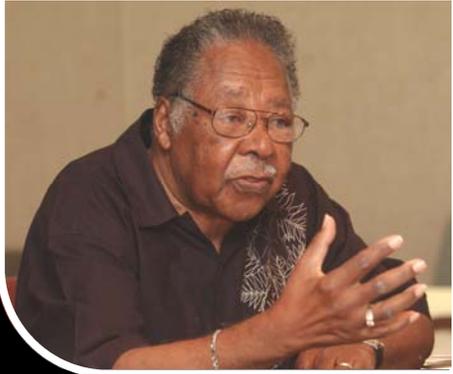


City of Lincoln
Commission on Human Rights

2008

Annual Report



Let's pull together
before we're torn apart.

440 South 8th Street
Suite 101
Lincoln, NE 68508
402.441.7624
402.441.6937 Fax
402.441.8398 TDD





CITY OF LINCOLN
NEBRASKA

MAYOR CHRIS BEUTLER
lincoln.ne.gov

Office of the Mayor
555 South 10th Street
Suite 208
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
402-441-7511
fax: 402-441-7120
mayor@lincoln.ne.gov



February 1, 2009

Dear Friends:

In 2009, the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR) celebrates 40 years of fighting against illegal discrimination and promoting equal opportunity for all Lincoln residents. This annual report for 2008 gives us a glimpse of the impact that LCHR has had on our community over the past four decades.

Last year, 98 new cases were filed with LCHR. The Commission closed 105 cases resulting in monetary recoveries of more than \$100,000. In addition to serving as the City's chief law enforcement agency for civil rights, LCHR is a leader in educating residents about their rights. In 2008, LCHR reached more than 4,000 residents in over 20 different venues with information on civil rights. The annual Fair Housing Conference has earned an excellent reputation throughout the Midwest, and the 2009 conference on April 21 and 22 will include special sessions for public housing authorities. Building on the success of this conference, LCHR will also sponsor a Fair Employment Conference.

I believe it takes education, information and open dialogue to increase awareness and change attitudes. LCHR plays a central role in our community in achieving this goal. Please take the time to review this report to see the many ways LCHR makes Lincoln a great place to live - for everyone.

Sincerely,

Chris Beutler
Mayor, City of Lincoln



February 1, 2009



Dear Friends:

The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights celebrates our 40th anniversary in 2009. Various events are planned throughout the year to acknowledge this milestone. I am very proud to be the director and exceptionally proud of the work we do.

This agency does the right thing in investigating claims of discrimination. We meet with clients and the alleged discriminating party face to face. We go onsite to visit work places, housing units and public accommodating places so that we can interview staff, witnesses and review documents. We conduct a full investigation so as to insure that the truth is uncovered.

Our customer surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction with our agency: more than 70% of our complainants and respondents felt that they were treated professionally, courteously and that the process was explained completely. Over 90% of the respondents would recommend LCHR to someone experiencing a problem with discrimination. We continuously work to ensure that our clients, regardless of the outcome of a particular complaint, understand why the Commission made its decision.

I have always been and will always be proud of our educational outreach programs in the community. What we do is unparalleled anywhere in the Midwest. For seven years we have facilitated an outreach program to all the high schools in the Lincoln Public School system through the career education program. We have reached more than 12,300 high school students and shared with them their rights and responsibilities in the workplace as they contemplate and move forward with their futures. This past year, we have just instituted a new program for our elementary and middle school students called "What does discrimination mean to me?" We are excited about the potential for this program based on its initial success. It is our belief that to end discrimination as we know it today requires that our youth understand what it is and what we can do about it. These programs accomplish those goals.

We have presented to many groups, companies and agencies throughout our community and we will continue to do so in the future. Our Fair Housing Conference has garnered a national reputation and we hope to begin a new tradition with our annual Fair Employment Practices Conference. Once again, to end discrimination as we know it, requires that we educate our people about it so they understand how it can be eliminated. We are also pleased with the reception our monthly television program, One Lincoln, continues to receive and we plan to broaden its scope and direction in 2009.

In order to reach even more community members, we are now embarking on a new frontier to form a 501(c)(3) a nonprofit corporation, called the "Friends of the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights." This independent fundraising organization will help us expand our educational outreach programs, conferences and seminars in the future.

We are ever changing and rethinking our strategy and we acknowledge that we could not do this without the support of Mayor Chris Beutler, the City Council, our LCHR Commissioners, the dedicated staff and countless supporters, partners and collaborators.

The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights is the agency designated by laws we adopted more than 40 years ago to insure that our community lives up to the ideals of equality before the law. I am proud to be a small part of this great organization and look forward to another year in which we seek equality, justice, fairness and opportunity for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Williams". The ink is dark and the signature is written in a fluid, personal style.

Larry Williams
Director



February 1, 2009

Dear Friends,

I have had the pleasure to serve on the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights since 2006. I am honored to have been asked to act as Chair for LCHR for the upcoming year.

David Fikar has been an excellent chairperson and role model for all of us who serve on the Commission and we thank David for his leadership and continued service to LCHR and the Citizens of Lincoln NE.

What I have seen since my start is a growing number of people filing complaints of discrimination. Whether it is employment, housing, public accommodations or retaliation ... the number of complaints has been increasing. I think one reason for this is the fact that more people who live and work in Lincoln are aware of LCHR.

LCHR has done an excellent job of outreach to the community through the efforts of Director Larry Williams. How many of you know that Larry hosts a monthly show on cable channel 5 called "One Lincoln?" This program can also be seen on Video on Demand via the following link: <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/mayor/cic/5citytv/video.htm> .

One of the most recent shows available is "Show 28: Awards Show". This was the awards presentation of the Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award to Annie and Leroy Stokes, as well as a Special Award from LCHR to The Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, and to the winners of the "What Prejudice Means to Me" Essay Contest.

LCHR is fortunate to have VISTA/AmeriCorps Volunteer Pippi Van Slooten as an additional resource. Pippi worked with Lincoln Public Schools to develop an anti-prejudice program targeting 5th and 6th graders. As a result of her efforts, an essay contest was held and 5 students presented their essays during the awards presentation. I encourage all to view this show!

I was delighted to hear such insight and optimism from such young citizens of our community and pleased to see that LCHR can make a difference through the outreach we do. Perhaps one day, all of Lincoln will be on the same page and we truly can be "One Lincoln".

Best Regards,

Wendy Francis
Chair 2009



February 1, 2009

Dear Friends,

It has been a great honor and pleasure to have served as the Chair of YOUR Lincoln Commission on Human Rights for the previous three years. As the time now arrives to “pass the torch” to a new and very capable leader, Ms. Wendy Francis, I find myself thinking about all of our citizens who have benefited from the services provided by LCHR. Services that go beyond those received by complainants and respondents, but are also extended to our population at large.

Because of the extensive educational outreaches that LCHR has provided (and continue to provide) to our schools and larger community for a number of years, we now have a population of citizens coming of age that have a better understanding of our anti-discrimination laws. This excites me because, though we have laws on the books that can and need to be enforced, I feel discrimination prevented is much better than discrimination corrected. And how better to bring our community to this greater existence than through education. For teaching a person how to do right is in all ways more profitable than punishing that person after they’ve done wrong.

