

Dutchess County
Commission on
Human Rights



2017 Annual Report

Commission on Human Rights

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Poughkeepsie NY 12601

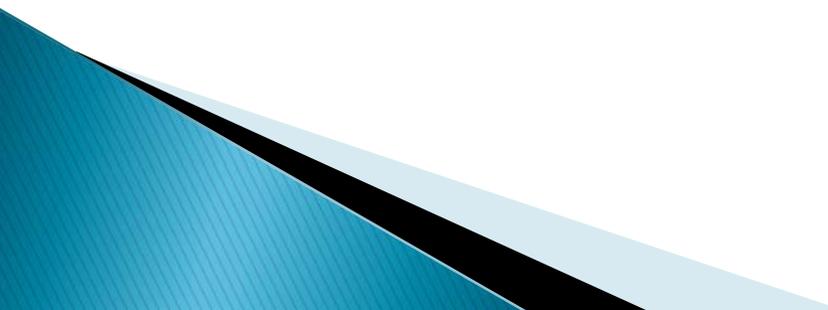
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www.dutchessny.gov/humanrights

2017 Annual Report

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Commission Members



Jody Miller
Chair



Jen Drake



Shirley Adams



Jen Herman



Victoria Anderson



Lance Ringel



Linda Balloqui-Smith



Seema Rizvi



Thomas Onaje Benjamin



Kathryn Sajdak



Michele Bertran



Chris St. Germain



COUNTY OF DUTCHESS

MARCUS J. MOLINARO
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

April, 2018

Dear friends,

Every life has purpose, and every voice deserves to be heard. That's why re-establishing the Commission on Human Rights was a priority, and I'm so impressed with the work the Commission accomplished in 2017. We are grateful to each of the Commission's volunteer members for their dedication and their commitment to our community.

The work of the Commission members is important to not only Dutchess County, but society as a whole. As a community, we must never shut ourselves off to diverse opinions, for when we stop listening to one another, the gap between us becomes cavernous. In such vast emptiness, only misperceptions and misunderstandings fill the void. The solution is simple: open and honest communication.

Our Commission on Human Rights brings that solution to life – fostering a dialogue through mutual respect and understanding that dissolves barriers and strengthens the bonds that tie us together as a community.

Building on the Commission's successes of the past year, we have bolstered its staff and resources; and we look forward to continuing the productive dialogues this cohort has already facilitated.

Sincerely,

Marcus J. Molinaro
Dutchess County Executive





COUNTY OF DUTCHESS
STATE OF NEW YORK

A. GREGG PULVER
CHAIRMAN OF THE LEGISLATURE

I am pleased to voice my support of the Commission on Human Rights and highlight my own experience with their important work this past year. Thankfully, the Commission was re-established due to their vital work on behalf of the residents of Dutchess County.

Dutchess County has a diverse population. Some of our families have lived here since the early 1700s, like my own, and others have more recently immigrated to work in our high-tech sector. I am proud that the leadership in Dutchess does not subscribe to the belief that divisive and inflammatory rhetoric is an effective way to operate a government.

In January, the Legislature participated in the *100 Cups of Coffee Transformative Dialogue Project*. It brought legislators together to share their personal experiences, successes, and failures with their colleagues. With seven new members this year, it is necessary for us know each other on a personal level- seeing each of our colleagues as merely a member of our party or the opposite party doesn't cut it. In the time since the event, I have seen legislators personal and professional relationships develop and it is thanks to a cup of coffee and a conversation.

I believe the work that the Commission is undertaking is making a visible and positive impact on Dutchess County residents. And I would like to thank Jody Miller and the fourteen members of the Commission for their dedication and hard work to further this noble mission.

Sincerely,

Chairman Gregg Pulver





COUNTY OF DUTCHESS

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The reestablishment of the Commission on Human Rights has not come a moment too soon. With human rights taking center stage as domestic and global events unfold, the Commission's mission, *Defending Human Rights, Bridging Differences, Embracing Diversity*, has taken on new urgency. With deeply committed Commission members, who have given countless hours in its first year, the Commission has established a strong foundation by carrying out several projects and beginning to raise the visibility on human rights. To do this work within a few miles from Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt's home has provided us with inspiration as we seek to champion dignity and respect for all in Dutchess County.

In 2017 the Commission engaged with the Dutchess County community in a number of ways. In Listening Sessions held in Millerton, Beacon, Red Hook, and Fishkill, Commission members learned about the strengths and challenges facing community members. The *100 Cups of Coffee Transformative Dialogue Project*, with the Northern Dutchess NAACP and the Dutchess County Interfaith Council, brought diverse groups together to discuss ways to build on Poughkeepsie's strengths as a kind, safe, and connected city. In collaboration with the FDR Presidential Library & Museum, Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill and United Nations Association – Mid Hudson Valley, "*Small Places Close to Home: A Celebration of International Human Rights Day: Working Together for Gender Equality*," was held to explore articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as applied to gender equality. Lastly, the Commission responded to calls for a variety of issues and requests that included facilitated conversations that resulted in new understandings, changes in policy and procedure, and increased community involvement; provided educational outreach presentations; connected people with community resources; and referred those with discrimination complaints to the NYS Division of Human Rights (DHR) for specific issues within the DHR's jurisdiction.

