

PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2014-2015 Annual Report



pennsylvania

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

"Protecting Pennsylvanians' civil rights since 1955"

PHRC Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate to serve five-year terms. They are chosen to further the interests of the Commonwealth in ending and preventing discrimination. They come from diverse backgrounds and are charged to further the PHRC mission by working with community organizations, religious organizations, advocacy groups, law enforcement and other community groups. The Commissioners meet on a monthly basis to deliberate over cases in which staff investigations have found probable cause to support discrimination allegations. Commissioners preside over public hearings, guide decision-making and set policies and priorities to support the agency’s mission.



Top row - L to R: Gerald S. Robinson, Esq., Chair, Raquel O. Yiengst, PhD, Vice Chair, Radheshyam M. Agrawal, MD, Middle row - L to R: M. Joel Bolstein, Esq., Kathleen T. Dormer-Carusone, George B. Dawson, Esq., Bottom row - L to R: Terence Farrell, Varsovia Fernandez, Meron Yemane

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Gerald S. Robinson, Esq. Chair

This has been a year of many accomplishments for the Commission. Two years ago, we embarked on a journey to address our backlog of cases. I am proud to say that since then, our staff through their hard work and commitment has been able to reduce our backlog by thirty percent, which is a great accomplishment!

The Commission has also focused on the organization's outreach efforts. Our programs and initiatives are highlighted in this report. One notable accomplishment was the regional offices' ability to directly train 5,000 residents, organizations and employees across the Commonwealth.

These are exciting times for the Commission. We look forward to reaching out to even more communities and organizations to provide education and training efforts, as well as address reports of discrimination from individuals in Pennsylvania.



JoAnn Edwards, Executive Director

We appreciate the support of Governor Wolf and the legislature and hope to continue to work in building these relationships.

The Commission would like to note that on October 27, 1955, Governor Leader signed the PA Fair Employment Practice Act and on March 2, 1956 the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission was established. Nearly 60 years later, the Commission continues to work hard to ensure that all Pennsylvanians can live, work and learn free from unlawful discrimination.

The 2015 Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission Annual Report is dedicated to PHRC Commissioners Reverend Dr. Garmon, Sr. and J. Whyatt Mondesire

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission Proclamation in Honor of Reverend Dr. James Earl Garmon, Sr., 1939-2015



Whereas, Reverend Dr. James Earl Garmon, Sr., began his advocacy and social justice involvement while studying at American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee; and

Whereas, Reverend Dr. James Garmon, Sr., served his community as pastor of the Trinity Baptist Church in Pittsburgh for over thirty years and as a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the NAACP; and

Whereas, Reverend Dr. James Garmon, Sr. worked tirelessly to help achieve equal opportunity in his community and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through his faith and as a member of many organizations, including the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission; and

Whereas, Reverend Dr. James Garmon, Sr., demonstrated leadership and commitment in his services as a Commissioner and as Secretary to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission; and

Whereas, Reverend Dr. James Earl Garmon, Sr., will be remembered for his graciousness and kindness as well as his quiet wisdom; and

Whereas, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission desires to formally acknowledge work of this gentle, committed man and emphasize the importance of Reverend Dr. Garmon's work toward furthering equal opportunity and civil rights throughout his lifetime.

Therefore, we the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission do hereby call upon all Pennsylvanians to join us in celebrating the life, legacy and vast achievements of Reverend Dr. James Earl Garmon, Sr.

Signed this 14th Day of August, 2015

Gerald S. Robinson, Esq.
Chairperson

JoAnn Edwards,
Executive Director

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission Proclamation in Honor of J. Whyatt Mondesire, 1949-2015



Whereas, J. Whyatt Mondesire, began his life-long career as a social justice advocate in the 1960's as a member of the NAACP High School Youth Council as well as studying journalism at City Colleges of New York; and

Whereas, as a journalist for the Philadelphia Inquirer and then, publisher of the Philadelphia Sun, J. Whyatt Mondesire was able to use the power of the pen to advocate for those without a voice; and

Whereas, working also through his position as aide to U.S. Congressman William H. Gray, he used his talent and professional contacts to focus attention on pressing social and political inequities at the local, national and international level; and