In closing allow me to extend my great respect for my fellow commissioners for the commitment and dedication that they show, as well as to Director Larry Williams and his excellent staff at the commission for all their hard work, and for seeing their profession as more than “just a job.” My hope for the city of Lincoln is steady because of the work of all members of LCHR, and you inspire me to continued service for my fellow beings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Fikar'.

David Fikar
Chair 2008

2008 Commissioners



Bottom row, left to right: David Fikar, Chair Wendy Francis and Jose Quintero.
Top row, left to right: Sitaram Jaswal, Lori Lopez-Urdiales and Dick Noble.
(Not pictured, Vice-Chair Karla Cooper, Gene Crump, Hazell Rodriguez)

The LCHR Commission is a nine member board of diverse people who hear and decide the cases presented to them. They are volunteers who are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. An additional goal of the Commission is to continue educating the public on the discrimination laws in the hope of preventing and eventually eliminating unlawful discrimination. They meet on the last Thursday of each month at 4 p.m. in the City Council Chambers of the County/City Building.

Mission

The administration of the Human Rights Division supports the enforcement of all provisions of Title 11 of the Lincoln Municipal Code. To receive, settle, conciliate, investigate, issue findings, and hold public hearings on complaints alleging discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin, familial status, age, ancestry, marital status, and retaliation.

To perform functions and activities with community groups, businesses, schools, and governmental entities for the purpose of promoting understanding between races, cultures, and sexes, and to work to eliminate inequalities and sources of inter-racial friction.

Review all City of Lincoln procurement bids and awards in excess of \$10,000.00.

Review DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprises) program of minority and women-owned businesses and maintain directory.

Goals

To eliminate and prevent all forms of illegal discrimination, to assure and foster equal opportunity for all citizens of the City, and to act in all matters within its jurisdiction.

The Commission's Role

The Commission is a NEUTRAL agency. We do not serve as either side's lawyer, advocate, or advisor. We are not prosecutors. We do not take the side of either the complainant (the person who filed the complaint) or the respondent (the alleged discriminator).

The job of the Commission is:

- to *investigate* complaints of discrimination;
- to *settle* complaints, if possible;
- to *determine*, after investigation, whether there was discrimination in violation of the City of Lincoln Equal Opportunity Ordinance;
- to *order remedies* if the complainant proves at a hearing that discrimination has occurred.

Agency Staff



Larry Williams, Executive Director
(402) 441-8691
lwilliams@lincoln.ne.gov

As Director, Larry provides leadership in the planning, developing, coordinating and administering the day to day operations of the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights. This includes the overall program of education to prevent and eliminate discrimination and the entire investigative process for complaints received. In addition, Larry is available for public speaking on the issues of equal opportunity, civil rights issues, diversity and discrimination. He is also charged with increasing contracting opportunities for women and minority businesses in the city.



Angela Wortman, Senior Civil Rights Investigator
(402) 441-3870
awortman@lincoln.ne.gov

Angela is responsible for the investigation and settlement of complaints alleging a violation of Title 11 of Lincoln's Municipal Code. She serves as the primary investigator for employment complaints, and is the staff liaison with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In addition, Angela conducts training and outreach sessions, educating the general public, landlords, and businesses on the various equal opportunity laws. Angela has an Associate Degree in Applied Science, and started with LCHR as an intern in 1997. She is available to assist with training and provide technical assistance to the general public, landlords, property management companies, employers, and employees.



Margie Kniep, Civil Rights Investigator
(402) 441-8690
mknief@lincoln.ne.gov

Margie is responsible for the intake and investigation of complaints alleging a violation of Title 11 of Lincoln's Municipal Code. She serves as the primary investigator for housing complaints, which includes settlement of these complaints, and is the agency's liaison with HUD. Margie has a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Journalism with emphasis in news, editorial and public relations. She started as LCHR's Senior Office

(Continued on page 9)

Agency Staff

(Continued from page 8)

Assistant in November, 2006, and became an investigator in March of 2008. Margie will also be assisting in providing trainings and technical assistance to the general public, landlords, property management companies, employers, and employees.



Pippi van Slooten, AmeriCorps*VISTA Outreach Coordinator
(402) 441-7624
pvenslooten@lincoln.ne.gov

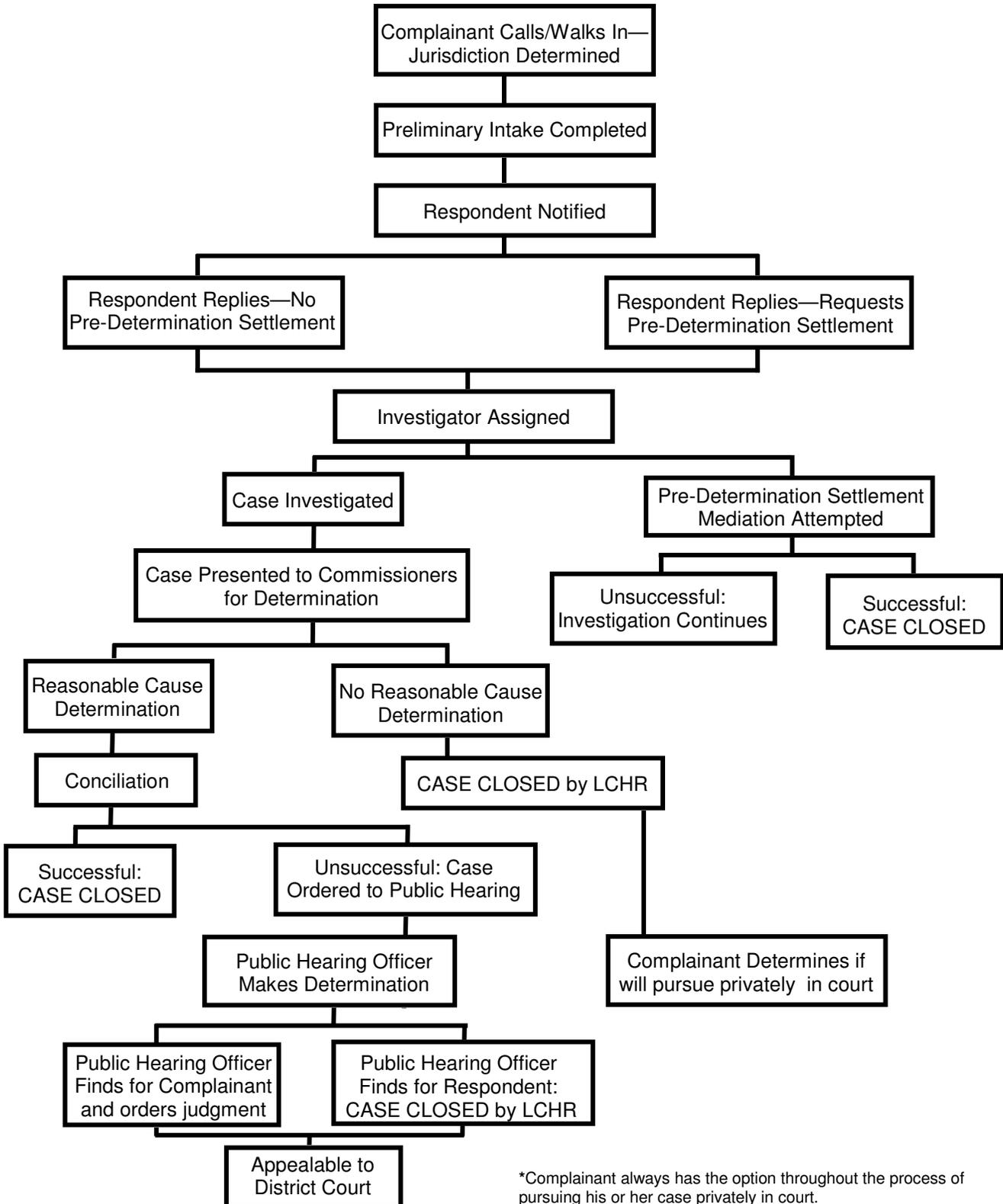
Pippi is responsible for helping LCHR meet its outreach and education goals. She accomplishes this through planning and facilitating anti-discrimination conferences, conducting youth outreach with elementary, middle school, and high school students, conducting general community outreach with various government and nonprofit agencies, and by working with the Friends of the Human Rights Commission on fundraising activities.