I am reminded of an African Proverb that says:

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

The protection of human rights calls on us to go together. I invite you to join with us.

In community,
Jody



History of the Commission

The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights was re-established in 2016. Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro stated “Our goal is to always be responsive to our community, providing opportunities for people to have their voices heard, facilitate change where needed and help move our county forward with broader opportunities for all.” In line with this goal, County Executive Molinaro re-established The Commission and appointed Jody Miller as the County’s new Human Rights/Equal Employment Opportunity (HR/EEO) Officer. The original Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights was created in 1984 by the Dutchess County Legislature and authorized by then County Executive Lucille Pattison. The Commission has served in an inquiry/advisory/outreach role and is charged with the responsibility of addressing discriminatory practices, attempting to resolve the practices and serve as an efficient referral of complaint materials to the New York State Division of Human Rights (White Plains Office) in the event a resolution cannot be reached. The Commission fosters mutual respect and serves as a resource for the community to identify discrimination, address the issue, and work with those involved to stop the behavior.



Our Mission

The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights is dedicated to:

Defending Human Rights

Bridging Differences

Embracing Diversity

Our Commitment

Dutchess County is committed to ensuring our community is inclusive and respectful for all, with the human rights of every individual protected and championed.

Our Purpose

The purpose of the Commission on Human Rights is to enhance the quality of life in Dutchess County by:

- ▶ Fostering mutual respect and understanding among all groups
- ▶ Inquiring into incidents of tension and conflict among or between various groups including but not limited to racial, religious, national disability, and LGBT groups and to take such possible actions as may be designed to alleviate such tensions and conflict
- ▶ Reporting complaints of alleged discrimination because of age, religion or religious practice, race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, domestic violence victim status, status, disability, military status, arrest record, conviction record, predisposing genetic characteristics, familial status (housing only), and domestic worker status (employment only) to the New York State Division of Human Rights
- ▶ Conducting and recommending such educational programs as, in the judgment of the Commission, will increase goodwill among people of the county and open new opportunities into all phases of community life for all
- ▶ Making such studies in any field of human relationship in the county as in the judgment of the Commission will aid in effectuating its general purposes



Development

The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights spent time in 2017 developing as a Commission since its re-establishment in 2016. In addition to developing a mission and goals, understanding the Commission's purpose and role in the county, and developing by-laws and other imperative organizational tools, the Commission members developed unity as a group and a structure built on collaboration. The Commission also began to publicize its existence to the Dutchess County community, with great success.



Our Work

The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights, in line with its mission and commitment, has actively engaged in the Dutchess County community. Through a number of tabling events, transformative conversations, facilitator trainings, community collaboration, participatory events, and responding to concerns and collecting data, the Commission has connected with the Dutchess County community and has become established as a local resource.



100 Cups of Coffee

A Transformative Dialogue Project



- ▶ The primary goal of the *100 Cups of Coffee Transformative Dialogue Project* is to help improve community relations in Poughkeepsie by providing spaces for people to come together to talk about the things that are of concern to them in their neighborhoods. The secondary goal of the project is to document the changes in the community and the effectiveness of the dialogue process. This will allow Poughkeepsie to serve as a model for other communities as it builds on its strengths as a kind, safe and connected city.
- ▶ The *100 Cups of Coffee Transformative Dialogue Project*, in collaboration with the Northern Dutchess NAACP (NDNAACP) and the Dutchess County Interfaith Council, began in July 2016 after the murders of 2 black men and 5 police officers in other parts of the country. These community gatherings began as a way to foster conversations between law enforcement, elected officials, clergy, community members and others. Since then, many more community gatherings/conversations have been held, involving more than 400 people, and more are planned for 2018.



What is Transformative Dialogue?

Transformative Dialogue is a unique way of approaching conflict, which differs from traditional interventions by focusing on the interactional changes that are key to sustainably decreasing tension and conflict. It puts decisions in the hands of people affected. Through interacting with each other, community members shape desired outcomes and may decide to implement specific activities beyond the dialogue. First used in Kosovo and other places where ethno-political violence had divided communities, Transformative Dialogue was used to help people make decisions about how to move forward based on what they needed.

Listening Sessions

- ▶ The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights has hosted several events in the “Listening Session Series.” The listening sessions are opportunities for community members to meet with members of the Commission on Human Rights and discuss the issues that concern them most in their community. The Listening Sessions are part of a series of initiatives the Commission on Human Rights has launched as part of its stated mission of “Defending Human Rights, Building Bridges, and Embracing Diversity.”
- ▶ Over the course of the year, the commission planned and held four listening sessions around the county to hear directly from residents about their thoughts and concerns for human rights in our area. The issues raised by residents varied among communities. Commission members made a number of direct connections between people and resources. We plan to continue this work of reaching out and thoughtfully listening to our constituency .



