



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**Fiscal Year 2016**

December 31, 2016

**The Five Sitting VHRC Commissioners and their Terms of Appointment:**

|                            |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Mary Marzec-Gerrior, Chair | 2008-2018 |
| Nathan Besio               | 2007-2017 |
| Donald Vickers             | 2008-2021 |
| Mary Brodsky               | 2011-2019 |
| Dawn Ellis                 | 2015-2020 |

All appointments are for five-year staggered terms and expire on the last day of February.

**Staff**

| <b>Name</b>     | <b>Position</b>             | <b>Date of Hire</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Karen Richards  | Executive Director          | 3/18/2013           |
| Ellen Maxon     | Administrative Law Examiner | 10/2/2006           |
| Nelson Campbell | Administrative Law Examiner | 4/27/2010           |
| Bor Yang        | Administrative Law Examiner | 11/30/2015          |
| Jocelyn Bolduc  | Executive Staff Assistant   | 3/23/2015           |

# Vermont Human Rights Commission

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Vermont Human Rights Commission is to promote full civil and human rights in Vermont. The Commission protects people from unlawful discrimination in housing, state government employment and public accommodations.\* The Commission pursues its mission by:

- Enforcing laws
- Conciliating disputes
- Educating the public
- Providing information and referrals
- Advancing effective public policies on human rights

\* A public accommodation is an establishment such as a school, restaurant, office or store that offers facilities, goods or services to the public.

## INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Human Rights Commission (VHRC) is the state agency having jurisdiction over claims of unlawful discrimination in housing, state government employment, and public accommodations. Public accommodations include any business or governmental unit that provides goods, services or facilities to the public (including but not limited to stores, restaurants, professional offices, and hospitals, and government agencies/entities (including schools). The VHRC has four statutorily mandated roles: enforcement, conciliation, outreach and education, and public policy development.

The law prohibits individuals or entities from taking adverse action (discriminating) against individuals in protected categories based on their membership in one or more of the categories. The Vermont Human Rights Commission enforces state anti-discrimination/civil rights laws; it does not enforce federal laws. Vermont law is broader than federal law in terms of the categories of people who are protected from discrimination. See page 5 for a list of the protected categories by type of case (federal categories are in bold type).

By its enabling statute, the Human Rights Commission is an enforcement agency. It does not represent either party in a complaint. The VHRC staff conduct impartial investigations of allegations of discrimination under the Vermont Fair Housing and Public Accommodations Act (VFHPA), 9 V.S.A. §4500 *et seq.*, the Vermont Fair Employment Practices Act (FEPA) (for State government employees only)<sup>1</sup> and the anti-harassment provisions of Title 16 (education), 16 V.S.A. §11 and §570 *et seq.* VHRC staff determine whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that unlawful discrimination occurred and make a recommendation to the Commissioners. During the course of the impartial investigation, VHRC staff seek to resolve complaints through conciliation and, if appropriate, formal mediation. If the Commissioners, after hearing, find reasonable grounds to believe that a person or entity discriminated against someone in a protected class, the executive director engages in post-determination conciliation efforts. If a settlement cannot be reached, the Commissioners can authorize the executive director to file suit in state court in furtherance of the public's interest in a society free from discrimination.

The VHRC is also charged with increasing "public awareness of the importance of full civil and human rights for each inhabitant of this state;" examining "the existence of practices of discrimination which detract from the enjoyment of full civil and human rights;" and with recommending "measures designed to protect

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals with discrimination complaints concerning private employment file their complaints with the Vermont Attorney General's Office, Civil Rights Division.

those rights.” 9 V.S.A. §4552. It is within these roles that the VHRC works to ensure equal justice, equal opportunity, and equal dignity without discrimination. In furtherance of these goals, VHRC staff speak with and provide training to individuals and groups about their rights and responsibilities under state and federal civil rights laws, work with individuals, agencies and groups to combat bias and bigotry, and supply information, legal analysis, and advice to the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches.

## JURISDICTION

The Vermont Human Rights Commission has jurisdiction over the following areas (federal categories in **bold**):

| <b>HOUSING</b>         | <b>PUBLIC<br/>ACCOMMODATIONS</b> | <b>STATE<br/>EMPLOYMENT</b>  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Race</b>            | <b>Race</b>                      | <b>Race</b>                  |
| <b>Color</b>           | <b>Color</b>                     | <b>Color</b>                 |
| <b>Sex</b>             | <b>Sex</b>                       | <b>Sex</b>                   |
| <b>Religion</b>        | <b>Religion</b>                  | <b>Religion</b>              |
| <b>National Origin</b> | <b>National Origin</b>           | <b>National Origin</b>       |
| <b>Disability</b>      | <b>Disability</b>                | <b>Disability</b>            |
| Sexual Orientation     | Sexual Orientation               | Sexual Orientation           |
| Marital Status         | Marital Status                   | Ancestry                     |
| Gender Identity        | Gender Identity                  | Gender Identity              |
| <b>Minor Children</b>  | Breastfeeding                    | <b>Age</b>                   |
| Public Assistance      |                                  | Breastfeeding                |
|                        |                                  | HIV blood test               |
|                        |                                  | Workers’ Compensation        |
|                        |                                  | <b>Family/Parental Leave</b> |
|                        |                                  | Place of birth               |
|                        |                                  | Credit history               |

## STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE MISSION AND VISION

- Complaints alleging violations of anti-discrimination laws are investigated impartially and decided in a timely manner by the Human Rights Commission.
- Complainants and Respondents are offered timely and meaningful access to mediation services or informal means of conciliation that promote mutually satisfactory resolution of their dispute.