Mary Reece, Senior Office Assistant
(402) 441-7625
lchr@lincoln.ne.gov

Mary is responsible for overall office management, preliminary phone calls for jurisdiction and/or direction to other governmental agencies, preparing for the annual Fair Housing Conference and Employment Symposium, serves as secretary to the Commission, prepares office communications with complainants and respondents including opening and closing case files, maintaining the status and statistics of case records and provides clerical assistance to all staff members.

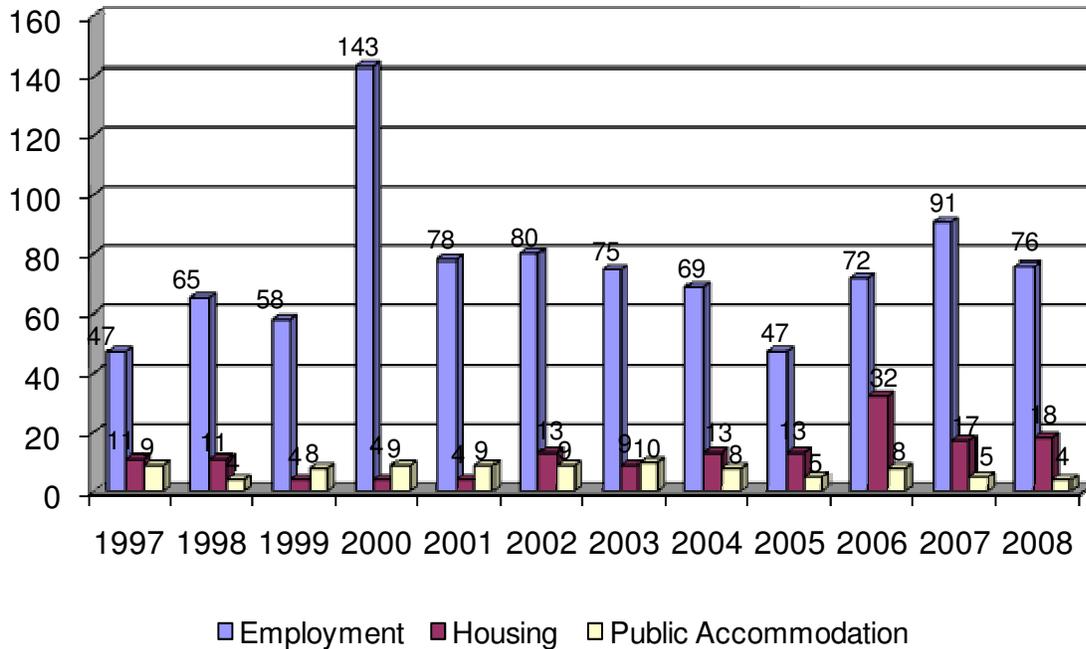
Complaint Process*



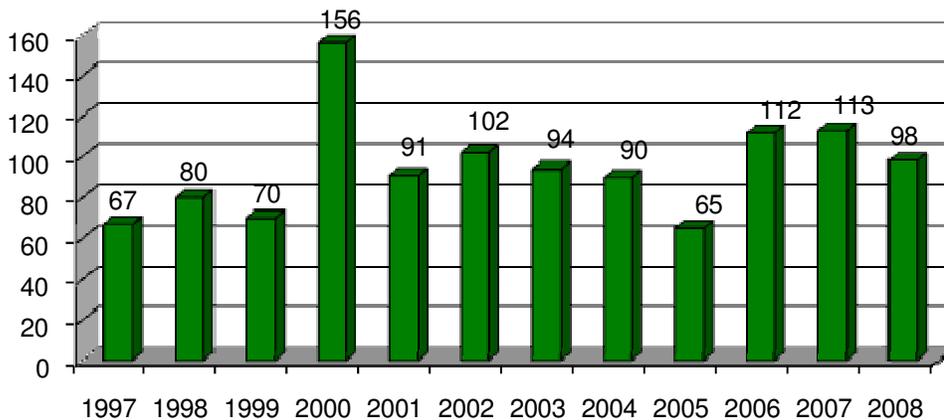
*Complainant always has the option throughout the process of pursuing his or her case privately in court.