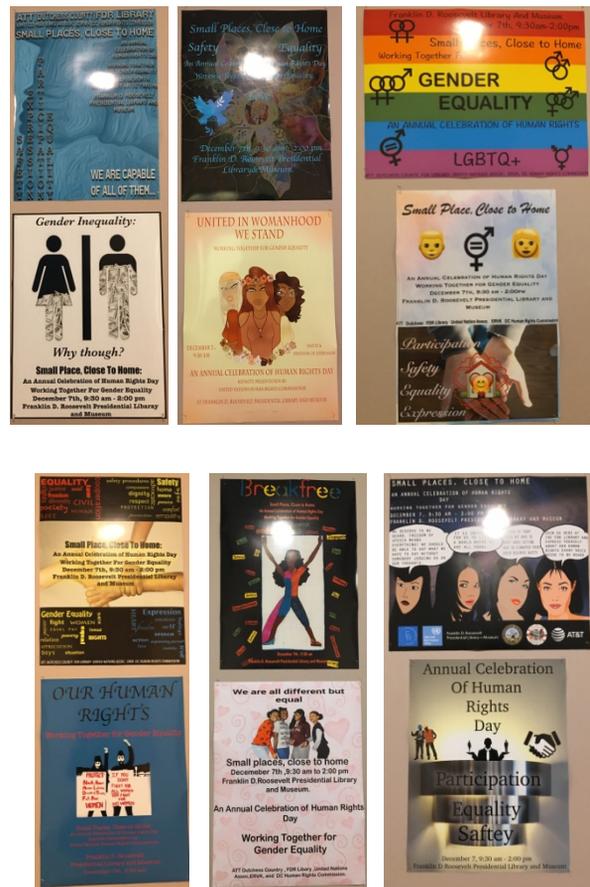
Transformative Dialogue Training

In 2017, The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights, in collaboration with Northern Dutchess NAACP and the Dutchess County Interfaith Council, offered two 2-day trainings on Transformative Dialogue facilitation. The training was made available to members of the Dutchess County community free of charge. This training, which more than 30 community members participated in, developed facilitation skills so that individuals could assist with the 100 Cups of Coffee Transformative Dialogue Project. Participants learned how to facilitate meetings, how to better understand their own and others’ responses to conflict and difficult interaction, how to listen to concerns from others, and how to increase their ability to support positive and connecting interactions among those with different perspectives. This successful certificate program is planned to be offered again in the future.



International Human Rights Day

- ▶ International Human Rights Day commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The UDHR was championed by Dutchess County's own Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the UN committee charged with drafting the document. The Declaration, unprecedented at the time of its adoption, establishes the basic tenets of freedom and democracy as a guide for people and governments.
- ▶ The annual Hudson Valley celebration of Human Rights Day, "Small Places Close to Home," seeks to connect the UDHR to its Hudson Valley roots, and to address local issues and solutions. Observed for the past decade, the event is a joint effort involving the United Nations Association of the Mid-Hudson Valley through Oakwood Friends School, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, and the Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights. An idea that originated with the Commission (to involve young people from the community in creating artwork publicizing International Human Rights Day) came to fruition through a collaborative process with Mill Street Loft/Spark Media Project (now The Art Effect.)
- ▶ At the event, held on December 7 at the FDR Library's Henry A. Wallace Center in Hyde Park, approximately 150 attendees were greeted with re-creations of that artwork. The theme of the day was *Working Together for Gender Equality*. Speakers included Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro, New York Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and Commission Chair Jody Miller, among others.



Planning is already underway for the 2018 edition of "Small Places Close to Home," which will again take place on Friday, December 7 at the Henry A. Wallace Center. The theme of the day will be *FDR's Four Freedoms Today*.

How We Help: The Commission's Impact

Intra-personal Impact

"I learned a lot and met new people."

"We came away with a much better understanding about how the system at the jail works."

"I understood the officer differently than I have before. It was really helpful to hear his perspective."

"I was impressed by the deep and genuine sentiment expressed by those present to be part of something that can improve the City of Poughkeepsie and the County more generally."

"After Tuesday's session, I'm more optimistic for local success than I've been for a long time."

"I can speak up more often."

Interpersonal Impact

"I wanted to tell you that as a result of the meeting at the Partnership last Tuesday, particularly the discussion groups, I have dates for further conversation with two people I had not met with before..."

"On the way out of the forum, I had better conversations."

"I learned about new groups doing work with the Latino community."

"In the future, I will be more sensitive to and recognize the needs of the deaf community."

Civic Engagement Impact

"We're interested in working on domestic violence and DWI issues with our community. We want to help our people and the Sheriff's efforts."

"I reached out to an elected official that I met at the 2nd gathering."

"I got information about services that I didn't know existed."