Whereas, J. Whyatt Mondesire, has served the community as Philadelphia president of the NAACP and demonstrated his commitment as president of the PA State Conference of the NAACP, working tirelessly to achieve equal opportunity for persons of color; and

Whereas, J. Whyatt Mondesire was a lion for civil rights; and

Whereas, he will be remembered as a relentless crusader whose strong passion and activism in his community made a difference; and

Whereas, J. Whyatt Mondesire demonstrated candor, intelligence, humor, perseverance as well as commitment in his services as a Commissioner for the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission from 2004 through 2015; and

Whereas, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission wishes to formally acknowledge his advocacy and emphasize the importance of J. Whyatt Mondesire's unwavering and awe-inspiring work towards furthering equal opportunity and civil rights throughout his lifetime.

Therefore, we the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission do hereby call upon all Pennsylvanians to join us in celebrating the life, legacy, service and numerous achievements of J. Whyatt Mondesire.

Signed on the 7th Day of October, 2015

Gerald S. Robinson, Esq.
Chairperson

JoAnn Edwards,
Executive Director

STRATEGIC PLAN



In 2014, the PHRC created a strategic plan that provides a roadmap for the agency to follow for the next three years in addressing our mission.

Strategic Plan Goals:

Goal 1:	To ensure responsive, timely resolution of discrimination complaints
Goal 2:	To promote equal opportunity and prevent unlawful discrimination by providing relevant training, reliable information and targeted outreach
Goal 3:	To ensure effective and efficient agency operations by optimizing resources

The Strategic Plan sets forth three goals that help the PHRC achieve the vision that all people in Pennsylvania will live, work and learn free from unlawful discrimination.

The Commission has been working to meet each goal throughout the past year and is committed to accomplishing them in the times

designated for completion. Additionally, this annual report highlights the Commission's accomplishments in regard to the timely resolution of complaints, providing training and outreach throughout the state and ensuring that the resources are used efficiently to carry out our mission.

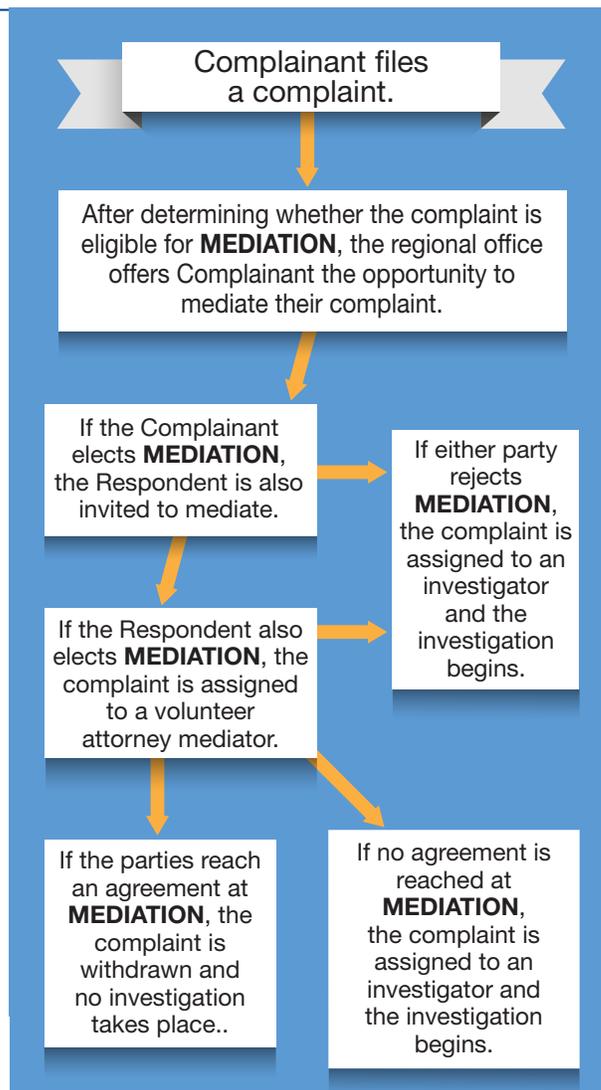
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mediation Program

