"Protecting Pennsylvanians' civil rights since 1955"

PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

pennsylvania
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2015-2016 Annual Report

PHRC Commissioners

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 by preventing and ending unlawful discrimination. They are charged to further the PHRC's mission by working with community organizations, religious organizations, advocacy groups, law enforcement and other community groups. Commissioners attend monthly meetings, preside over public hearings, guide decision-making and set policies and priorities to support the agency's mission.

Top row - L to R: M. Joel Bolstein, Esq., Interim Chair, Raquel O. Yiengst, PhD, Vice Chair, George B. Dawson, Esq.,

Middle row - L to R: Radheshyam M. Agrawal, Kathleen T. Dormer-Carusone, Michael Hardiman, Esq.,

Bottom row - L to R: Varsovia Fernandez, Meron Yemane, Terence Farrell, Gerald Robinson, Esq.

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MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

M. Joel Bolstein, Esq. Interim Chair

JoAnn L. Edwards, Executive Director

In April 2016, M. Joel Bolstein, Esq. was appointed by Governor Wolf as Interim Chair to the Commission and he has served on the Commission since 1999.

This has been a year of many challenges for our agency. As we all know, Pennsylvania's state budget deficit over the past several years has had a significant impact on all agencies and particularly on the PHRC. The budget deficit has decreased staff complement as well as our daily operating budget.

In June 2016, the Senate State Government Committee held a public hearing relating to concerns about the operations of the PHRC in which the PHRC testified. Additionally, Sen. Anthony Williams and members of the Black Caucus and Philadelphia delegation held a press conference in June, promoting the importance of adequately funding PHRC so it can protect Pennsylvanians who have been discriminated against. We are grateful for their continued support.

In May, 2016, Governor Wolf appointed Michael Hardiman to serve on the Commission. Michael is a past Chief Counsel for the PHRC. He is a welcomed addition to the Commission and has a boatload of knowledge and experience in the area of civil rights.

We are proud to say that the staff continues to work hard and are committed to addressing the discrimination complaints that are submitted from individuals. We continue to provide training and outreach to organizations, businesses and schools. In fact, the PHRC has provided training to 52 businesses and organizations this year.

We thank Governor Wolf and the legislature for their support.

"On October 27, 1955, Governor George Leader signed the PA Fair Employment Practice Act and on March 2, 1956 the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission was established. Sixty-one years later, the Commission continues to work hard to ensure that all Pennsylvanians can live, work and learn free from unlawful discrimination."

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 within the designated time frame. 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 commission's resources are used efficiently to carry out our mission.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

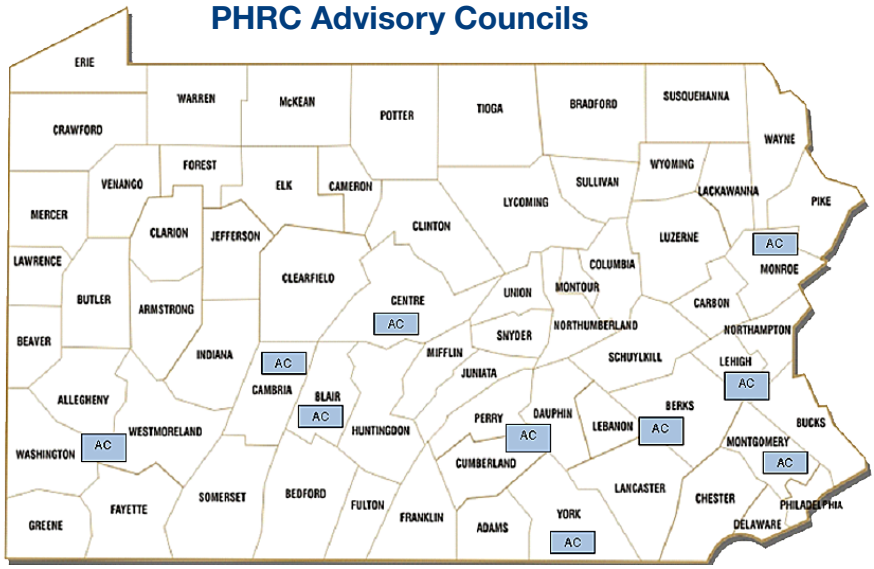
PHRC Advisory Councils

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.