Institutional/Structural Impact

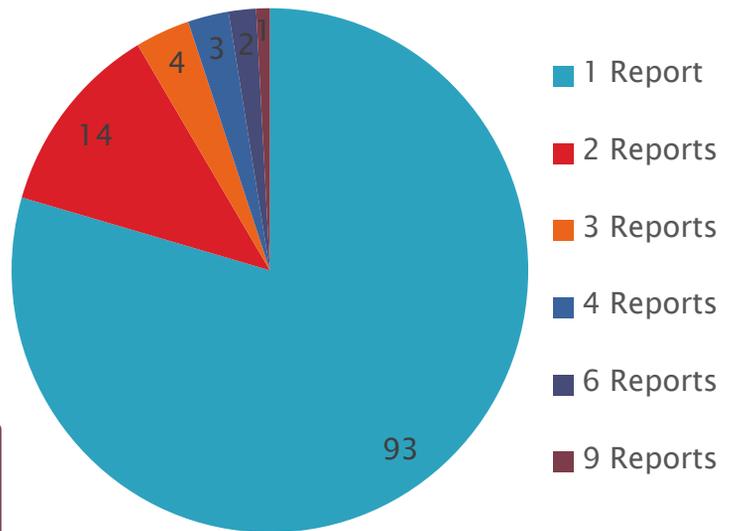
"We are going to train staff in new reporting procedures and how to distinguish conflict from bullying. We have a goal to report bullying incidents to administrators more quickly."

"I review every event application for the City of Poughkeepsie and have never seen anything about an accessibility plan. I can add a question about that so that event organizers consider how the event will be accessible to all." Police Chief Tom Pape

Responding to Community Concerns

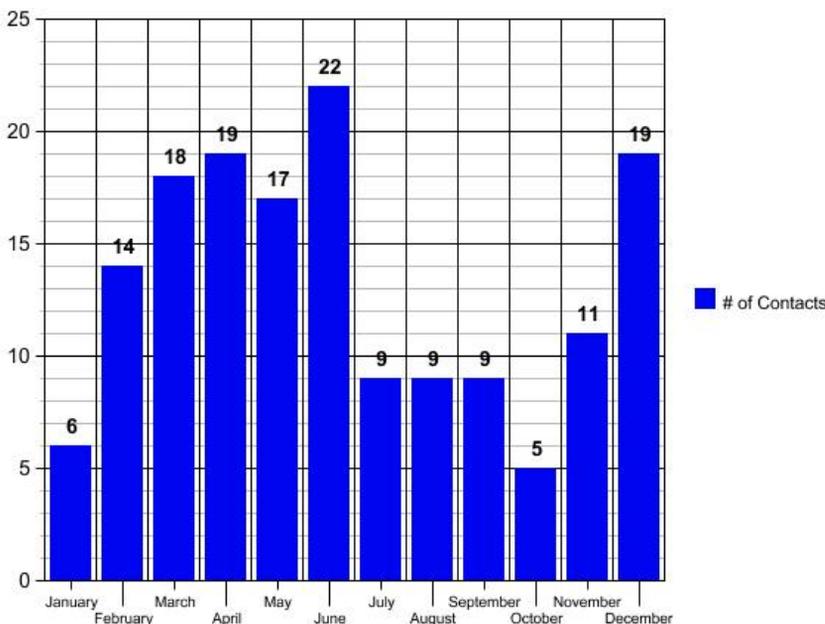
- ▶ The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights is responsible for receiving complaints regarding alleged discrimination. It is then the responsibility of the Commission to provide resources, information, and support to those making complaints. When appropriate, individuals are aided in sending official complaints to the New York State Department of Human Rights for further investigation and support.

Number of Reports Per Person



- ▶ In 2017, there 166 total contacts with the DCCHR.
- ▶ These contacts were made by 117 unique individuals.