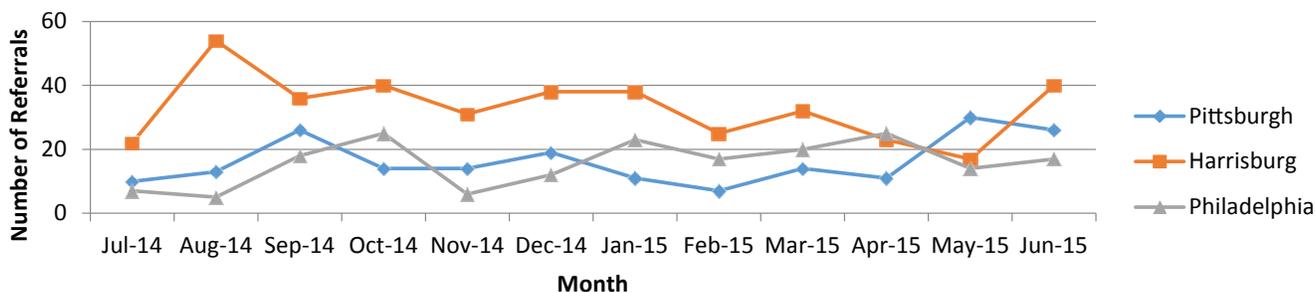
The PHRC Mediation Program was created in June of 2013 as an alternative to resolving disputes without lengthy investigations, or going through the PHRC hearing process or the courts. The program involves a voluntary, informal process where both parties agree to work with a trained, neutral mediator to help them explore and resolve their differences together. The goal is to establish a settlement acceptable to both parties. As of June 30, 2015, 27 cases have been mediated and the program has saved nearly \$135,000 by resolving Employment discrimination cases early in the process.

The Mediation Program continues to recruit volunteer attorneys from the public and private sectors to work with the program. The program provides training for those attorneys who volunteer to mediate cases. Additionally, the program plans to utilize Continuing Legal Education credits (CLEs) as a method of expanding awareness throughout the legal community about the initiative.

For more information, visit our website at www.phrc.pa.gov.



Regional Office Referrals by Month FY 2014 - 2015



ACCOMPLISHMENTS



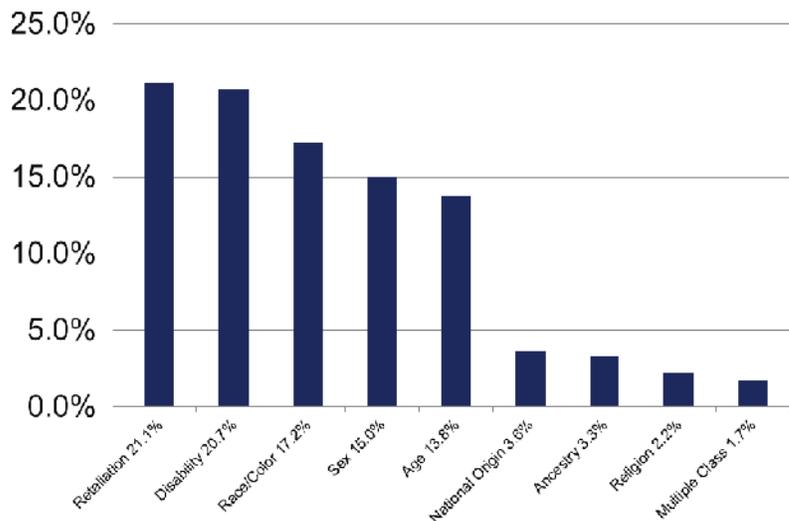
Case-Management Re-Engineering Initiative

Through a case re-engineering process implemented in 2013, the PHRC has closed many of their oldest cases and established procedures that result in quality investigations. Staff also has been able to close many of the oldest cases. This ongoing initiative is intended to achieve the goal of closing both old and new cases in a timely manner. PHRC's ability to deliver responsive service to Pennsylvanians is central to our mission and mandate.

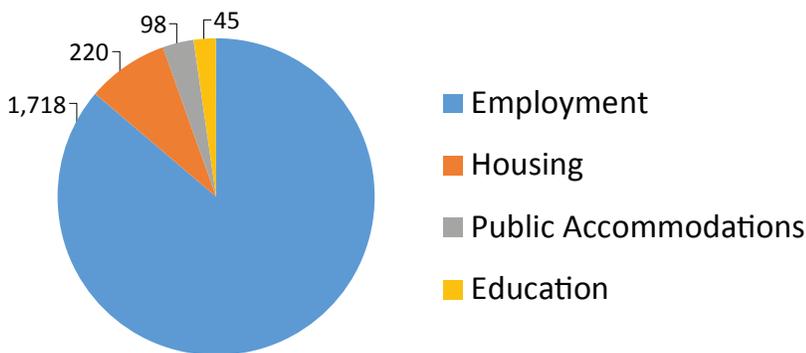
With this in mind, our goals are to eliminate almost 2,000 backlog older cases that have been present well before FY 2014-15; and second, to

enable agency staff to resolve substantially more cases within a year of staff being assigned the case.