In 2015-2016 three new advisory councils were established: Lebanon/Lancaster/Berks Counties, Cumberland/Dauphin/Perry Counties, and Lehigh Valley and began holding meetings. Some of the councils have decided to focus on specific areas of discrimination such as education, housing, employment, or public accommodations. These groups partner with organizations, schools, governments, and businesses in their communities to develop solutions to local issues. Advisory councils who become aware of instances of suspected discrimination refer such claims to the PHRC.

Advisory councils have been operating throughout the state since the creation of the PHRC in 1955.

PHRC Advisory Councils



Second Annual HRC Summit

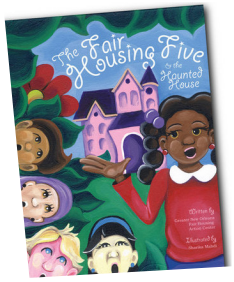
The PHRC held its second annual Human Relations Commission (HRC) Summit on July 26, 2016. Thirty attendees participated in the summit including HRCs, advisory councils, law enforcement and state and federal agencies. Breakout sessions included discussions about the roles of HRCs and advisory councils, the PHRC mediation program, state-wide complaint data, etc. PHRC staff enjoyed meeting and networking with those in attendance at the summit.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Fair Housing Book initiative

Through a grant provided by HUD, the PHRC has facilitated book readings on the "The Fair Housing Five and the Haunted House" for children's groups at libraries, elementary schools, day care programs and other community organizations. The book readings promote a better understanding about housing discrimination. The program initiative was launched in late spring of 2016. Local advisory councils have also provided reading to children's groups in their areas.

As part of the reading, a discussion is held with the children about housing discrimination and they are encouraged to talk with their parents or grandparents about the issue.



Children complete feedback post cards which illustrate their understanding of housing discrimination and encourage them to show the book to others.

PHRC continues to offer the book reading program to schools and organizations. If you would like to have a book reading session at your organization or school, email **fairhousing@pa.gov**.

To date, we have reached about 1000 children through 20 book reading sessions.

PHRC Received GO-TIME Recognition

The Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Management and Efficiency (GO-TIME) recognized the PHRC for its creation of an online option for filing an employment discrimination complaint.

The online complaint form, which has been available to the public for nearly a year, enables individuals to complete an employment discrimination questionnaire, providing them increased convenience and accessibility. The PHRC worked closely with the Office of Administration's Office of Information Technology to design this new feature.

This is PHRC's first step in doing business online, and it hopes to offer other types of online discrimination questionnaires in the future. Since the questionnaire is automatically entered into a computer tracking system, it is an efficient feature for the agency.

The protection of private information is paramount to the Commission, so individuals who file a complaint online must first register with Keystone ID, the Commonwealth's online registration process. It is estimated that the online complaint form will save the PHRC approximately $282,758 over a five-year period.

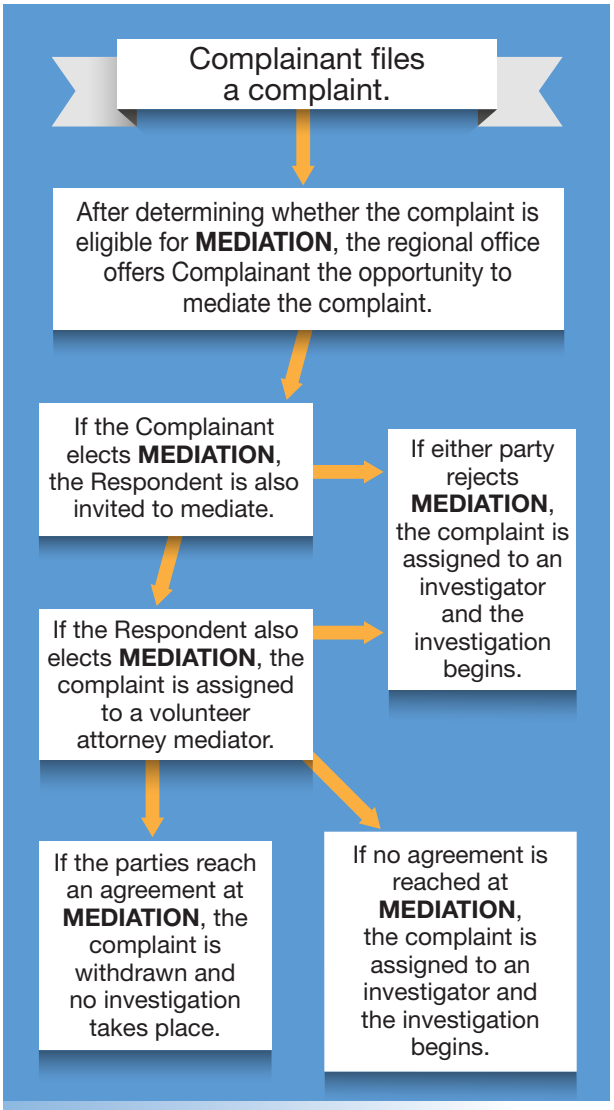
GO-TIME was created to modernize government operations in order to reduce costs and improve services. GO-TIME works with agencies, boards and commissions to identify opportunities to share resources, collaborate and engage employees in transforming their operations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PHRC Mediation Program