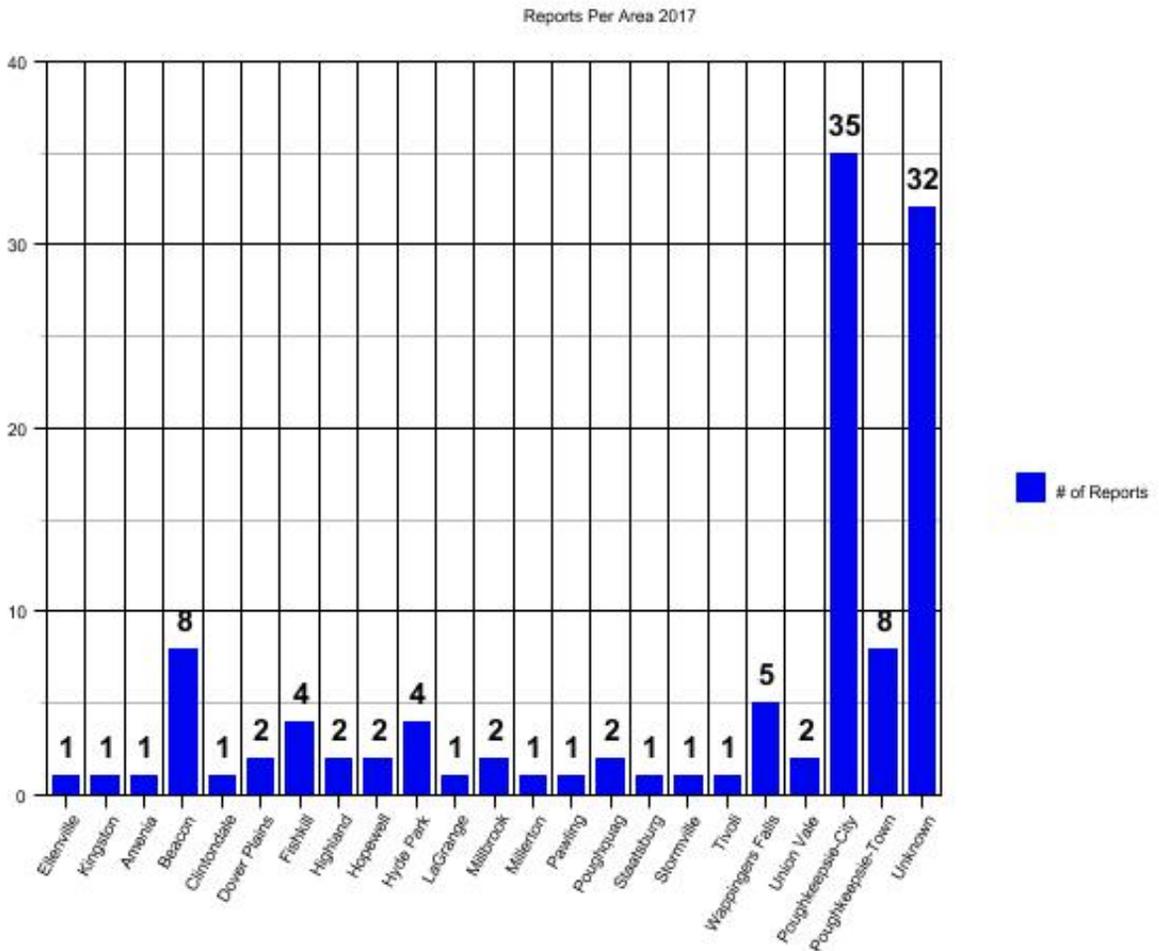
Monthly Contacts



- ▶ When the monthly distribution of contacts is explored, results indicate that the months of March, April, May, and June had higher numbers of contact with the DCCHR than other months of the year, except for a spike in December.
- ▶ June was the month with the most frequent contacts (22), while October had the least (5).
- ▶ This data will be compared with data of future years to help determine whether or not annual patterns exist.

Statistics, Locations

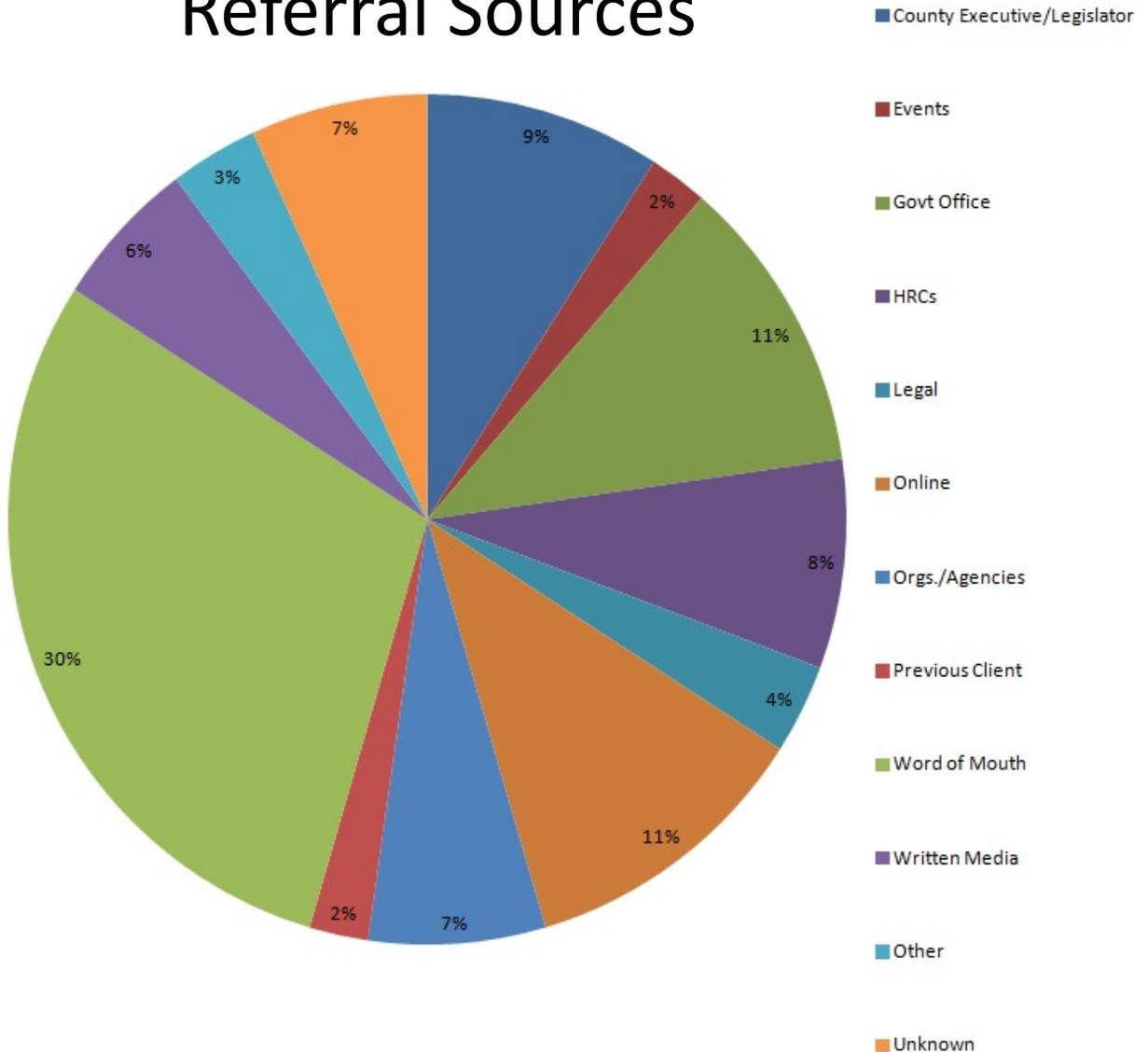
- ▶ Collected data reveals that contacts came from at least 20 different Towns/Cities in Dutchess County.
- ▶ The highest report rate came from the City of Poughkeepsie (35) with the next highest rates in Town of Poughkeepsie-8, Beacon – 8, Wappingers Falls-5, and Hyde Park-4.
- ▶ Several other areas had one or two contacts, which indicates that there is some awareness of the Commission in these areas. These areas with low or no contacts would benefit from future outreach to increase awareness and let people in these communities know that they have a resource to turn to when/if they need.