Basis of complaints PHRC Receives



Discrimination Complaints Docketed in 2014-2015



For more information on cases and statistics, contact us at www.phrc.pa.gov.

This year, the Commission expects to receive almost 2,000 new cases.

The agency has been able to reduce overall caseload by 30 percent and closed a total of 2,264 cases in 2013-14. Additionally, the PHRC was able to obtain \$5,968,000 monetary settlements provided for clients as well as expect over 3,000 individuals and businesses with training and improved policy changes.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Electronic Employment Complaint Form

[PHRC home page](#) > [Resources](#) > [Complaint Forms](#) > [Discrimination in Employment-online form](#) > [Keystone ID-log in/create account](#)

In September, 2015, the PHRC took the first step in allowing individuals to begin the complaint process by submitting an on-line questionnaire. The completed questionnaire is the first step in filing an employment discrimination complaint. The PHRC worked with the Office of Administration to pilot the first online questionnaire. Individuals who wish to submit the form must first register under the Keystone ID system.

Once completed, the questionnaire is routed to the appropriate regional office and entered into the PHRC case tracking system. The PHRC will be phasing in additional questionnaires for housing, public accommodations, education and disabilities. This is a huge accomplishment for the PHRC in moving into the digital age.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Training

Training is an ongoing effort and priority for the PHRC. Training is conducted by regional staff as well as legal and education and community services staff. Training is offered on types of discrimination, cultural diversity, mediation, fair housing, equal education and the complaint filing process.

Trainings are conducted for organizations such as the PA Bar Institute, law school students, state agencies, county government groups, organizations, schools and local employers. Training can also be mandated in a settlement or other legal order as part of resolving a complaint of illegal discrimination.



Geoff Biringger participated with others in "Let's Talk: A Dialogue on Race"

The goal of each training sessions is to promote equal opportunity, and to help communities, public agencies, businesses and schools prevent and/or eliminate illegal discrimination.

Overall training efforts by PHRC staff touch over 5,000 individuals in 2014-15.



Geoff Biringger and Carol Chromicky provide information and outreach at the Autism Fall Festival in Pottstown

ENFORCEMENT



Public Hearings

When an investigation has found probable cause and the case has failed to settle, the Commission holds a public hearing. In 2014-15, there were 26 cases approved for public hearing that settled after the approval for the hearing. As to the number of Public Hearings held, there were 24 pre-hearing conferences resulting in seven public hearings.



Housing

As of June 30, 2015, the total number of submissions to HUD was 177 cases, surpassing the overall contract goal of 150 cases by 27 for the case processing year beginning July 1, 2014 and ending June 30, 2015. This benchmark was exceeded by continuing to deem housing cases as “a number one priority” for both investigative and attorney staff. As of September 30, 2015, the PHRC have already submitted 49 cases for the first quarter of the 2015-2016 case processing year. PHRC continues to make cases older than 100 days our primary focus, with our Regional Directors and Team Leaders instructed to target these cases for closure in the monthly case audits.



Sexual Harassment

A woman from Montgomery County filed for alleged pregnancy discrimination. The business owner never responded to numerous attempts to contact them. Therefore, the business was ordered to pay lost wages and expenses plus interest. The complainant received \$32,191.

A female in Dauphin County was terminated from her job in retaliation for alleging sexual harassment. The employer was found liable for retaliation and was ordered to pay over \$14,000.00 in back pay and interest to the complainant.



Disability Discrimination

A woman from Adams County filed a complaint alleging discrimination relating to disability, age and retaliation due to denial of a promotion and then termination. The complainant then filed a second complaint alleging the business would not permit her to be on the property after her termination. The PHRC ruled in favor of the woman on aged-based discrimination and retaliation. The business was ordered to pay the complainant back pay award, lost pension award plus pension contributions, health care coverage, dental and medical expenditures plus interest amounting to \$315,168. Also, she will receive pay until she obtains a job or she reaches the age of 68.



