014.
3. Launch and broadly promote online filing option for employment complaints by January 2015.

4. Using data gathered through the survey and web analytics, plan, migrate and launch revised, mobile-friendly website by the end of June 2015.
5. Implement three-year statewide Fair Housing campaign, incorporating radio and print media, with special emphasis on disabilities and renters. Include Spanish media outreach.
6. Determine staffing, funding and other resources necessary to meet strategic plan objectives.

2015–2016: Using data gathered through survey and continued analytics, plan and promote PHRC initiatives to targeted audiences by:

1. Planning and proposing at least one op-ed, letter to the editor, special edition article or public affairs program appearance in each PA media market by the end of June 2016
2. Expanding PHRC use of social media in conjunction with the new mobile-friendly website

2016–2017: By October of 2017, repeat survey conducted in 2014-2015. Continue to promote PHRC initiatives to targeted audiences, adjusting plans in response to survey data and web analytics by:

1. Planning and proposing at least one op-ed, letter to the editor, special edition article or public affairs program appearance in each PA media market by the end of June 2017
2. Using social media in conjunction with new website platform, reacting to changing technology and new avenues for reaching various audiences
3. Using web analytics to determine most-sought web content, re-evaluating and revising content as appropriate

Commission Objective D: Engage key partners in order to enhance PHRC’s effectiveness and capacity to reach communities statewide:

Objective D.1: PHRC Advisory Councils

Lead Responsible Parties: Executive Director, Director of Education and Community Services, Director of Communications

2014–2015:

By June 2015, develop criteria for assessing effectiveness of existing six advisory councils in advancing the commission’s mission. Provide training to the six councils by June 2015.

Establish and implement a program structure by which advisory councils will operate. Include an annual meeting with legislators in their respective regions geared toward raising awareness of PHRC and equal opportunity issues among legislators and their staff members who serve constituents.

Identify regions of the state in which PHRC has the greatest need to increase our presence. Develop a plan to recruit advisory council members in identified regions.

2015–2016:

Based on an annual assessment, continue training for advisory councils targeted toward the needs and issues in their respective locations. Implement recruitment plan to develop one new advisory council by June 2016.

2016-2017:

Based on an annual assessment, continue training for advisory councils targeted toward the needs and issues in their respective locations. Implement recruitment plan to develop one new advisory council by June 2017.

Objective D.2: Local Human Relations Commissions

2014-2015:

By June 2015, propose work-sharing agreements to two local human relations commissions whose ordinances provide authority to accept, mediate or investigate complaints. Reissue letter of instruction to all local commissions regarding PHRC roles and responsibilities.

2015-2016:

Assess local human relations commission work-sharing agreements entered into in 2014-15, and modify as needed by December 2015. Propose work-sharing agreements to five additional local commissions by June 2016.

2016-2017:

By June 2017, assess existing local commission agreements, and propose work-sharing agreements to five local commissions.

GOAL 3: To ensure effective and efficient agency operations by optimizing resources

Talented staff members are the commission's most critical asset. Accomplishing the agency's challenging goals requires a dedicated, diverse, highly skilled and motivated workforce. The commission is using the results of a job competency study to ensure that employees gain the right skills, abilities and knowledge for a rewarding and progressive career at PHRC. Further, a state-of-the-art case management system will better enable staff to analyze and record investigation data while decreasing redundant data entry. With an eye towards the future, PHRC will strengthen its recruitment and retention programs to ensure the commission maintains the expertise necessary to accomplish its mission. These initiatives include management succession and diversity planning to prepare present staff for the future and recruit a workforce that reflects Pennsylvania demographics.

Objective A.1: Strengthen our workforce by implementing a new Competency Model to improve upward job progression

2014-2015: Study and select the best combination of workforce competencies (skills, knowledge and aptitudes) for each agency job classification (HHR1-HHR4) by June 2015.

2015-2016: Set developmental goals based on Competency Model results, for all PHRC employees by October 2015. Conduct first Employee Performance Ratings (EPRs) under the new program by September 2016.

All Regional Offices: Provide tailored training for 75% of employees in order to attain developmental goals in EPRs

2016-2017: Fully implement the Competency Model program for all commission employees

All Regional Offices: Provide tailored training for 95% of employees in order to attain developmental goals in EPRs

Objective A.2: Strengthen our workforce by recruiting highly qualified candidates from all segments of society

2014-2015: Continue to broadly distribute recruitment notices by email and online and through alumni and career offices of minority-serving colleges and universities, and job boards of professional, social and advocacy organizations.

2015-2016: Develop an effective workforce-planning strategy by January 2016 that includes funding and formalizing an internship program to recruit and develop diverse job candidates.

2016-2017: Conduct a study by January 2017 to compile, analyze and assess other federal and state agencies' successful strategies for diversity recruitment, hiring and retention. Adopt selected best practices by June 2017.

Objective A.3: Strengthen our workforce through knowledge transfer and succession plans

2014-2015: By December 2014, the commission will partner with the PA State Archives to identify, archive and catalogue PHRC historical records and photos to make them available to future researchers and preserve PA civil rights history for future generations.

2015-2016: By June 2016, develop and implement a knowledge-transfer policy to preserve institutional knowledge tied to all senior staff positions agency-wide.

2016-2017: By June 2017, the executive director, in collaboration with Executive Offices' Human Resources staff, will define the skill sets, expertise and characteristics required for all executive staff positions. In doing so, they will evaluate changing technology, budgetary and staffing needs and the commission's ability to meet strategic plan objectives as part of this task.

Objective B: Bolster morale by fostering a positive, respectful work environment in which individual and team contributions are recognized

2014-2015: By June 2015, continue to implement the agency Staff Recognition Program, highlighting top performers monthly and annually, and selecting honorees in the categories of Investigation, Administration, Clerical, Legal, Leadership and Longevity of Service.

2015-2016: Continue the Staff Recognition Program on a monthly basis and present annual awards to deserving personnel by June 2016.

2016-2017: Continue the Staff Recognition Program on a monthly basis and present annual awards to deserving personnel by June 2017.

Objective C: Procure and implement a modern Case Management System that better enables our workforce and produces data for public education, trend-tracking and future initiatives to eliminate discrimination

2014-2015: Select and procure a new Case Management System by January 2015 that best supports PHRC's new Case Investigative Procedures. Benchmark current system based on selected criteria such as reliability, reporting and error prevention.

2015-2016: Train staff, test and deploy the system by January 2016.

2016-2017: No later than June 2017, evaluate and refine the system based on system performance.

Objective D: Fully engage commissioners' experience and talents in order to achieve the greatest possible public impact

2014-2015: Form a Strategic Plan Steering Committee to oversee implementation of the Strategic Plan. Develop a charter, membership and meeting schedule for the committee by December 2014.

2015-2016: Enhance commissioners' perspectives and statewide visibility by establishing a new *Ad Hoc* Advisory Council comprised of prominent Pennsylvania leaders in the employment, housing and education sectors. Develop charter, membership and meeting schedule by October 2015. Appoint a commissioner to serve as a liaison to each PHRC Advisory Council by December 2015.

2016-2017: By June 2017, evaluate effectiveness of the *Ad Hoc* Advisory Council and Strategic Planning Steering Committee and make adjustments as necessary to increase impact