Statistics, Referrals

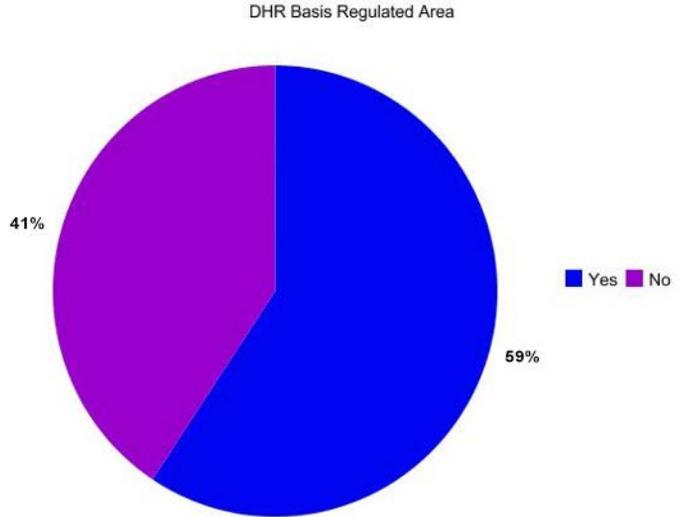
Statistics illustrate that the greatest referral source to the DCCHR is word of mouth. This type of source was responsible for 30% of referrals. Online visibility was the second largest referral source, and it was also found to be just as effective as referrals specifically given to people by government agencies/offices at 11%. The Offices of the County Executive and the County Legislature is responsible for 9% of the referrals. It is worth noting that additional sources of referrals include 6 % from brochures/handouts, 2% from unions , 2% from Human Rights Commissions in neighboring counties, 2% from previous clients served by the DCCHR, 7% from local organizations/agencies and 2% from individuals who have attended DCCHR events, among others.