Religion-Based Discrimination

A man from Philadelphia filed a discrimination complaint alleging that his employer fired him because his religion was non-Muslim. The commission found the employer liable for discrimination based on religion and failure to respond and to pay the complainant for expenses and lost wages plus interest, bringing the award to more than \$3,475.

PHRC PROACTIVE OUTREACH



Education Equity Initiative

The PHRC's Education Equity Initiative was established to help ensure that equal educational opportunities exist for all Pennsylvania students, and they have a safe and positive environment that is conducive to learning.

The Education and Community Services Division of the PHRC has been working with a number of schools throughout the state. The Commission has successfully worked with the Coatesville School District and staff is presently working with Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Reading School Districts.

The PHRC continues to work with these schools and local organizations to help them advocate for student success to improve overall outcomes and work to decrease the school to prison effect. The PHRC strongly supports students having the opportunity to learn in a positive and nurturing environment and is working to identify other schools that may need assistance with addressing student outcomes. The program includes:

In the first phase of the Education Equity Initiative, the Education and Community Services Division reaches out to school districts with significant achievement gaps and proposes a partnership,

between the school district, the PHRC, and local partners. A student-led program known as the S.P.I.R.I.T. program or a similar program, is initiated with these parties to begin addressing some of the gaps.

After the establishment of the S.P.I.R.I.T. or similar program, the school district, PHRC, and local partners work together to identify areas of concern. In this second phase of the program, PHRC staff may reach out to educational stakeholders such as PTO groups, Intermediate Units, universities and other groups for assistance in this process.

During the third phase, partners work together to brainstorm possible resolutions to the issues the district faces. An action plan is designed to include solutions, such as: diversity and civil rights trainings; transparency initiatives; an internal complaint process; or any other equity initiative may be part of the action plan agreed to by all parties (Commission, school and interested parties).

The Commission's goal is to broaden educational outreach by establishing relationships within local communities and provide a better understanding about the operations of the commission.



Pennsylvania Interagency Taskforce on Community Relations and Activities

One of the primary partnerships PHRC participates in and manages is a network of state and federal agencies and non-governmental groups known as the PA Interagency Taskforce on Community Activities and Relations. Originally formed to address racial unrest stemming from events like organized hate activity, the group tracks incidents that may lead to tension between racial and other

groups, refers inquiries as appropriate to address each situation and works collectively to reduce the potential for tensions in schools and communities. The group shares best practices to increase equal opportunity and appropriately address conflict. The group meets on a bi-monthly basis and shares information throughout the year.

PHRC PROACTIVE OUTREACH

Local HRC Summit

The PHRC held its first annual Local HRC Summit on June 19, 2015. The Commission has been working to strengthen partnerships with local HRCs. Over 35 individuals attended. The purpose of the summit was to bring individuals together from local PHRCs to discuss how the PHRC handles inquiries, cases and review processes as well as talk about common goals and practices.

It was a great opportunity to share information, put a name with a face and establish relationships with local human relations commissions. Everyone that attended felt that the meeting was

beneficial and agreed that it will be helpful to hold the summit on a yearly basis.



L to R: Jim Kayer, JoAnn Edwards, Commissioner Raquel Yiengst and Pinkey Lucas

Advisory Councils

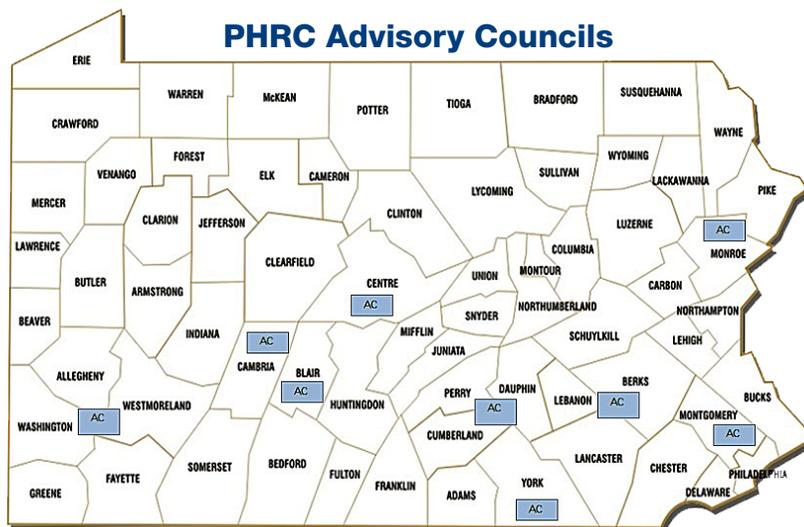
The PHRC Advisory Councils were created to extend the Commission's ability to reach out to local communities to promote a better understanding of what the agency services include and to create partnerships at the