- VHRC staff offers information, referrals, educational programs and educational training to those who request these services. A small fee may be charged to cover expenses.
- The VHRC provides leadership in public policy development with respect to civil and human rights issues in Vermont, provides testimony to the legislature on such issues and advice to the executive and judicial branches upon request.
- VHRC staff engage in coalition and community activities that address the needs of members of protected categories.

## **VHRC PROGRAM OPERATIONS**

### **VHRC Contact Information**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Office hours:     | 7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday                                       |
| Telephone number: | (800) 416-2010 (Toll Free Voice Line)<br>(802) 828-2480 or 828-1625 (Voice) |
| Fax number:       | (802) 828-2481  |
| Mailing address:  | 14-16 Baldwin Street<br>Montpelier, VT 05633-6301                           |
| E-mail address:   | human.rights@vermont.gov  |
| Website:          | hrc.vermont.gov   |

### **Staffing**

There are five Human Rights Commissioners appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for five-year terms. Commissioners may be re-appointed. The Commissioners meet regularly, usually monthly, to discuss and decide the merits of individual discrimination complaints, as well as to set the overall policy of the organization. (See page 2 for a listing of the Commissioners).

The VHRC also has a staff of five state employees. The Commissioners hire, supervise and direct the organization's executive director who also acts as the

VHRC's legal counsel and legislative liaison. Karen Richards was hired as the executive director and began her work in March 2013. The executive director hires, supervises and directs the executive staff assistant, and three administrative law examiners/trainers. (See page 2 for a listing of staff)

## COMPLAINTS

### Phone Contacts

In FY16, the VHRC received 1008 calls for assistance from the general public. The vast majority of these calls do not result in formal complaints. Many of the calls are individuals seeking assistance for issues beyond VHRC's jurisdiction. Those are referred to other appropriate organizations. Other calls require a VHRC staff person to answer basic questions regarding Vermont's various anti-discrimination laws. VHRC does not provide legal counsel or advice. Some of the calls result in informal cases<sup>2</sup> and others in formal complaints. In FY16, there were fifteen (15) informal cases and fifty-six (56) formal complaints accepted for processing

### Enforcement Programs

Vermont's anti-discrimination laws protect people from discrimination based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, mental or physical disability, age, marital status and, gender identity. Different categories are protected in each area: housing, employment, and public accommodations. (See chart on page 5). For example, in addition to the above reasons, a person may not be denied housing because of the presence of minor children or due to receipt of public assistance (including housing assistance).

A "complaint" as used in this report refers to those contacts that result in a formal VHRC investigation. For an allegation of discrimination to become a formal investigation, a citizen must allege the *prima facie*<sup>3</sup> elements of a violation of Vermont's discrimination laws in one of VHRC's areas of jurisdiction - - housing, public accommodations or State government employment.

The staff receives and impartially investigates allegations of unlawful discrimination

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<sup>2</sup> An "informal case" is a situation, (often an accessibility issue), that can be resolved easily and does not require a full investigation.

<sup>3</sup> A *prima facie* case lists the facts that if proven to be true would be a violation of the specific law. (e.g., in a housing discrimination case the complainant must allege that she is a member of a protected class, that she experienced an adverse housing action and that the adverse action was due to her membership in the protected class.)

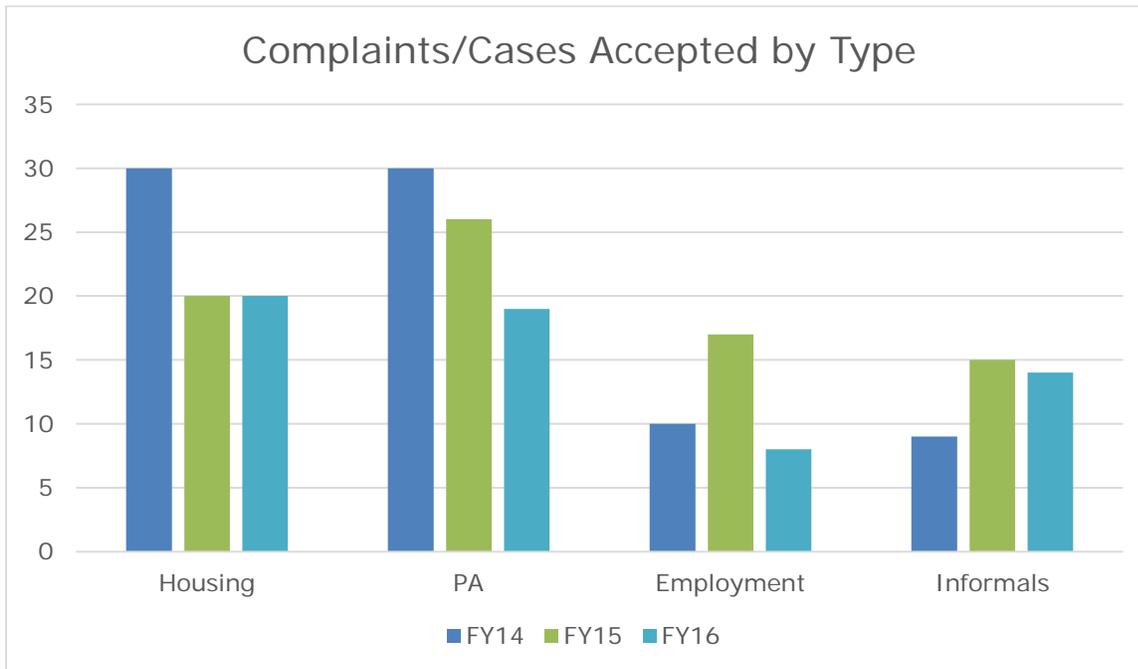
only after an individual has signed a complaint under oath. At the conclusion of the investigation, administrative law examiners write Investigative Reports that are reviewed and approved by the executive director. They are then distributed to the parties and to the Commissioners who consider these reports at their monthly meeting for their review and determination in executive session. The parties to the complaint (the complainant and the respondent) are invited to attend, present the reasons why they agree or disagree with the staff recommendation and answer questions from the Commissioners about the circumstances surrounding the complaint. The hearings are non-evidentiary. The information considered is the evidence presented in the investigative report from the administrative law examiner.