Referral Sources

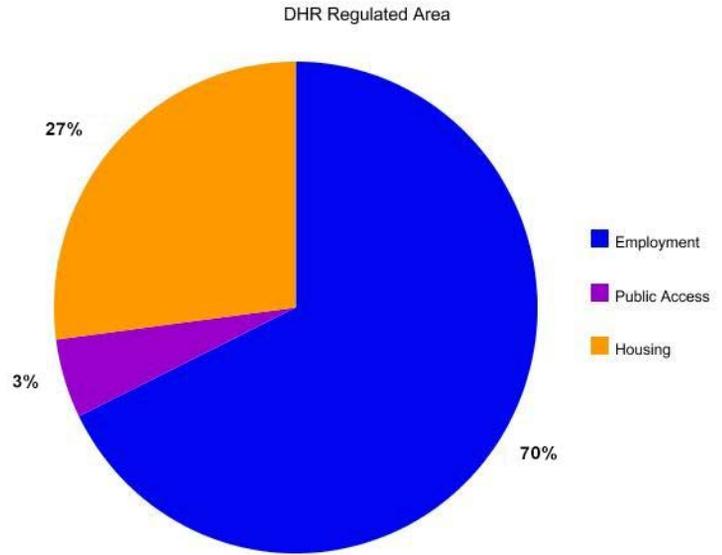


Statistics, Content

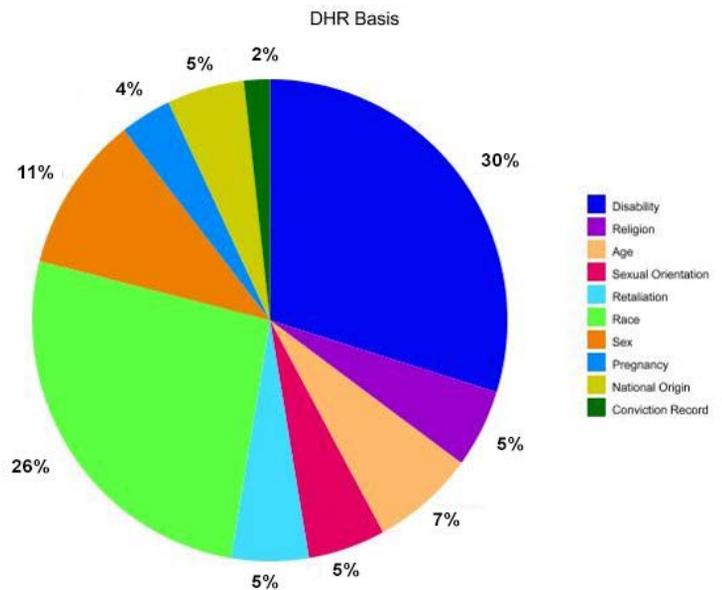
59% of all contacts to the Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights office fell into the category of a NY State Department of Human Rights Regulated Area.



Of this 59%, 70% of the contacts involved employment, while 27% involved housing, and 3% involved issues with public access.



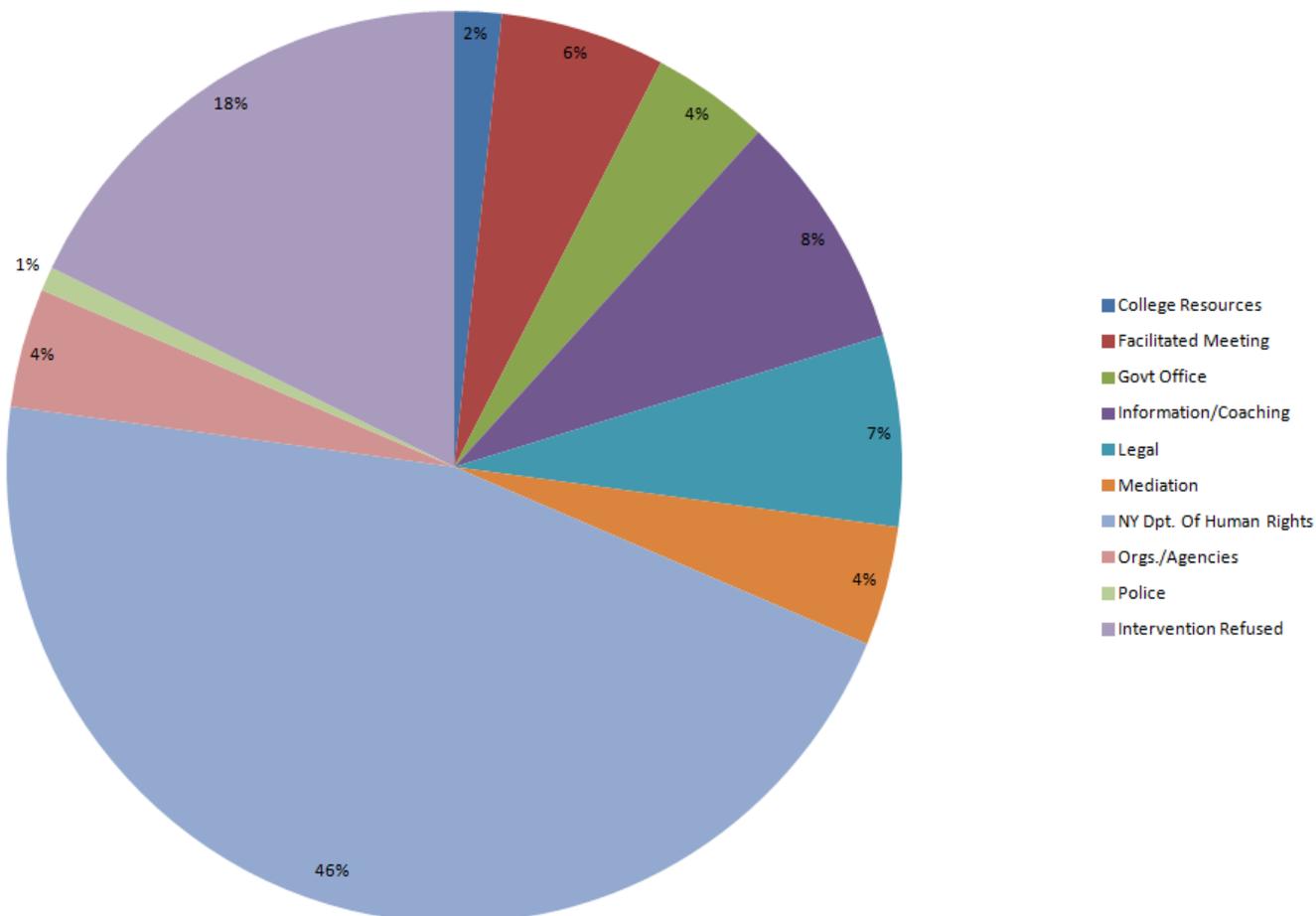
When the specific basis for the contact was explored further, 30% of the contacts were in reference to Disability, 26% related to Race, 11% related to Sex (Gender), 7% were related to Age, 5% related to Religion, 5% related to Sexual Orientation, 5% related to Retaliation, 4% related to Pregnancy, 5% related to National Origin, and 2% related to Conviction Record.