local level. Some advisory councils hold civil rights award programs, forums and educational sessions on discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation and education. Additionally, these councils

can provide assistance with forming strategies in addressing problems at the local level.

This year, we have been successful in expanding the number of advisory councils from six to nine across the state. Several more are in the formative stages, but will be up and running in the near future.

The map indicates the locations of the advisory councils.



COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

PHRC Outreach and Media

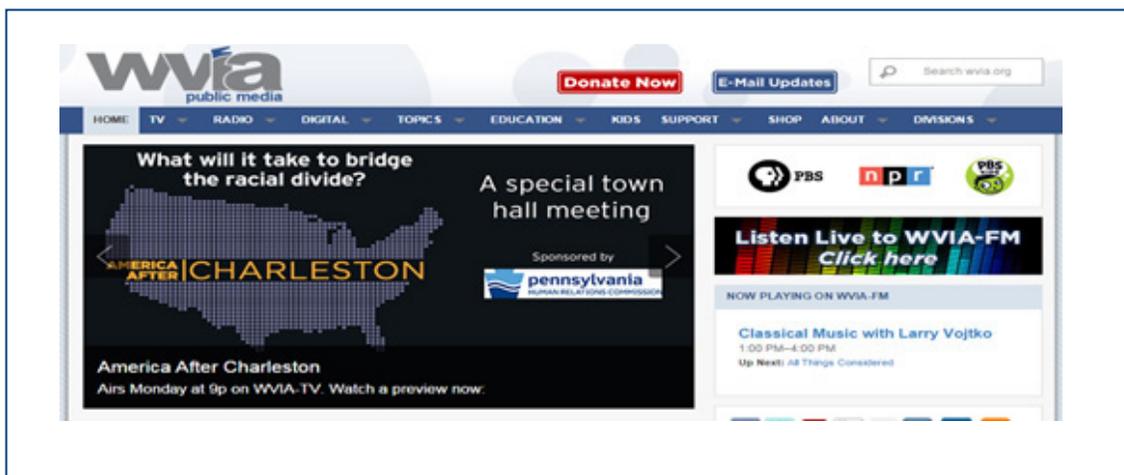
Last spring, the PHRC carried out a media campaign around fair housing. The campaign was successful and we continue to explore other options in the media to get the word out about the services we offer to people living in the Commonwealth.

On October 23, 2015, Chair Gerald Robinson and Executive Director, JoAnn Edwards visited Blue Ridge Cable Channel 11 to tape a show that was aired on the station's Local Government programming. The station's viewing area is Manheim Central, Warwick, Ephrata, Cocalico, Conestoga Valley townships as well as eastern Lancaster County.

The PHRC had the opportunity to help sponsor the PBS Town Meeting: "America After Charleston" on stations throughout the state. The town meeting was hosted on September 22nd but has been shown numerous times since then. Below is a screenshot of WVIA's website announcing the Town Meeting. The PHRC sponsorship was for all eight PBS stations in Pennsylvania.



Commissioner Robinson, JoAnn Edwards and Host Bob Miller talk about the PHRC



COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

Fair Housing Campaign

The PHRC Media Campaign was launched in April 2015. The objective of the campaign was to increase awareness of the PHRC's Fair Housing Hotline and to encourage consumers who felt they were discriminated against to file a complaint.

PHRC worked with a media consultant to identify geographical areas where our target audiences were located. The campaign consisted of developing public service announcement (PSAs) which were distributed and played on radio stations throughout the state. Conventional radio, Pandora internet radio, online video, geo-fencing using mobile applications, and paid search were media outlets that were used to distribute the message.