The PHRC Mediation Program was created in 2013 to provide an alternative to resolving disputes. The program involves a voluntary, informal process where both parties agree to work with a trained and neutral mediator to help them resolve their differences. The goal is to reach a settlement acceptable to both parties. A total of 109 cases went through the mediation process during FY 2015-16. Of those, 51 cases were successfully mediated.

The program continues to recruit volunteer trained mediators. If you or someone you know is interested in participating as a mediator in our Mediation Program, visit the PHRC website at **www.phrc.pa.gov.**



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

ENFORCEMENT

Public Hearings

When an investigation results in a probable cause finding and conciliation efforts fail, the Commission may hold a public hearing. At the hearing, both sides present testimony and evidence to support their case. The Commission reviews the facts of the case and renders a formal decision. In 2015-16, there were 29 cases approved for public hearing, of which, seven cases resulted in public hearings being held. Of the remaining cases, some settled before a hearing and others were still on the public hearing docket as of June 30, 2016.

Disability Discrimination

A man who applied for a corrections officer position was denied employment because he had a prior history of back surgeries. Despite the complainant passing the medical exam he was deemed not qualified because the respondent's policy automatically disqualified applicants from employment who had certain prior medical conditions. This policy was deemed to be discriminatory. The case was settled prior to public hearing. Complainant received $63,000 in back pay and was hired. The respondent also changed their hiring policy.

Race-Based Discrimination

A man from Clinton County filed a complaint alleging that his employer terminated his employment based on racial discrimination. The Commission held a public hearing to determine damages and ordered the employer to cease from race-based discrimination and pay the man $6,841.10 plus interest for back pay. The commission also ordered the employer to hold training for association board members regarding individual rights under the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA).

Race and Sex Based Discrimination

An African American male applied for an Administrative position. A total of 22 applicants submitted resumes for the position. Complainant was the only African American that applied. A panel which consisted of all Caucasian employees interviewed the applicants. Despite complainant being sent for a second round of interviews and being the highest scoring candidate he was not selected for the position. Respondent stated he lacked interpersonal skills; however, the notes from the interviewers showed that each gave him a perfect score in the area of communications. Additionally, documented responses from an employment reference indicated that complainant was highly recommended. A female Caucasian candidate who had scored lower than complainant was selected and offered the position. Evidence obtained also revealed that the respondent falsified the hiring paperwork sent to their EEO office by reporting that the highest scoring candidate had withdrawn from consideration. These hiring decisions were found to be discriminatory by the PHRC. The case settled in conciliation. Complainant was awarded $10,000. Respondent agreed to participate in Anti-Discrimination training.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

PHRC pro-actively offers free training upon request, to any organization in Pennsylvania. PHRC also conducts training when it is required as part of settling a complaint of unlawful discrimination. PHRC conducted training for community groups police, housing providers, employers, county governments and others.

Pittsburgh Regional Office

In April 2016, the Pittsburgh Regional Office staff participated in the Thomas Enzerra Autism Project dodge ball event. This community event brings the community together to raise funds for local school special needs programs. The regional office staff provided PHRC information at the event.

Pittsburgh staff also participated in Rep. Dan Miller's Children and Youth Disability Summit. The purpose of the event was to connect people with services and promote a better understanding of the needs of children with disabilities.