If the Commissioners determine that the evidence is sufficient (using a preponderance of the evidence standard) to show illegal discrimination, they reach a finding of reasonable grounds. The Investigative Report becomes a public record at that point. In addition, by statute all settlements of complaints filed with the VHRC are also public records. If the Commissioners issue a reasonable grounds finding, the executive director actively pursues settlement negotiations for a period of up to six months, either directly or through a professional mediator. Past settlements have included agreements not to discriminate in the future, modification of inaccessible premises or discriminatory policies, anti-discrimination education, letters of apology, compensation for damages, attorneys' fees and modest civil penalties or reimbursement of costs to the VHRC.

If the Commissioners determine there are no reasonable grounds to believe that discrimination occurred, the case is closed and remains confidential. The parties are free to make the information about the case public if they so desire. Additionally, the complaining party may decide to pursue legal or other administrative action, but the VHRC is not a party to those actions.

The VHRC only has legal authority to investigate complaints, negotiate and enforce anti-discrimination provisions in settlements, and to bring an action in court after a reasonable grounds finding and failed efforts to resolve the dispute informally or to enforce a settlement agreement. If illegal discrimination is proven to a judge or jury, the court may impose fines or monetary damages, costs and attorneys' fees against the Respondent/Defendant as well as require other remedial measures to avoid further violations of law.

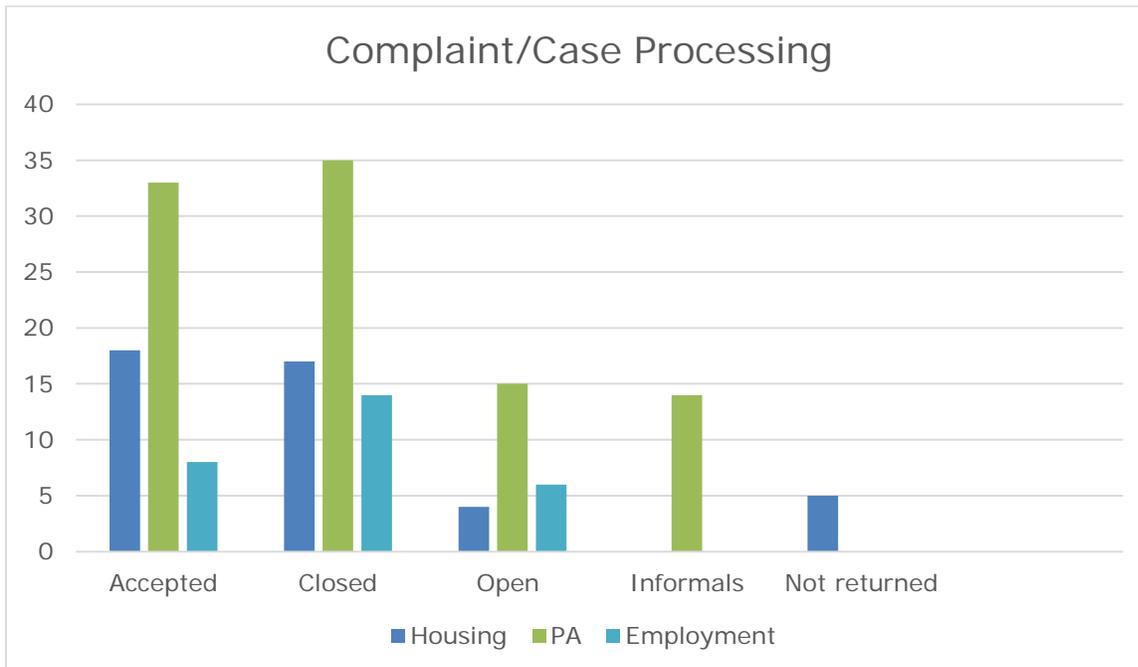
## Complaints/Cases



In FY16, HRC accepted sixty-one (61) cases for processing which is below the averages for the past three years (including FY13). However, last year a total of 17 of those complaints were not returned reducing the actual number of cases processed to 60. This year only five were not returned so in terms of actual processing the difference is 56 cases in FY16 compared to 60 cases in FY15.