Complaint Overview

Cases Filed 1997-2008



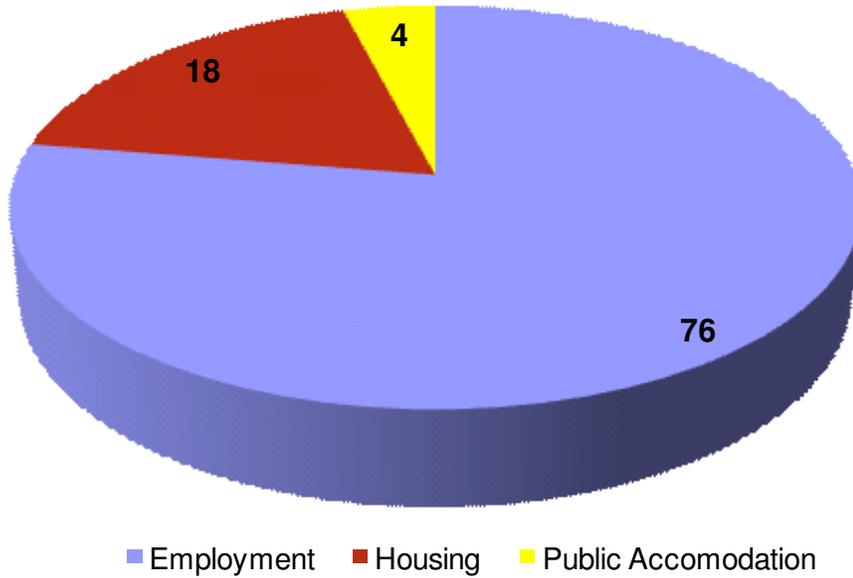
Total Filed



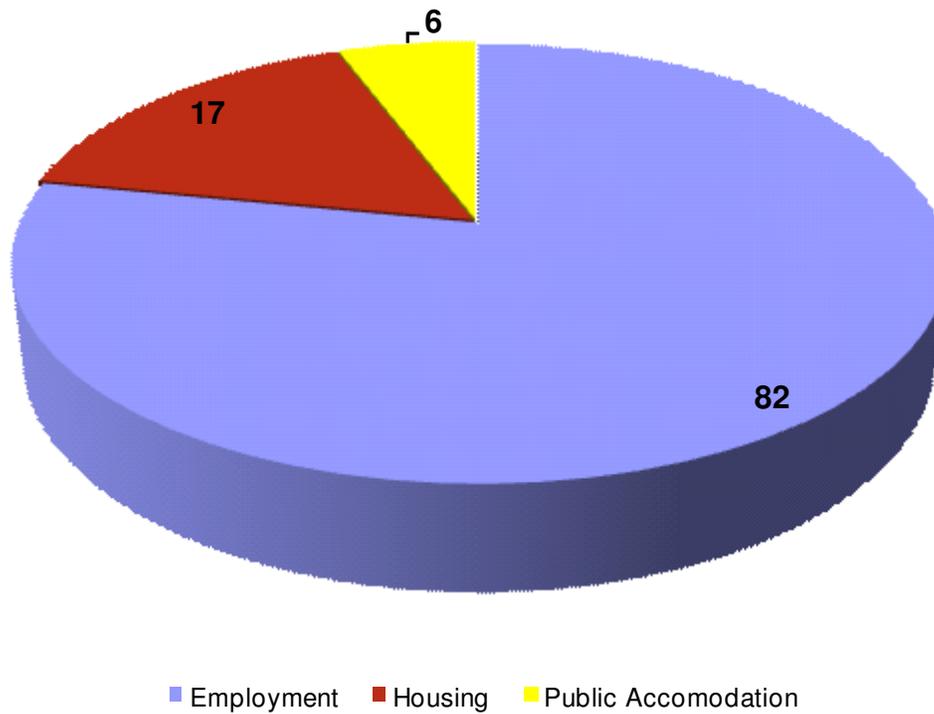
The number of cases filed in 2008 was down slightly, although by no means low. Compared with 2007, the number of Housing and Public Accommodation cases remained stable, the number of Employment cases filed dropped by about 20%.

*In 2000, the LCHR had a contract with the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission (NEOC) in which any cases filed with the NEOC that were in the City of Lincoln would be turned over to the LCHR for investigation. During 2007, the NEOC deferred 13 cases to the LCHR for investigation in order to expedite case investigation.

Cases Filed - 98



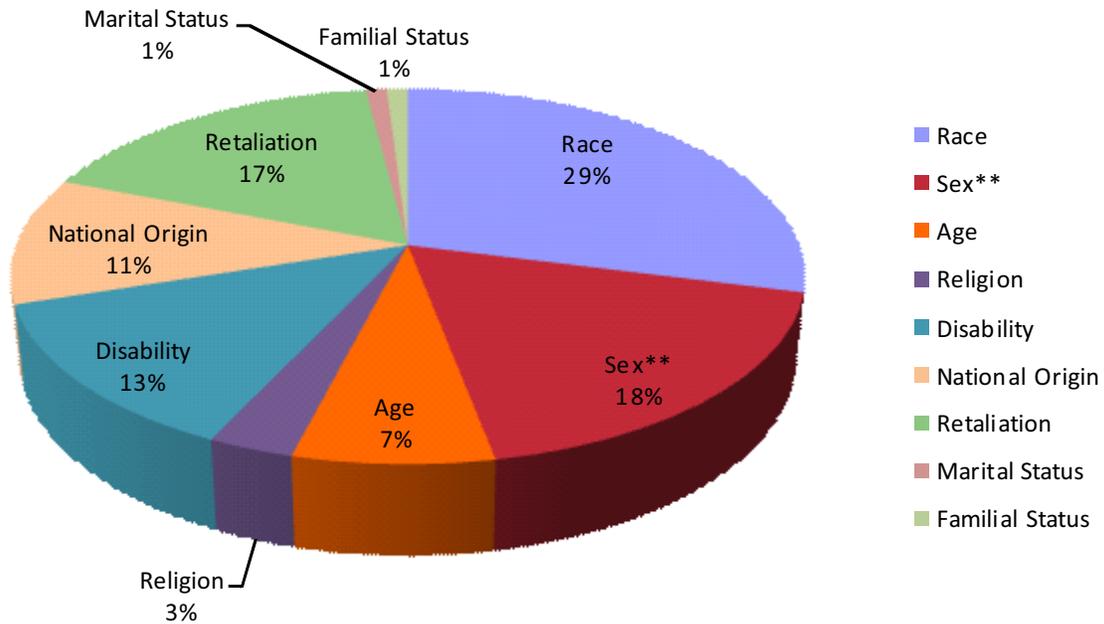
Cases Closed - 105*



*Cases closed includes cases filed in 2007 but closed in 2008.

Case Disposition

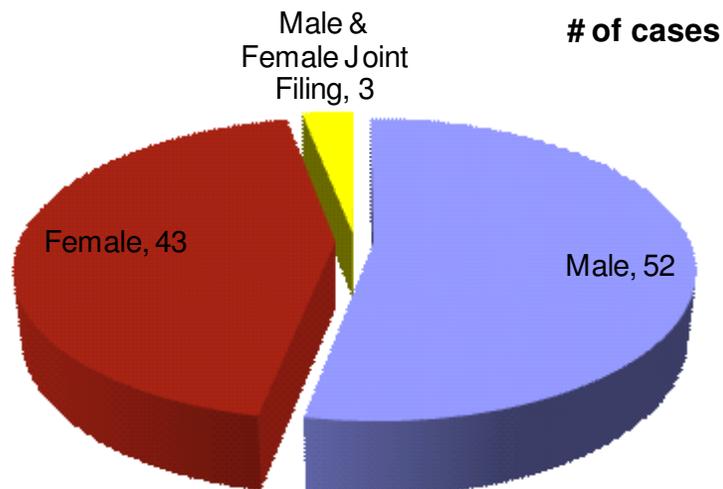
Breakdown of Cases Filed by Basis*



*Cases may be filed under more than one basis, which could include a case filed, for example, on the basis of both Sex and Disability, or Race and Retaliation.