Statistics, Actions Taken

- ▶ 2017 data reveals that 46% of the contacts received by the Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights were referred on to the New York State Department of Human Rights for investigation.
- ▶ 16% of the contacts received were either resolved on their own, or the individual was not asking for resolution and simply wanted to report a particular incident.
- ▶ A large number of individuals who contacted the Commission were referred to local area resources, including 7% to legal services , 4% to mediation services , 4% to local agencies and organizations , 3% to government offices and departments., 2% to college campus resources , and 1% to police.
- ▶ 6% of contacts resulted in face to face meetings between two or more parties or larger discussions/presentations.

Actions Taken/Referral Made



Areas of Expressed Concern



Looking Forward...

The Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights has had a successful 2017. The Commission, still new in its re-establishment, developed core tools necessary for an organization, developed healthy and effective outreach to the Dutchess County community, and continued to create a greater level of visibility for the Commission throughout the county. In 2018 the Commission intends to continue to implement some of the successful community outreach programs that were developed, including *100 Cups of Coffee*, Transformative Dialogue Training, Listening Sessions, and International Human Rights Day. The Commission hopes to expand its awareness to the greater Dutchess County area and bring together participants and community members from all areas of the county. To do this, the Commission also intends to strengthen its online outreach and public relations strategies, which will also make information about the Commission more accessible. The Commission on Human Rights intends to continue to act upon incidents of discrimination and provide resources to those who may be impacted in our community. It will also develop new strategies to address rising concerns within Dutchess County, as appropriate. Finally, the Dutchess County Commission on Human Rights has renewed its commitment to being a supportive space that can foster mutual respect and understanding among all groups. The Commission will continue to carry out its mission of defending human rights, bridging differences, and embracing diversity in Dutchess County and beyond.

Local Resources*

Catholic Charities Community Services of Dutchess County

www.catholiccharities-dutchesscounty.org

845-452-1400

Center for Child Abuse Prevention

www.thecpca.org

845-454-0595

1-800-342-3720 Child Abuse Central Registry

Center for Victim Safety and Support - Family Services

www.familyservicesny.org

845-485-5550 24 hr. hotline – domestic violence

845-452-7272 – 24 hr. hotline – rape crisis & victim services

Dutchess County Helpline

845-485-9700 call or text 1-877-485-9700

Dutchess County Interfaith Council

www.dutchesscountyinterfaith.org

845-471-7333

Dutchess County Veteran's Services

www.dutchessny.gov

845-486-2060

Dutchess Outreach

www.dutchessoutreach.org

845-454-3792

Grace Smith House

www.gracesmithhouse.org

845-471-3033 24 hr. hotline

Hudson River Housing

www.hudsonriverhousing.org

845-454-5176

*not an exhaustive list of all services available in Dutchess County

Hudson Valley House of Hope
www.hudsonvalleyhouseofhope.org
845-765-0294 24 hr. hotline

Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center
www.lgbtqcenter.org
845-331-5300

Hudson Valley Mental Health
www.hvmh.org
845-486-2703

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
www.LSHV.org
1-877-574-8529

Mediation Center of Dutchess County
www.dutchessmediation.org
845-471-7213

Mental Health America-Dutchess County
www.mhadutchess.org

Northern Dutchess NAACP 845-471-4421

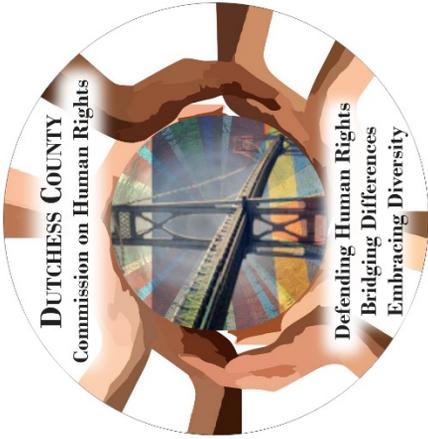
Southern Dutchess NAACP 845-235-3560

Taconic Resources for Independence
www.taconicresources.org
845-452-3913 (voice) 845-345-8416 (VP)

Think Differently
www.thinkdifferently.net

Worker Justice Center
www.wjcny.org
845-331-4615

*not an exhaustive list of all services available in Dutchess County



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