Housing cases declined in FY15 and remained stagnant in FY16 despite running Public Service Ads (PSA) on WCAX and conducting a lot of training for providers. The housing investigator provided fair housing training that reached 377 people this past year. Historically housing cases were the ones most likely to not be returned for processing but this year only three housing cases were not returned so that does not explain the lower number. Reaching tenants in Vermont is difficult but clearly the VHRC needs to conduct some additional outreach that will directly reach tenants and/or reach providers who are assisting them. Our long-term housing investigator is retiring in January 2017 after ten years. This presents an opportunity for the new investigator to learn more about the Vermont agencies that assist potential complainants by doing some concentrated outreach to targeted groups.

In our other areas of jurisdiction, we accepted twenty-one (19) public accommodation cases and fourteen (14) informal cases for a total of 33 public accommodations cases for FY16 versus 41 (combined) in FY15. There were eight (8) employment cases, down significantly from last year's high of 17. However, last year's spike in employment cases was an anomaly so this year's data is actually more consistent with past years (11 in FY13 and 10 in FY14).



This chart shows the manner in which cases were processed for FY16 including the number closed, some of which were opened in prior fiscal years. It also shows the number of cases remaining open at the end of the fiscal year and therefore carried forward into FY17. The totals are: closed sixty-five (65) cases; open at the end of FY16-twenty-five (25) cases; and not returned- five cases (5) (0-Employment, 3-Housing and 2-Public Accommodations).

### **Complaints Brought Before the Commission for Hearing**

In FY16, the Commission heard 13 cases, compared to 17 in FY15. Of the cases heard, the Commission found no reasonable grounds in six (6) cases and reasonable grounds in seven (7) cases.

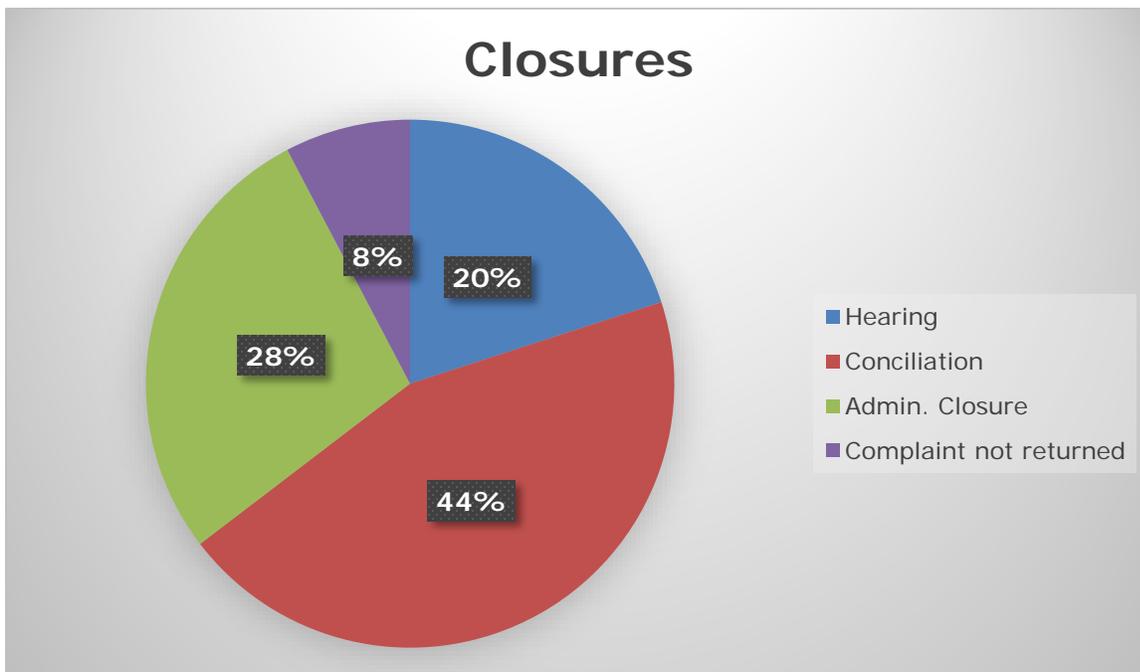
| <b>Outcome</b>        | <b>Employment</b> | <b>Housing</b> | <b>Public Accommodations</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Reasonable Grounds    | 1                 | 0              | 6                            | <b>7</b>      |
| No reasonable grounds | 2                 | 3              | 1                            | <b>6</b>      |

While the Commission heard 17 cases in FY15, only two (2) were reasonable grounds. Most of the reasonable grounds cases in FY16 were in the category of public accommodations and the highest number of no reasonable grounds cases

was in housing, followed by employment. Most housing and employment cases that should settle, from a factual standpoint, do. In the public accommodations area, the reasonable grounds cases have been in areas of emerging law and interpretation (specifically the ADA/VFHPAA rights of offenders with mental illness and racial profiling). The reasonable grounds findings have resulted in positive local and national press coverage that is raising the VHRC's statewide profile and bringing important civil and human rights issues to the attention of legislators, regulators and the general public.