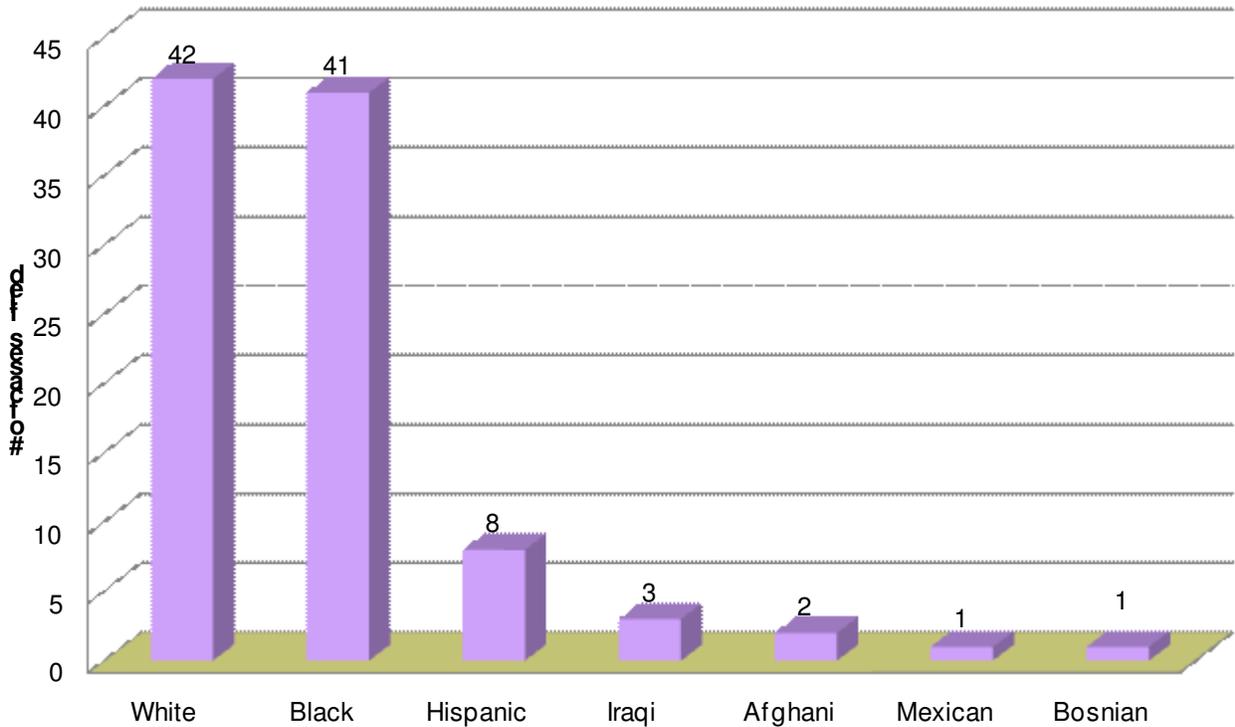
** Of the 27 cases filed under Sex, 11 of those included Sexual Harassment and 6 included Pregnancy.

Breakdown of Cases Filed by Gender



Case Disposition

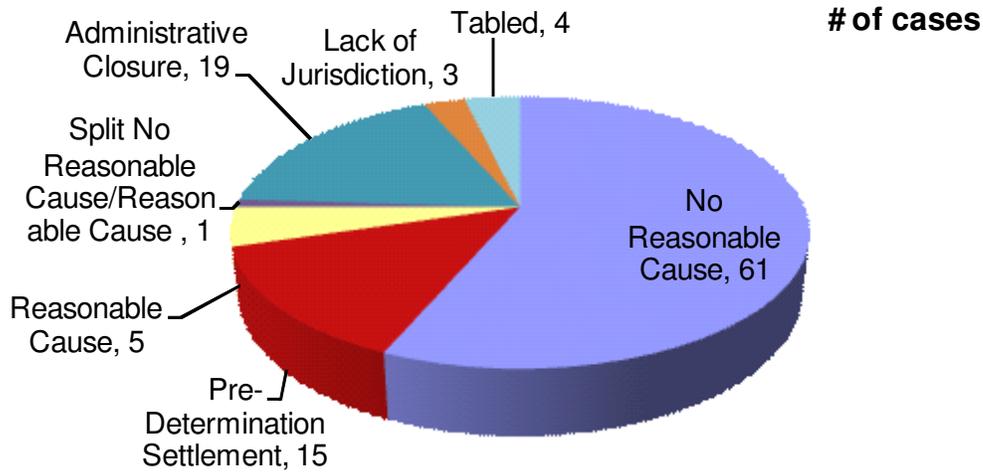
Breakdown of Cases Filed by Race / National Origin*



*This provides an approximate demographic report based on the racial or national origin designation provided by the Complainant. Although Hispanic is neither a race nor a national origin, it is indicated here in this report.

Case Disposition

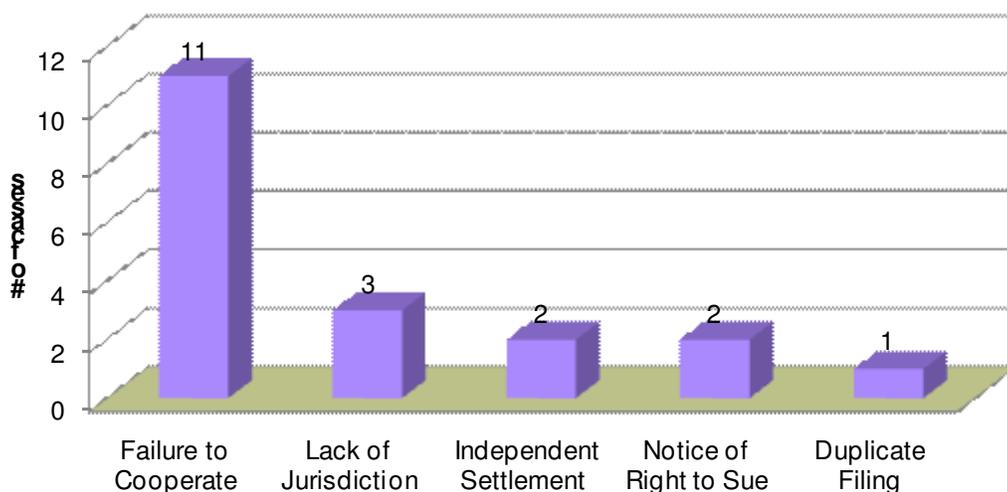
Breakdown of Commission Decisions



What do the numbers mean? No Reasonable Cause are those cases in which the Commissioners determined there was little or no evidence to believe discrimination occurred. In Reasonable Cause determinations Commissioners believe there is evidence showing discrimination did occur. Administrative Closures are cases closed for a variety of reasons—see the chart below. Pre-Determination Settlements are cases closed due to a settlement agreement prior to a Commission decision.

Sometimes the Commissioners make more than one decision in cases. Commissioners may determine that Reasonable Cause exists and those cases may later be closed in the same year by the Commission due to successful conciliation, public hearing determination, or issuance of a notice of right to sue. Because of this, the total number of Commission decisions may be greater than the number of cases closed .