In addition to the PSAs, a fair housing awareness advertisement was created and placed on sides and insides of SEPTA buses. The ad was also placed on strategically targeted bus shelters in Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. The campaign's total length of exposure was nearly 6 months.



COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA



Videos Developed to Describe Types of Discrimination



and how to get help if they feel they were discriminated against.

As part of our outreach efforts, the Education and Community Services division developed a series of videos to provide basic information on types of discrimination. The videos, eight in English and eight in Spanish, are posted on the PHRC website for users to learn more about discrimination and what to do to get help. The videos are also being used by staff and advisory councils as part of presentations and training programs.

According to a study that Penn State conducted for the PHRC, many individuals do not know what types of discrimination exist

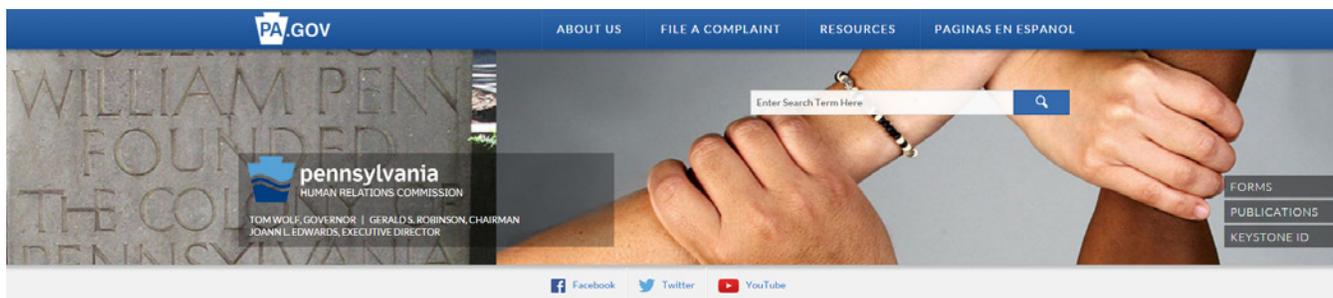


New PHRC Website

The PHRC launched a newly updated website on October 30, 2015!

The update is part of a Commonwealth wide initiative to update all agencies' websites. The purpose for the updates is to provide a new platform for the sites to operate on and to make them uniform and easier to access information.

The new website address is www.phrc.gov.



REGIONAL OFFICE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



Pittsburgh Regional Office

Pittsburgh staff members participate in quarterly forums organized by the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh's Center for Race and Gender Equity during which network nonprofits, with universities, economic development organizations, neighborhood groups and government agencies to explore solutions that hinder economic prosperity in minority communities. Pittsburgh's office continues to participate in the U.S. Attorneys' Community Police Relations Group, which aims to address racial tensions between police and urban Pittsburgh neighborhoods. In response to a University of Pittsburgh survey identifying

underemployment, unemployment, and high recidivism rates as systemic cause of crime and community-police tensions, and the regional office has become a valuable partner in resolving issues. PHRC has been working with the group to address recruitment and hiring strategies, ways to combat discriminatory bullying and non-discriminatory approaches to student discipline. The regional office is involved in fair housing training and participated in an event with the City of Pittsburgh during fair housing month. Staff also worked with Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agency and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to provide training.



Philadelphia Regional Office

The Philadelphia office is located in close proximity to a large number of local human relations commissions and fair housing organizations that serve as referral entities, and in some cases, enforce local ordinances. PHRC participates in a regional coalition of human relations organizations and hosted training for the group on mediating

discrimination complaints. This year the regional office focused their efforts in providing housing training to staff and housing counselors of community organizations. The training has helped promote a better understand and processing of housing complaints filed. To date, nearly 60 housing counselors have been trained.



Harrisburg Regional Office

PHRC's Harrisburg office staff members partner with a wide range of organizations that includes the Pennsylvania Disability Employment and Summit, the Harrisburg YWCA's Race Against Racism Program, Pennsylvania State Council on SHRM's (Society for Human Resource Management) Annual Legal and Legislative Conference, Human Resource Professionals of Central PA and Berks County Society for Human Resources Management. Staff has reached out to more than 3,000 individuals in order to provide information and training on services of the PHRC. Additionally, they have conducted training sessions for organizations/companies in their region.



Harrisburg Regional Office staff participated in Race Against Racism



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HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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