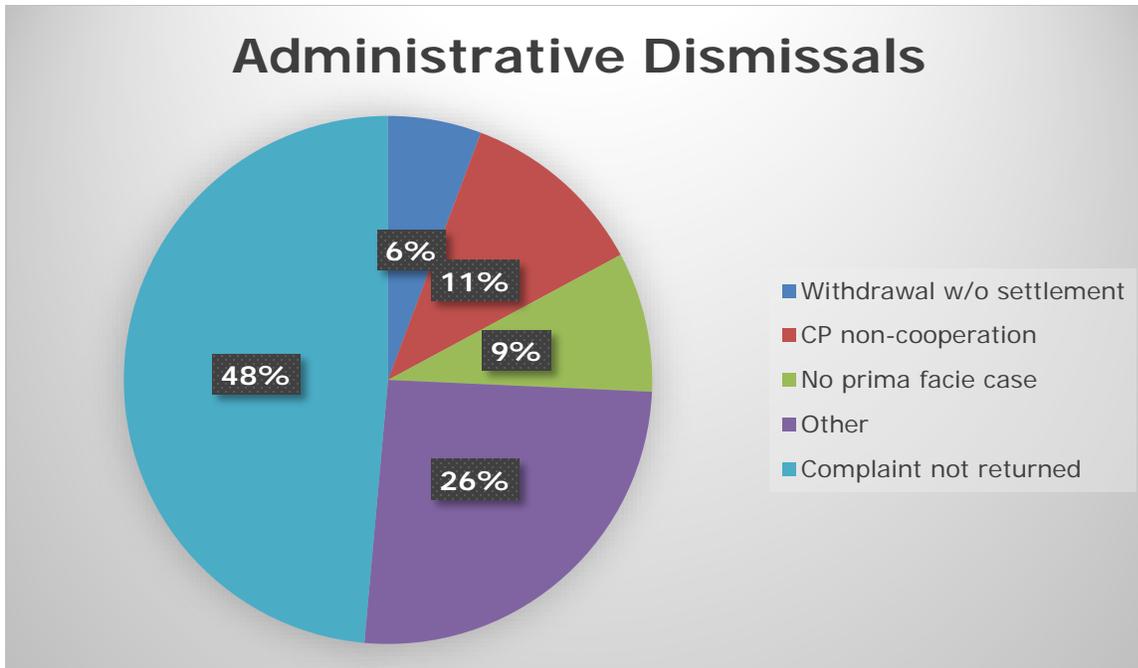
### Disposition of Closed Complaints

Cases are generally disposed of in three ways: (1) hearing, (2) conciliation/ settlement or (3) administrative dismissal. This chart shows the percentage of cases that were disposed of in each category.



There are improvements in the way cases were processed overall between FY15 and FY16. Last year, administrative dismissals (which included administrative closure and complaints not returned) were 41% of the total case. In FY16, administrative dismissals (including administrative closure and complaints not returned) dropped to 36% of the dismissals and the number of complaints processed to hearing or conciliation was 64% versus 59% in FY15. The chart below shows the breakdown of administrative dismissals by type.