Administrative Closures



Pre-Determination Settlements Summaries & Withdrawals with Settlements

- Respondent reinstated Complainant to former position and compensated him for his lost wages. The dollar amount is unknown.
- Respondent paid the Complainant \$120.00 and provided a neutral reference
- Respondent paid the Complainant \$1,200.00 and provided a neutral reference.
- Respondent agreed to continue to provide service to the Complainant, and agreed to work with the Complainant so she can avoid contact with staff person.
- Neutral Reference.
- Respondent agreed to continue to pay the Complainant's salary and benefits for six months; reimbursed her \$260.00 for mileage, paid four days vacation, and provide a neutral reference. Approximate value of: \$16,500.00
- Respondent agreed to pay the Complainant \$30,000.00 contingent on his resignation. Both parties agree to non-disparagement, and the Complainant agrees not to seek reemployment.
- Respondent reinstated Complainant to former position and compensated him for his lost wages. The dollar amount is unknown.
- Respondent agreed to pay the Complainant \$26,666.67 in lost wages contingent on his resignation. Respondent paid \$13,333.33 to Complainant's attorney. Respondent agreed to provide a neutral reference and undergo equal opportunity training for managers.
- Confidential settlement.
- Respondent agreed to install a barricade so vehicles cannot park in front of ramp. Respondent also implemented a tow policy for handicap parking violators.
- Respondent agreed to pay the Complainant \$1,000.00

Pre-Determination Settlements Summaries & Withdrawals with Settlements

- Complainant agreed to make monthly payments for a total of \$1,000.00 in back due rent. Respondent agrees to relocate/dispose of mobile home at Respondent’s cost. Respondent agrees to file a Satisfaction of Judgment with Court once Complainant pays the back due rent.
- Respondent agreed to pay Complainant \$1,680.00 in back pay and an additional \$2,200.00. Respondent will also provide a positive reference letter for the Complainant, and will require managers to attend equal opportunity training.
- Respondent agreed to “forgive” the rent and the money that was owed by Complainant.
- Respondent agreed to pay Complainant \$1,129.00.
- Respondent agreed to pay Complainant \$4,500.00.
- Respondent agreed to pay Complainant \$3,600.00

Conciliation Summaries*

- Respondent agreed to pay the Complainant a lump sum amount of \$1,500.00.

*A conciliation takes place after a finding of Reasonable Cause. Both parties come together and discuss, negotiate and facilitate a settlement.

FREE! FREE! FREE!
2009 Fair Housing Conference
 April 21 & 22, 2009
 Cornhusker Marriot ~ 333 South 13th Street ~ Lincoln, NE

New this year:
 Fair Housing Law by John Relman - 1/2 day session April 21
 Fair Housing 101 for Public Housing Authorities
 And much much more!

Service Satisfaction Survey

In an effort to gauge how our complainants and respondents felt about their contact with our agency, determine how they felt about the process and understanding the process, and to look for areas in which we could provide better service or a clearer understanding of what we do, surveys were mailed to all complainants and respondents following their case closure, regardless of the case outcome. We asked them to rank us in several areas.

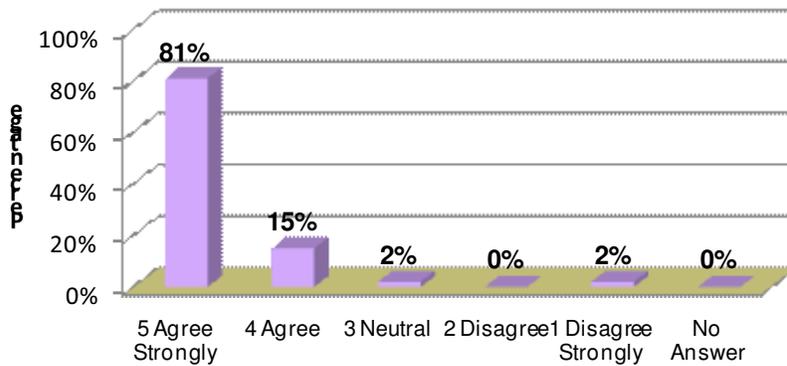
Both Complainants and Respondents were asked to rank our office with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest in the following areas:

1. All department staff presented themselves in a courteous and professional manner at all times.
2. The investigator explained the laws and the LCHR investigative procedures to your satisfaction.
3. Opportunities to present your position were given to you during the investigation.
4. The investigator kept you adequately informed about the progress of the investigation.
5. Regardless of the case outcome, you felt the overall process was fair.
6. The investigator interviewed all the witnesses you identified.
If not, the investigator explained why some witnesses were not interviewed?
7. The investigator discussed with you the possibility of settling this case.
8. If settlement was discussed, you were allowed to make your decision without pressure from the investigator.
9. Would you refer someone experiencing a possible discrimination problem to the LCHR?

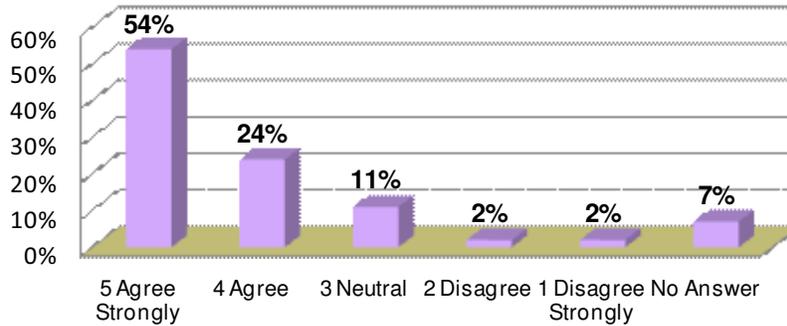
Surveys Sent: 97 surveys were mailed in total and 46 (47.5%) returned. A complete overview of the responses can be viewed at the LCHR office. The next page shows the responses for questions #1, 2, 4, 5, and 9, which gives a good impression of the overall satisfaction of our clients. A letter of explanation as well as a self-addressed stamped envelope is included with each survey.

Service Satisfaction Survey

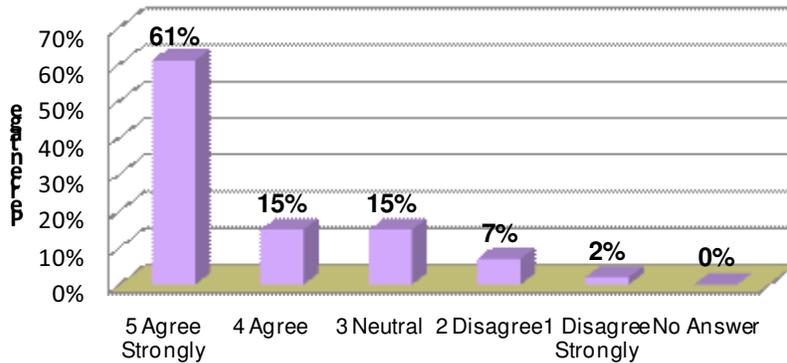
All department staff presented themselves in a courteous and professional manner at all times.