Annually, Pittsburgh staff partner with local housing organizations and the City of Pittsburgh to provide information and training. Additionally, staff worked with students at the University of Pittsburgh and Robert Morris University to provide information on housing discrimination to members of their faculty.

Pittsburgh staff members also participated in the Annual Rally Against Racism held at the Community College of Allegheny County.

PHRC staff participated in the annual PA Disability Employment and Empowerment Summit. Each year the PHRC attends and provides information to the event's attendees.

The Pittsburgh Regional Office staff participated in the Thomas Enzerra Autism annual fundraising event.

Philadelphia Regional Office

The Philadelphia Regional Office attended local events sponsored by the Inter-Faith Center of the Greater Philadelphia area. The office also participated in meetings with the regional coalition of human rights organizations.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

Harrisburg Regional Office

Heather Roth and Carl Summerson spoke at the York City Human Relations Commission annual diversity luncheon that took place in January. The event recognizes local leaders, awards student scholarships and brings the community together to celebrate diversity.

During National Volunteer Week Deven Price and Sheldon Murray participated in the 100 Men Reading Program. Both Price and Murray read books to elementary school children in the Harrisburg School District.

The Harrisburg Regional office participated in the Diversity Conference sponsored by the Hanover Latino Center. The conference brings together organizations from the community to discuss issues relating to diversity.

Deven Price participated in a minority recruitment event sponsored by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for their summer jobs program.

PHRC staff attended a community meeting regarding disparaging statements made towards minorities made by former West York Borough mayor.

The Harrisburg Regional Office staff participated in the York City Human Relations Commission annual diversity luncheon in January.

Stephanie Seaton, Harrisburg Regional Office staff person (bottom right corner) attended West York Borough community meeting regarding the concerns over former mayor's comments.

Central Office

- Tameka Hatcher provided a bullying prevention workshop to teens from eight school districts (SD) at a leadership summit held at Steelton-Highspire High School in April 2016. Students were from Steelton-Highspire SD, Harrisburg City SD, Susquehanna SC, Central Dauphin SD, Hershey SD, Camp Hill SD and Harrisburg Academy.
- Jelani Cooper in conjunction with the Department of Justice (DOJ) offered a SPIRIT program at the George Washington High School in Philadelphia.
- Staff in each of our regions have attended numerous "unity" sponsored events throughout the state in support of healthy and diverse communities.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

Central Office continued

- Kathy Morrison and Christina Reese attended an event at Widener Law School in Harrisburg sponsored by Rep. Patty Kim and Governor Wolf's Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs that brought together minority groups and organizations to speak about ways to support one another.

Kathy Morrison speaks at event sponsored by Rep.Patty Kim and Govornor's Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs.

- The Commission held their February monthly meeting in Allentown to listen to parents, and community organizations' concerns relating to disparities in the treatment of minority students. This meeting brought about the formation of a new Advisory Council in the Lehigh Valley.

Community leaders and members of Governor Wolf's Commission on Latino Affairs attended the February PHRC meeting.

Pennsylvania Interagency Taskforce on Community Relations and Activities

One of PHRC's primary partnerships is with 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 civil tension.

The group refers inquiries as appropriate and works collectively to reduce tensions in schools and communities. The group shares best practices to increase equal opportunity and decrease conflict. The group meets on a bi-monthly basis and shares information throughout the year.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

IAOHRA Conference

PHRC Executive Director, JoAnn Edwards, Commission Interim Chair, Joel Bolstein and Commissioner Michael Hardiman attended the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies Annual Conference in August 2016 in Philadelphia.

The theme "Liberty, Justice and Human Rights for All" invokes U.S. history, the decades-long fight for equal rights and equal justice under law, and a quest to define who is included in "justice for all."

The conference program included compelling speakers and plenary sessions on LGBTQ issues and civil rights, fair housing, state and local implementation of international human rights standards and strategies, racial equity, dangerous speech, and police /community relations.

The conference was a great opportunity to listen to national speakers and network with others working in civil rights agencies.

PHRC Interim Chair, Joel Bolstein, Chair of the US Commission on Civil Rights, Martin Castro, and PHRC Commissioner, Michael Hardiman

Education Equity initiative

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's (PHRC) Education Equity Initiative was created to ensure equal-educational opportunity for all students. The initiative's objective is to eliminate racial and gender biases in schools, end the school-to-prison pipeline and create safe and effective school environments. It is our goal to ensure equal educational opportunity for all Pennsylvania students and to enforce the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA) and the Pennsylvania Fair Educational Opportunities Act (PFEOA).