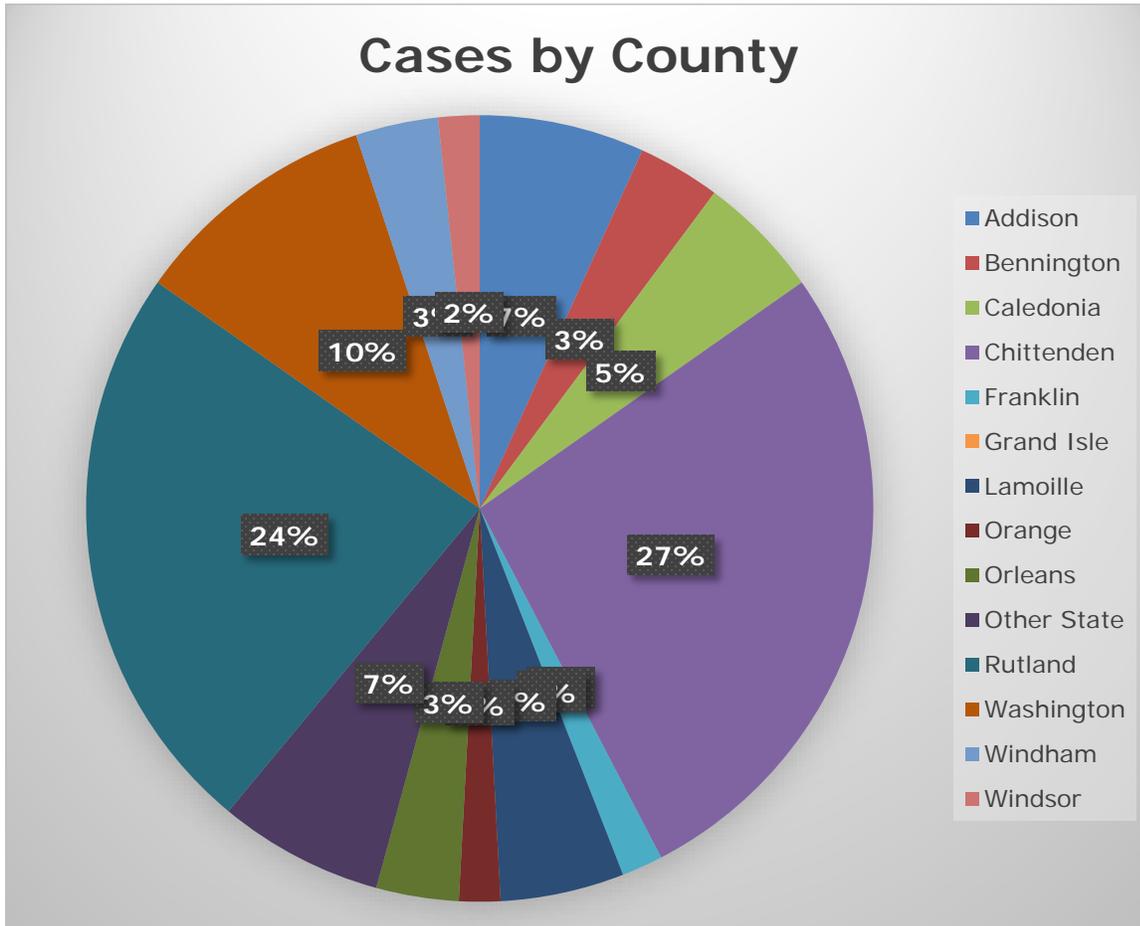
## Administrative Dismissals



A total of 20 cases were administratively dismissed. The largest category in FY16 was "other" with six (6) cases. This captures closures related to complainants who die (1), cases that start as an informal that are opened as formal cases (1), requests by the complainant to withdraw (1) and the initiation of an administrative or judicial complaint in another forum (3). While complaints not returned is the second highest category at five (5) cases, in FY15, those cases constituted 50% of the closures versus 25% this year. This reflects the more aggressive approach we have taken with complaints. There are several points of follow up by the executive staff assistant after the complaint is sent out. This appears to have been effective in significantly reducing the number not returned.

Complainant non-cooperation-- consists of individuals who file a complaint and then fail to keep in contact with the administrative law examiner during the course of the investigation. Four (4) cases were dismissed for this reason. Multiple attempts are made to reach complainants with email, telephone, and certified and regular mail warning of dismissal before a case is actually dismissed. This number is also down from 23% in FY15 and dismissal for lack of a *prima facie* case (three (3) cases) or some other legal argument that may have arisen during the course of the investigation of the complaint are up slightly (15% this year versus 9% last year).

**Areas of the State Served**



This chart shows the cases accepted in FY16 by county of residence of the complainant. We had cases from all counties except Essex and Grand Isle so we are more or less serving the entire state with case intake. The largest number of cases came from Chittenden (16-27%) and Rutland (14- 24%). It appears that the numbers are generally consistent with relative population--Addison (4- 7%) Bennington (2-3%), Caledonia (3-5%), Franklin (1- 2%), Lamoille (3- 5%), Orange (1-2%), Orleans (2- 3%), Washington (6- 10%), Windham (2- 3%) and Windsor (1- 2%).

## Protected Categories by Type of Complaint/Case FY16

| Protected Category    | Housing | PA | Employment | Total <sup>4</sup> |
|-----------------------|---------|----|------------|--------------------|
| Age                   | 0       | 0  | 1          | <b>1</b>           |
| Breastfeeding         | 0       | 0  | 0          | <b>0</b>           |
| Disability            | 11      | 24 | 0          | <b>35</b>          |
| Gender ID             | 0       | 1  | 1          | <b>2</b>           |
| National Origin       | 0       | 3  | 0          | <b>3</b>           |
| Race/Color            | 1       | 4  | 1          | <b>6</b>           |
| Retaliation           | 0       | 1  | 3          | <b>4</b>           |
| Religion              | 0       | 2  | 0          | <b>2</b>           |
| Sex                   | 0       | 1  | 3          | <b>4</b>           |
| Minor Children        | 2       | 0  | 0          | <b>2</b>           |
| Public Assistance     | 2       | 0  | 0          | <b>2</b>           |
| Marital Status        | 0       | 0  | 0          | <b>0</b>           |
| Family/Parental Leave | 0       | 0  | 1          | <b>1</b>           |
| Workers Comp          | 0       | 0  | 0          | <b>0</b>           |
| Sexual Orientation    | 0       | 0  | 0          | <b>0</b>           |

The category of disability continues to generate the most significant number of complaints across all three jurisdictional areas. Anecdotally, there should be more race and gender identity complaints, given statistical evidence of fairly widespread discrimination against these protected categories nationally, but VHRC is not seeing these cases.

### Settlements

There were a total of 29 settlements, 27 of them were pre-determination and two were post-determination. Given that the post cases were also reasonable grounds cases. This means that there were 40 cases resolved either by hearing or conciliation. Thus 62% were settled or heard. This chart includes only the relief actually obtained in FY16. Some of the cases reported in the reasonable grounds section were settled after June 30, 2016 and the relief obtained is not reflected in this chart.