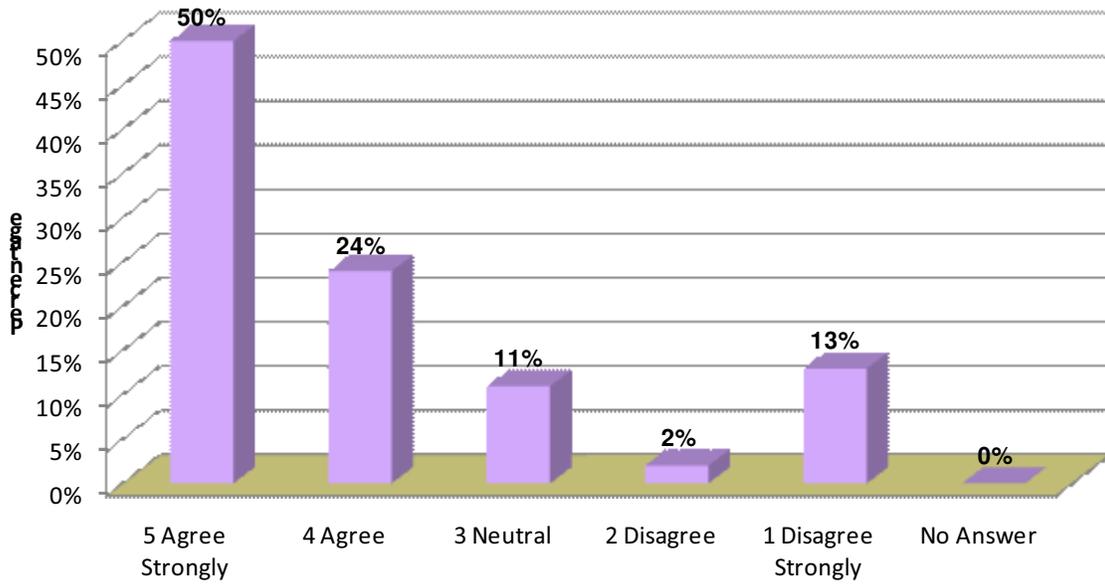
The investigator explained the laws and the LCHR investigative procedures to your satisfaction.



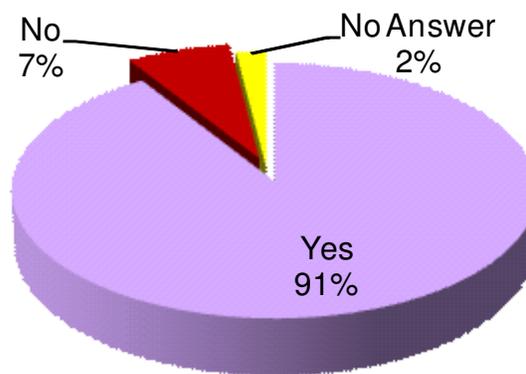
The investigator kept you adequately informed about the progress of the investigation.



Regardless of the outcome, you felt the overall process was fair.



Would you refer someone experiencing a possible discrimination problem to the LCHR?

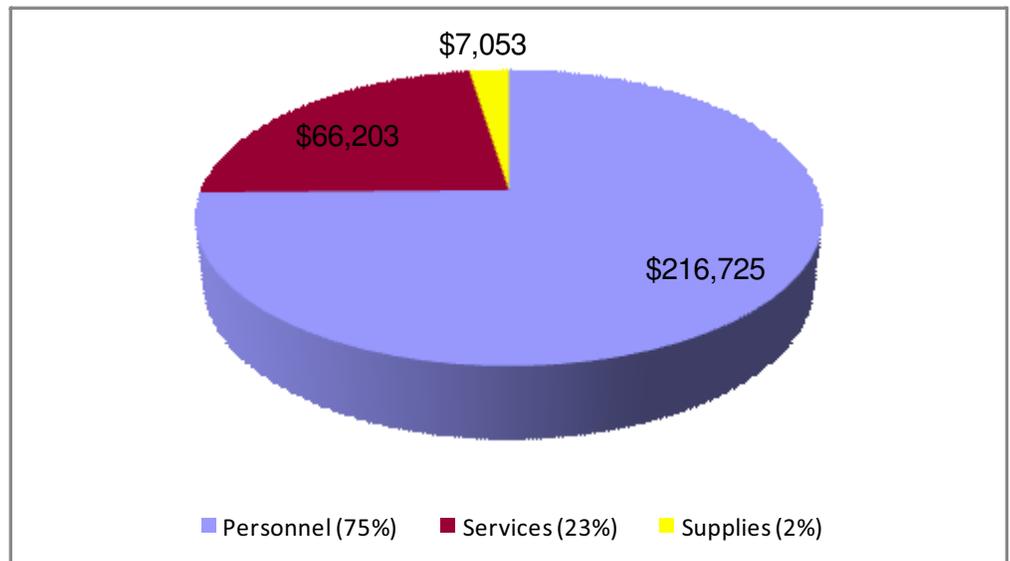


For fiscal year 2007-2008, which ran September 1, 2007 until August 31, 2008, the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights Budget adopted by the City Council was \$124, 641 out of a total city budget of \$134,894,287. In addition to the City’s General Funds, the Commission on Human Rights received \$165, 340 of their total budget, or 57% of our total budget of \$289,981 from federal grant funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

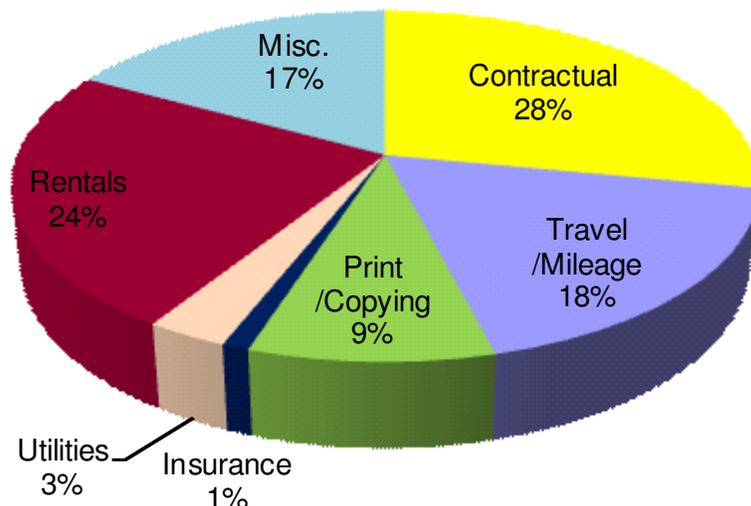
LCHR is a division of the Mayor’s Office which includes Lincoln Area on Aging, the Citizen Information Center and the Mayor’s Office itself. The budget for all of these divisions in the Mayor’s Office is \$7,963,564 of which LCHR amounts to about 4% of the total budget in this department.

Where Did the Money Go?

Of the total budget of \$289,981, the largest percentage went to personnel for salaries and benefits, for a total of \$216,725 or 75%. Services, which expenditures cover our insurance, travel, mileage, interpretation/ translation costs, office rental, copying, printing and utilities’ accounts for \$66,203 or 23% of our budget, while office supplies accounts for \$7,053, or 2% of our total budget.