The PHRC partners with PA Safe Schools, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the PA Department of Education to help schools where students are experiencing disparate treatment and acts of discrimination to address and correct these issues.

When a school is identified with a problem relating to equal educational opportunities, the PHRC will work with the DOJ and PA Safe Schools to carry out a Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together (SPIRIT) Program. Under the program, the school administration selects a team or committee to work on identifying issues and ways to resolve them.

The PHRC continues to work with schools and its partners to advocate for student success and improve overall outcomes that will decrease the school to prison effect. The PHRC strongly supports students having the opportunity to learn in a positive environment.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

Senator Williams Holds Press Conference to Support PHRC

On June 22, 2016, Senator Anthony Williams, who served as Minority Chair for the Senate State Government Committee, held a press conference at the State Capitol urging the legislature to provide an additional $2 million for the PHRC. Senators Jay Costa, Vincent Hughes, Christine Tartaglione as well as former PHRC Executive Director Homer Floyd joined Senator Williams in supporting the PHRC's need to secure additional funding.

PHRC Executive Director JoAnn Edwards speaks at Sen. Williams' press conference calling for more legislators to support the agency.

PHRC Testifies on SB1306

PHRC Executive Director JoAnn Edwards testifies on SB1306.

On August 30, 2016, PHRC Executive Director, JoAnn Edwards testified regarding Senate Bill 1306 at a public hearing of the Senate Labor and Industry Committee. SB1306 proposed to address sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in employment, which is currently not covered under the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA). In her testimony, Ms. Edwards urged the legislature to pass protections for LGBTQ individuals who could be discriminated against without these laws.

The PHRC was one of many groups and organizations testifying at the public hearing.

MEDIA

Fair Housing Campaign

Last year, the PHRC carried out a media campaign to promote a better understanding of fair housing practices among Pennsylvanians and PHRC's Fair Housing Hotline. The message was distributed through a public service announcement (PSA), online video and geo-fencing using mobile applications.

The PHRC received funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which was used to place advertisements for the Fair Housing Hotline on SEPTA buses and in targeted bus shelters in Pittsburgh and Harrisburg.

Additionally, the PHRC carried out "The Fair Housing Five and the Haunted House" book reading initiative geared toward increasing awareness of fair housing rights through children.

HUD has agreed to assist the PHRC in purchasing additional books in order to continue carrying out the book readings across the state.

CASE STATISTICS

E-Employment	H-Housing	PA-Public Accommodations	ED-Education

Note: In FY 2015-16, 1636 cases were docketed. The charts below correspond to the protected classes. Note that there may be more than one protected class in an individual case.

Age

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
	2				2
40-42	22				22
43-45	13				13
46-48	26	1			27
49-51	37				37
52-54	38	2			40
55-57	41				41
58-60	88				88
61-63	64	1			65
64-66	41	4			45
67-69	24				24
70-72	3				3
73-75	5				5
76-78	8				8
79-81	6	1			7
82-85	3				3
Total	421	9	0	0	430

Ancestry

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
African	13				13
Algerian	1				1
American or United States	9				9
Arab	3				3
Chinese		2			2
Columbian	2				2
Filipino	2				2
Guyanese	1				1
Hispanic	50	7	1		58
Indian	3				3
Italian	2				2
Latino	1				1
Mexican	2				2
Nigerian	1				1
Pakistani			1		1
Palestinian	2				2
Puerto Rican	16				16
Total	108	9	2	0	119

CASE STATISTICS

E-Employment	H-Housing	PA-Public Accommodations	ED-Education

Race

Race	E	H	PA	ED	Total
African American	342	50	22	15	429
American Indian	1		2		3
Asian	7	1			8
Bi-Racial	14		1		15
Black	25		1	3	29
Caucasian	22		1		23
Complainants race and the known association with another person		7			7
Total	411	58	27	18	514

Sex

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Female	319	15	6	1	341
Female Pregnant	82	1			83
Male	99	7	7	6	119
Total	500	23	13	7	543

Retaliation

Retaliation	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Assisted	56	17	2		75
Filed a PHRC Complaint	57	12			69
Otherwise Opposed Unlawful Activity	560	35	10	18	623
Provided Information	51				51
Testified	1				1
Total	725	64	12	18	819