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<sup>4</sup> Totals will not equal the number of actual complaints because many cases allege discrimination based on more than one protected category.

## Relief Obtained FY16

| Complaint/Case Type               | Monetary Relief  | Non-monetary Relief/<br>Public Interest                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|--|
| <b>Employment (4)</b>             | \$17,000         | New pay grade and retroactive step                                   |
|                                   |                  | Reasonable accommodations provided                                   |
|                                   |                  | Written reprimand & investigation report removed from personnel file |
| <b>Housing (8)</b>                | \$1400           | Fair Housing Training (8)  |
|                                   |                  | Moved to top of transfer list and lease agreement rescinded          |
|                                   |                  | Assistance animal allowed for minor child                            |
| <b>Public Accommodations (12)</b> | \$82,300         | Handicapped accessible parking                                       |
|                                   |                  | Training, apology and free rental                                    |
|                                   |                  | Assistance animal allowed in emergency housing shelter               |
|                                   |                  | Allowed handicapped accessible parking nearest entrance              |
|                                   |                  | Accessible route to goods and services                               |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>\$100,700</b> |  |

## Summary of Reasonable Grounds Complaints

After the VHRC finds reasonable grounds in a matter, the executive director attempts to settle the complaint through conciliation efforts or formal mediation. This settlement process lasts for up to six months after the determination. If this process is not successful, the VHRC can file a lawsuit against the responding party. Many times the mediation process results in a settlement. More often than not a reasonable grounds complaint is not resolved in the same fiscal year that the determination was made.

Below are summaries of the complaints heard in FY16 in which the Commissioners found there were reasonable grounds to believe that discrimination occurred. **The**

**status of the case is as of the date of this report not the status at the end of the fiscal year.**

### **Employment:**

**Thissell v. Department of Corrections- E16-0004** (PFMLA) Complainant, a third shift Corrections Officer II (COII) at Northeast Regional Correctional Facility (NERCF), filed a Complaint with the VHRC, alleging that the Department of Corrections violated the Parental Family Medical Leave Act (PFMLA) by denying his request to be exempt from “order-ins” (mandatory overtime) to care for a minor child.

### **Public Accommodations:**

**Alcudia v. Grand Isle County Sheriff’s Department – PA15-0021** (national origin and color) Complainant, a Mexican national was a passenger in a vehicle traveling South within Grand Isle County when the car he was traveling in was pulled over by the Grand Isle County Sheriff’s Department (GICSD). The officer asked only a few questions of the driver before focusing on the Complainant, directing his questions as to whether Complainant was legally present in the United States. The officer contacted Border Control and the Complainant was held until their arrival an hour later at which time he was taken into custody. After his release, Complainant filed a Complaint with the VHRC alleging GICSD discriminated against him based on his national origin when it detained him for an inordinate period of time without sufficient reasonable suspicion of any crime. The parties agreed to mediate. Complainant received \$27,000, including attorney’s fees. The VHRC received \$2,600 for attorney’s fees and Respondents agreed to internal policy changes, training and reporting of traffic stop data to the VHRC on an annual basis for a specified period.

**D.C. v. Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Mental Health (DMH) & Agency of Human Services (AHS) – PA15-0007** (disability) Complainant, an individual with a psychiatric disability was incarcerated for (40) days while awaiting a bed in a psychiatric hospital. Ten of those day were spent in a segregation unit. Complainant alleged that the incarceration was not required for his mental health needs or to address any criminogenic needs. Complainant further alleged that he was denied access services in the most integrated setting appropriate to his needs by the collective failure of AHS, DOC and DMH to coordinate placement and provision of services to him thus causing him harm. Post-finding mediation failed to resolve the matter and it was filed in court.

**C.S. v. Department of Corrections – PA15-0001** (disability) Complainant, an individual with a psychiatric disability is incarcerated within the Department of Corrections (DOC). During time spent at Southern State Correctional Facility (SSCF), Complainant alleged that the DOC held him in segregation for approximately 2.5 years due to the failure of the DOC to provide adequate staffing, mental health treatment and reasonable accommodations that would have prevented him from being held in segregation longer than necessary. Post-finding attempts at settlement were unsuccessful and this matter was filed in court.

**Nolen v. D.J.'s Convenience Mart – PA15-0016** (disability) Complainant, an individual with a mobility disability alleged that there was lack of accessible parking at this store and there was not proper signage on the gas pump informing persons with accessibility placards how to receive help with pumping their gas. Respondents brought their accessible parking into compliance with proper signage and striping and additionally placed proper signage on the gas pumps.

