



Annual Report

February 1, 2023

Revised May 15, 2023



The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights works to eliminate and prevent all forms of illegal discrimination, to assure and foster equal opportunity for all community members of the City, and to act in all matters within its jurisdiction.

Background

The groundwork for LCHR was laid in 1966 when Lincoln voters passed Article 10, an antidiscrimination and human rights amendment to the City Charter. [Article 10](#) authorized the City of Lincoln to establish the commission on human rights to assure equal opportunity for all citizens, and equal enjoyment of, and equal protection under, the laws of the City of Lincoln.

In 1973, [Title 11](#) was added to the Lincoln Municipal Code.

Title 11 established the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights and set forth its organization, powers, and duties.

Responsibilities

Under Title 11, LCHR has four primary areas of responsibility:

- Engage in community outreach to promote equity and human rights within the City of Lincoln.
- Investigate and adjudicate cases of unlawful discrimination related to housing, employment, and public accommodation.
- Support efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within city operations.
- Collect and publish data related to the status of human rights and equity within the City of Lincoln.

Staff

The LCHR Team underwent some changes during 2022:

After serving as Director for three years, Mindy Rush Chipman left the City in March of 2022 for an opportunity with the ACLU of Nebraska. Rush Chipman was instrumental in the creation and implementation of the Tenant Assistance Project (TAP), which kept thousands of Lincoln residents in their homes during the height of the pandemic. In June of 2022, Sara Houston was hired as the new LCHR Director.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program, a collaborative program between LCHR and the Department of Urban Development, was transferred to Urban Development. Nicholas Fogerty and Vayda Kirshman, Emergency Rental Assistance Program supervisors, remain housed at LCHR. LCHR continues to have a close relationship with the program and collaborate on efforts related to housing justice.

Last, Lin Quenzer, the City's Title VI and ADA Coordinator, physically relocated to LCHR. Quenzer contributed to LCHR outreach efforts as part of her work.

LCHR currently employs six full-time employees, one part-time employee, and two part-time Human Rights Externs. Current LCHR staff includes:

Administration

Sara Houston, JD, Director
Shanna Eckman, Senior Office Assistant

Investigations

Rob Rowan, MBA, Senior Civil Rights Investigator
Chassidy Jackson-Goodwin, Senior Civil Rights Investigator

Outreach

Francisca Beltran, Community Outreach Coordinator
Haefaa Hasan, Housing Outreach Coordinator
Thuyhong Le, Outreach Worker and Office Assistant

Student Externs

Jeannine Akamba, University of Nebraska Lincoln
Kimberly Nyadongo, Nebraska Wesleyan University

Commissioners

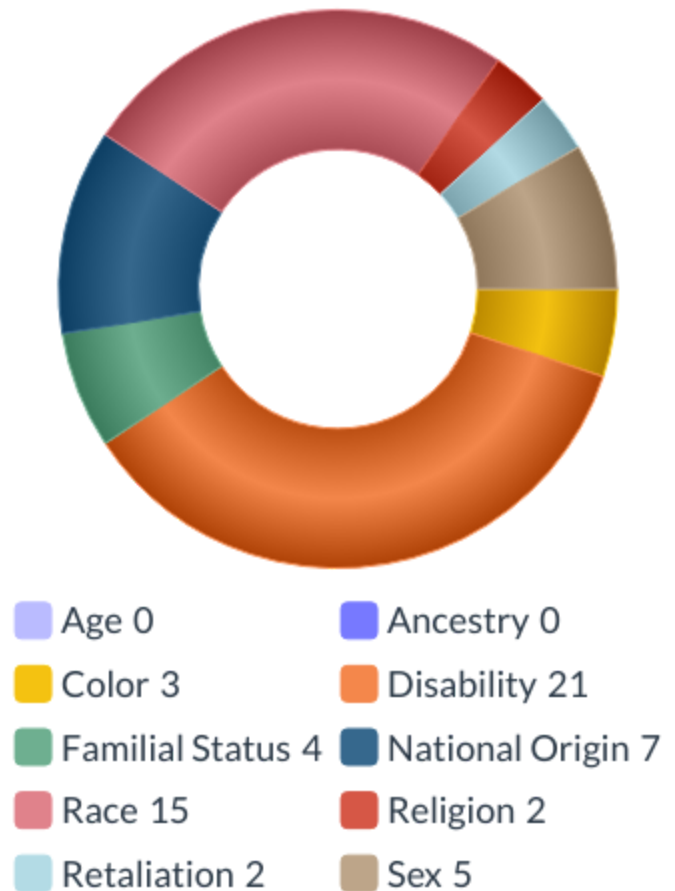
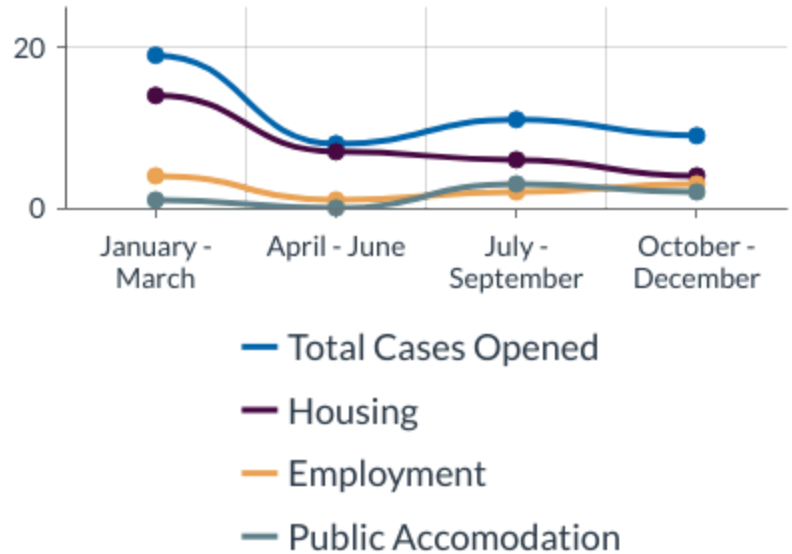
The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights includes nine commissioners who volunteer their time to hear cases of alleged discrimination. These Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council and reflect the diversity of the Lincoln community. Commission meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of the month at 4:00 p.m. at the City/County Building, City Council Chambers. Current Commissioners include:

- Dr. Emira Ibrahimasic, Assistant Professor of Practice, University of Nebraska Lincoln. (Chair)
- Dr. Shari Block, Instructor, Southeast Community College-Lincoln (Vice Chair)
- Rose Godinez, Legal and Policy Counsel, ACLU of Nebraska
- John Goldrich, Assistant Director of Counseling and Psychological Services, University of Nebraska Lincoln
- Haroon Al Hayder, School Community Coordinator, Civic Nebraska CLC
- Ryan Kelly, Supervising Attorney, Brown Immigration Law PC LLO
- Alyssa Martin, Legal Counsel for Tax and Renewable Energy, Nelnet
- Davetta Nelson, Specialized Probation Officer, Nebraska Probation, Lancaster County Nebraska
- Sarah Cohen Walker, Director of Development, Civic Nebraska

Two Commissioners, Terry Werner and Kevin Abouezk, recently resigned from their roles on the Commission. All of the Commissioner's time and dedication to the work of the Commission is greatly appreciated. For additional information on the role of our Commissioners please visit humanrights.lincoln.ne.gov.

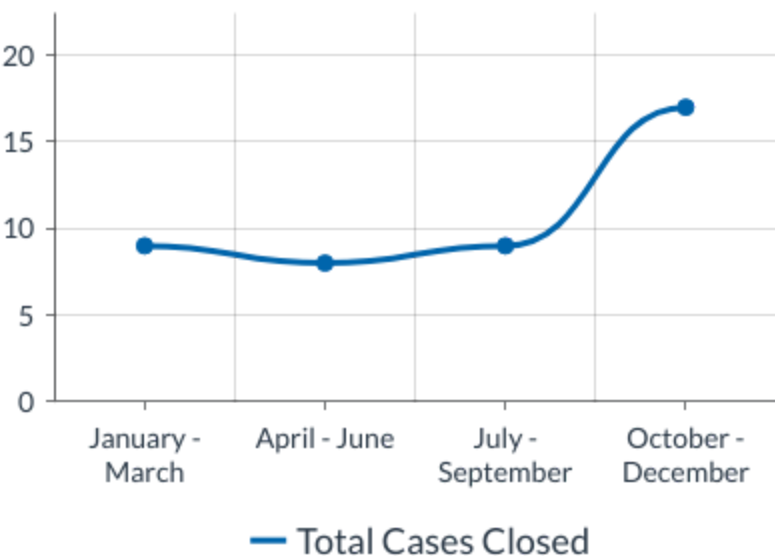
Case Statistics

In 2022, 47 new cases were filed with LCHR. Of that total, 31 cases involved housing discrimination, 10 involved employment discrimination and 6 involved discrimination related to a public accommodation.



This chart reflects the protected classifications represented in the total number of cases opened by LCHR in 2022.

LCHR closed a total of 43 cases in 2022. The average time from file date to close date was 246.5 days, including public hearings when applicable.



Of the 43 cases that were investigated and closed in 2022: 32 cases were determined by the Commissioners to have "no reasonable cause" to believe unlawful discrimination occurred. 6 cases settled before the matter was brought before the Commissioners. 2 cases settled after a finding of "cause" by the Commissioners. 2 were withdrawn or otherwise administratively closed. 1 case moved to public hearing where it was heard by a hearing officer, who found in favor of the Respondent. This determination was adopted by the Commission.



- No Reasonable Cause 32
- Pre-determination Settlement 6
- Conciliation 2
- Administrative Closure 4
- Public Hearing 1

Activity Highlights

Throughout the year, LCHR staff educate community groups, businesses, non-profit organizations, schools and governmental entities on legal rights and responsibilities. LCHR staff also contribute to and lead efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the City of Lincoln.

A few highlights from 2022:

- LCHR hosted the Annual Civil Rights Conference in April of 2022. Information and tickets for LCHR's 2023 conference can be found [here](#).
- My City Academy, lead by LCHR Outreach Team, held one eight-week session during the fall of 2022. The purpose of My City Academy is to educate New Americans about local government and encourage general civic engagement and participation. My City Academy is sponsored by the Career Ladder Project, Nebraska Appleseed, and the Asian Community and Cultural Center of Lincoln. More information can be found [here](#).
- In August, LCHR started working with the Career Ladder Connectors Program. LCHR recruited mentors for New Americans with advanced training obtained outside of the United States and facilitated professional networking within the local community.
- LCHR received the highest ranking available by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for its participation in the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) and the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP). FHIP provides financial assistance to LCHR to support 1.5 FTE and engage in housing-related outreach. FHAP is the foundational program that provides financial support for LCHR's investigations.
- LCHR Director joined the the City of Lincoln Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Leadership Team to help promote better intra-department collaboration.
- LCHR staff met to engage in long-term strategic planning, placing an emphasis on department-wide organization/document management, increased attention to outreach strategy, budget management, and data collection and dissemination. LCHR recognizes the duty under Title 11 to collect equity-related data and make data related to the state of human-rights in the City of Lincoln more readily available. In 2023, LCHR plans to expand and improve its work in this area.

Typical Case Progression