Religion

Religion	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Christianity	10	1			11
Coptic Christian		2			2
Hinduism	1				1
Islam	20	1	3	1	25
Israelite	5				5
Judaism	3			1	4
Non-Christian	1				1
Pentecostal	2				2
Total	42	4	3	2	51

CASE STATISTICS

E-Employment	H-Housing	PA-Public Accommodations	ED-Education

National Origin

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Algeria	2				2
Bosnia And Herzegovina	8				8
China	4				4
Colombia	4	2			6
Dominican Republic	1				1
Egypt	1				1
Ghana	1				1
Guinea	1				1
Haiti	5				5
Hungary	1				1
India	4				4
Islamic Republic of Iran	2	2			4
Iraq			1		1
Jamaica	5				5
Kenya	4				4
Liberia	6				6
Mauritius	1				1
Mexico	3				3
Nicaragua	1				1
Nigeria	1				1
Pakistan	1				1
Philippines	1				1
Puerto Rico	7	1	1		9
Russian Federation			1		1
Sierra Leone	1				1
Somalia	2				2
Spain		1			1
United States	7	2			9
Total	74	8	3	0	85

Miscellaneous Class

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Trainer of Guide/Support Animal			2		2
Use of Guide/Support Animal		7	4		11
Total	0	7	6	0	13

CASE STATISTICS

E-Employment	H-Housing	PA-Public Accommodations	ED-Education

Familial Status

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Designee Of Such Parent Or Other Person Having Custody		1			1
Individual Not Yet 18 Living With Parents Or Guardian		2			2
Parent Or Other Person Having Legal Custody		10			10
Total		13			13

Multiple Class

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
African American Female	30	2	3		35
African American Male	27		2	2	31
Total	57	2	5	2	66

CASE STATISTICS

E-Employment	H-Housing	PA-Public Accommodations	ED-Education

Disability

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Agent Orange	9	2			11
Alcoholism	3	1			4
Allergies	3	2	4	2	11
Anxiety Disorder	37		1	1	39
Arthritis	9	7			16
Asthma	16	1			17
Attention Deficit Disorder	7	1		7	15
Autism	5	3	9		17
Back	43	3	1		47
Bi-Polar	14		4	4	22
Brain/Head Injury	7				7
Brain/Head Injury (Traumatic)	13	3		2	18
Cancer	18				18
Carpel Tunnel Syndrome	5				5
Cerebral Palsy	8		2		10
Chemical Sensitivities	3		1		4
Crohn's Disease				4	4
Depression	35	6	1		42
Diabetes	31		1		32
Downes Syndrome	2				2
Drug Addiction	3				3
Dyslexia	6				6
Eating Disorder	1				1
Epilepsy	3	2	1		6
Extremeties Impairment	23	3	1		27
Fibromyalgia	12				12
Gastrointestinal	2		1		3
Hand Injury	9				9
Hearing	9	1	2		12
Heart/Cardiovascular	14		2		16
Hepatitis	3			2	5
Hip Replacement	3				3
HIV			3		3
Kidney	3				3

	E	H	PA	ED	Total
Learning Disability	5				5
Liver Impairment	3				3
Liver Transplant	3				3
Lupus	6				6
Mental - Other	7	24	1		32
Migraine	6	2			8
Multiple Sclerosis	8	1			9
Narcolepsy	1				1
Nonparalytic Orthopedic	9				9
Obesity	5				5
Other	94	60	3	1	158
Other Blood Disorder	2	2			4
Other Emotional/Psychiatric	1	1		1	3
Other Neurological	9				9
Other Respiratory/Pulmonary	3	1			4
Panic Disorder	6		3	3	12
Post Traumatic Stress	21				21
Psoriasis	4				4
Renal Dysfunction	6				6
Respiratory Pulmonary Disorder	4				4
Schizophrenia	2				2
Seizure Disorder	3	1			4
Shoulder Impairment	14				14
Sleep Apnea	2				2
Speech	4				4
Spinal Stenosis	2				2
Stroke	5	2	1		8
Thyroid Disease				1	1
Tourettes Syndrome	3			1	4
Tuberculosis	1				1
Vision	6	4			10
Total	604	133	42	29	808

pennsylvania
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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