**Rababah v. Department of Motor Vehicles – PA15-0012** (race, color, religion and national origin) Complainant, a Jordanian citizen, filed a complaint with the VHRC alleging that the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) discriminated against him by making improper requests for information, not allowing him to take the driving test, accusing him of committing fraud, and contacting the U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) resulting in deportation proceedings being commenced against him. A settlement agreement was reached in which the DMV agreed to modify its Application for License/Permit specific to written and website directions regarding social security numbers in the Driver Privilege Card (DPC) instructions; to add language above question 5 for individuals to skip that question if applying for a DPC; and to have DPC applications available in Spanish. The DMV additionally agreed to: develop written policies and procedures that set forth step by step processing methods for DPC applications; adopt the essential elements of the model Fair and Impartial Policy (FIP) as adopted by the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council; publish both the FIP and DPC Policies and Procedures on their website; collect and report to the VHRC on an annual basis for three calendar years on the racial, ethnic and national backgrounds of individuals referred for investigation; provide training for counter staff, managers and DMV law enforcement on implicit bias; and pay Complainant \$40,000, including attorney's fees.

**Ms. Poe o/b/o O.P. v. Camels Hump Middle School and Chittenden East Supervisory Union – PA15-0026** (disability) "Ms. Poe" filed a complaint of discrimination with the VHRC on behalf of her minor child "O.P." The Complainant, a student with a disability alleged that the school staff failed to use a personal Frequency Modulator (FM) system as a reasonable accommodation for her disability. The case settled with the District sending a memo to all staff reminding them of the responsibility to strictly follow all accommodations in students' Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan and ensuring that all of the student's teachers and other school staff who interact with the student received training regarding proper use of the FM system.

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

### **Committees and Task Forces**

VHRC staff members serve on a number of state-wide committees/task forces. Attendance at these meetings provides an opportunity to advocate for civil and human rights and to educate the public about anti-discrimination laws in the State of Vermont. Membership on these various committees helps VHRC fulfill its mandate to advance effective public policy on civil and human rights for the Vermont public. These include but not limited to:

Fair Housing Council- This task force meets regularly to discuss statewide issues related to fair housing. Members include representatives of government agencies, non-profits, and housing authorities, among others. The group provides advice to the Agency of Commerce & Community Development's Housing Division including input on the Consolidated Plan and the Analysis of Impediments.

Vermont Justice Coalition- This coalition is made up of stakeholders from state agencies, non-profits, former offenders and others interested in reforms to the criminal justice system that would reduce prison populations and ensure that all Vermont offenders are housed in correctional facilities within the state. Efforts focus both on ways to reduce the number of people entering correctional facilities using treatment (addiction and mental health), diversion and restorative justice, improving conditions within the facilities that will better prepare offenders to lead productive lives when released and providing better re-entry programming and services to help offenders be successful and reduce recidivism.

Hazing, Bullying and Harassment Prevention Advisory Council- This council was created by the legislature to address these issues in Vermont schools. Members include the VHRC, other state agencies, the school boards', superintendents' and principals' associations, non-profits, parents and others.

Vermont Dignity in Schools Coalition- This grass roots coalition seeks to address disparities based on race, disability and socio-economic status, in school discipline, specifically suspension and expulsion.

Staff also attend public meetings such as school board meetings, legislative hearings and other public forums where issues of human rights are discussed.

## Training and Outreach to the Community

### Education Provided by VHRC Staff to Others

| Type                 | # of Events | # of People |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Employment           | 1           | 150         |
| Housing              | 23          | 377         |
| Public Accommodation | 7           | 305         |
| Implicit Bias        | 9           | 321         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>40</b>   | <b>1109</b> |

### Training Received by Staff

In addition to providing training/education to others, HRC staff and Commissioners participated in training to improve their own knowledge and skills:

7/28/15- Webinar- Hate-related Housing Discrimination- Richards and Maxon

9/1-3/15 HUD Policy Conference, Washington DC- Richards

9/16-18/15 Mid-Atlantic ADA regional conference, Baltimore- Maxon

HEMS HUD on-line database training- Richards, Maxon, Bolduc

9/28/15-10/1/15 International Association of Official Human Rights Organizations (IAOHRA) Annual Conference, Birmingham, AL- Richards

1/11/16 VLRB Training on Employment/Labor issues, Montpelier- Campbell and Commissioner Brodsky

3/7/16 Commission on Women Housing Conference, Burlington- Richards and Commissioners Marzec-Gerrior and Brodsky

4/1/16 Vermont Bar Association Spring Meeting, Burlington- Richards

4/7-8/16 New England Civil Rights Conference- Springfield, MA- Maxon, Campbell, Yang and Commissioner Ellis

5/11/16 HRC Sponsored ADA Training Titles I, II & III with Kathy Gips from the New England ADA Center (Montpelier)- All HRC staff and Commissioners Marzec-Gerrior, Besio and Vickers.

6/3/16 Vermont Legal Aid, Annual Staff College- Ethics seminar- Richards

6/4/16 Leahy Women's Economic Conference, Randolph- Richards

6/27-29/16 International Restorative Justice Conference- Halifax, N.S.- Richards

## Legislation

The Human Rights Commission works actively on legislation that furthers its statutory mandate to increase public awareness of the importance of full civil and human rights for each inhabitant of this state; to examine the existence of practices of discrimination which detract from the enjoyment of full civil and human rights; and to recommend measures designed to protect those rights.

The executive director actively worked on several bills during the legislative session including:

- Fair and Impartial Policing- H.571/H.743 Act 147
- School Discipline- S.67, S.194 and H.796

The executive director provided testimony and information with regard to numerous other bills related to civil and human rights.