*Services Summary



Education and Outreach

The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights provides services to the community to assure that individuals are aware of the rights and responsibilities under the Equal Opportunity and Fair Housing Laws. LCHR works to reach as many agencies, groups, community-based organizations, employers, property owners, civic groups and individuals as possible. These efforts include training programs which can be customized to meet the needs of the target audience. Topics include: racial and sexual harassment; fair employment practices; harassment free work environments; fair housing laws; public accommodation laws; Americans With Disabilities Act; and diversity training.

In 2008, the staff conducted training at a number of organizations for a total of 83 sessions reaching over 4,000 people – that is up 25% from the previous year. These organizations include the Lincoln Public School System, from elementary classes to career education classes in the high schools; the Lincoln Housing Authority, Region V and VI, Real Estate owners and Managers Association of Lincoln (REOMA), as well as training sessions held with several respondents as a result of settlement agreements. Additionally, the Fair Housing Conference continued to be an unqualified success in 2008 providing the public with a forum and information on a wide range of housing topics.

LCHR TV's Program: *OneLincoln*

The 5 City TV program “OneLincoln” continued its successful run in 2008. The show is hosted by Director Larry Williams with local guests and presents issues relating to discrimination and areas of concern to residents of Lincoln.

The program's aim is to increase awareness and understanding, to provide information on these topics and to let the public know that the LCHR is the agency in the city of Lincoln responsible for investigating complaints of discrimination. Topics in 2008 included a special awards show, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Hispanic Heritage month, One Lincoln and many more. Questions, topic or guest suggestions are welcome and should go to Director Williams at 441-8691 or by email at lwilliams@lincoln.ne.gov .

The most recent show is broadcast on 5 City TV several times throughout the week. To view times go to: <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/mayor/cic/5citytv/guide.htm>
Past programs can also be viewed through 5 City TV video on demand, simply go to <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/mayor/cic/5citytv/video.htm> and select the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights link on the right side of the page to access the programs.

Annie and Leroy Stokes Honored as the 2008 Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award Recipients



In December 2008, LCHR presented Mr. and Mrs. Leroy and Annie Stokes with the Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award which commemorates outstanding achievements in furthering human relations in Lincoln.

Annie and Leroy Stokes were selected to receive the 2008 award, and according to LCHR Commissioner Gene Crump, the Stokes' represent the spirit of Gerald Henderson's life and his human rights vision for the City of Lincoln. Having been exposed to racism earlier in her life, Annie Stokes turned that negative experience into a positive force through her work as an advocate for children with special needs, through

organizing food collection drives at Lefler Middle School, by initiating a mentorship program for junior high school students who eventually completed high school, graduated from college, and became active members of their community and numerous other activities.

Leroy Stokes has served the Lincoln community by working on various boards and committees including serving as the president of the Lincoln Branch of the NAACP, as president of the Parent Advisory Committee for Lincoln High School, as a member of the Malone Community Center's Board of Directors, as a focus group member providing input on methods for recruiting people of color for Lincoln Public Schools; to name a few examples.

Together, the Stokes' spearheaded the naming of Rosa Parks Way, the development and implementation of voter registration programs in Lincoln, and in the raising of funds to award scholarships to over twenty graduating Lincoln high school students. In 1968, then Lincoln Human Rights Officer, Gerald Henderson stated, "There are many hidden problems here. Maybe Lincoln is not as warm a city with few race problems as is thought." Today, Lincoln is a thriving diverse city, but like any growing city, it still faces many challenges. Annie and Leroy Stokes continue to do their part to help Lincoln face those challenges head on, and for this reason they were selected by the Commission to receive the 2008 Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award.

In 2000, LCHR established an annual Human Rights award to recognize outstanding achievements in furthering human relations in the City of Lincoln. In 2003 the award was renamed the Gerald Henderson Human Rights award in order to remember and honor the first director of LCHR and a long-standing civil rights activist. Nominees for this award are judged based on their achievements in improving human rights based on activities implemented, services performed, or programs operated in the City of Lincoln. Previous winners of this award include the late Dan Williams of Citizens Against Racism and Discrimination, Cecilia Olivarez Huerta of the Mexican American Commission, Jose Soto and the Division of Affirmative Action, Equity and Diversity of Southeast Community College, Milo Mumgaard of Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, Florine Joseph of the Lincoln Action Program, and Beatty Brasch of the Center for People in Need.

NEBRASKA INDIAN COMMISSION AND STUDENTS RECEIVE STANDING BEAR AWARDS



Front: Zachary Weaver, Samantha Washington,
Jenny Tran, Lan Portnoy
Back: Judi gaiashkibos, Elizabeth Otto

Also in December 2008, LCHR presented Judi gaiashkibos, the Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, and the five student winners of the 2008 LCHR “What Prejudice Means to Me” essay contest with Chief Standing Bear awards and certificates of achievement.

Chief Standing Bear of the Ponca Indian tribe is another Nebraska human rights pioneer who LCHR chose to celebrate by creating an award in his honor. In 1879, Chief Standing Bear challenged decades of US Indian policy when he stood in a federal courthouse in Omaha, Nebraska and demanded to be recognized as a person by the US Government. The Ponca Indians had been forcibly relocated from their beloved Niobrara River Valley to the harsh plains of Oklahoma and their Chief had decided to

challenge this human rights violation in court. suit forced the government to grapple head-on with the issue of whether Native Americans, like the recently emancipated Black population, were persons entitled to equal protection under the law. General George Crook, an accomplished “Indian fighter” *supported* Standing Bear with a harsh indictment of the very policies he had spent his career implementing. Chief Standing Bear eventually won his case and the US government recognized for the first time that “an Indian is a person within the meaning of the law,” and was deserving of equal protection under the law. This is a complete embodiment of the Nebraska state motto: *Equality Before the Law*, and this is also what LCHR ensures for the people of Lincoln.

LCHR is proud of its continued relationship and partnership with the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs and LCHR thanks them for the use of Chief Standing Bear’s image as well as his legacy in its anti-prejudice outreach program with the Lincoln Public School system. In honor of that relationship, the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs was presented with the first LCHR Chief Standing Bear award.

The Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs was established in 1971 and consists of fourteen Commissioners appointed by the Governor. The Commission’s statutory mission is “to do all things which it may determine to enhance the cause of Indian rights and to develop solutions to the problems common to all Nebraska Indians.” The Commission helps assure that Indian communities in Nebraska are afforded the right to equitable opportunities in the areas of housing, employment, education, health care, economic development, and human / civil rights. Judi gaiashkibos is currently the Executive Director for the Commission and is a past recipient of the Gerald Henderson Human rights award.

2008 marked the first year of LCHR’s elementary and middle school diversity outreach program. Fifth-grade students from Eastridge, Morley, Holmes, and Riley elementary schools and sixth-grade students from Lux and Culler middle schools wrote essays on what prejudice meant to them. Five students were selected to receive LCHR awards. Their essays were reprinted in the January 2009 issue of OneLincoln newsletter and the students were taped reading their essays for the December “One Lincoln” television program.

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