



THE NEW YORK STATE HUMAN RIGHTS LAW PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, CREDIT, PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS, VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING, AND NON-SECTARIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, BASED ON AGE, CREED, RACE, COLOR, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, MARITAL STATUS, DISABILITY, MILITARY STATUS, ARREST RECORD, CONVICTION RECORD, FAMILIAL STATUS, AND PREDISPOSING GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS.

2006/2007 ANNUAL REPORT

NEW YORK STATE
DIVISION OF
**HUMAN
RIGHTS**

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ELIOT SPITZER, GOVERNOR
KUMIKI GIBSON, COMMISSIONER

FOREWORD

I am privileged to present to you the New York State Division of Human Rights' 2006-07 Annual Report — the first under the Spitzer Administration and during my tenure as Commissioner of the Agency.

This Report outlines the work of the Agency from April 1, 2006, through December 31, 2006, under the prior administration, and from January 1, 2007, through March 31, 2007, under my leadership. Specifically, it provides an overview of the Division's record in addressing complaints of discrimination, in prosecuting on its own initiative alleged acts of discrimination, in advancing and promoting policies that further the civil rights of New Yorkers, and in reaching out and educating the public on discrimination and the adverse effects of discrimination.

The data for 2007 evidence, in part, the Spitzer Administration's and my vision for the New York State Division of Human Rights for the future — that is, for it to serve as a model civil rights enforcement agency that works to ensure, as stated in the New York Human Rights Law, that every New Yorker has "an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life," by breaking down barriers based on race, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, military status, and other specified traits and characteristics.

I am excited and proud to have the opportunity to serve the people of New York in this effort, and to offer this report on the work of the Division in 2006 under the prior administration and on my work to date for the first quarter of 2007.

Kumiki Gibson
Commissioner

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ELIOT SPITZER, GOVERNOR
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INTRODUCTION

New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law (“Law”). This Law prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, credit, places of public accommodations, and non-sectarian educational institutions based on race, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, military status, and other protected classes. The New York State Division of Human Rights (“Division” or “Agency”) was created to enforce this important law. The mission of the Agency is to ensure that

“every individual . . . has an equal opportunity to participate fully in the economic, cultural and intellectual life of the State.”

Over the past decade (including in 2006), the Division attempted to accomplish its mission primarily by addressing individual complaints of discrimination.

Beginning in 2007, the Division adopted a more aggressive approach to fighting discrimination. It now employs a multi-faceted strategy that includes the following:

- The receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination filed by individuals;
- The vigorous prosecution of systematic forms of discriminatory practices through investigations and/or complaints initiated by the Division itself;
- The development of policies and legislation that further the civil rights of New Yorkers; and
- The creation of studies, programs, and campaigns designed to, among other things, reach and educate New Yorkers about their rights under the Law and how the Division can assist them in vindicating their rights.

This Annual Report is structured around these four pillars of this new strategy —

- (1) individual complaints,
- (2) Division-initiated investigations/complaints,
- (3) mission-driven policies and legislation, and
- (4) public awareness and education.

It begins, however, with an overview of the Law and its history.

OVERVIEW OF LAW AND THE DIVISION

I. THE LAW: THEN AND NOW

In 1945, Governor Thomas E. Dewey signed the Ives-Quinn Anti-Discrimination Bill, making New York the first state in the country to enact legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment based on race, creed, color, and national origin. In doing so, New York also became the first state to establish a permanent agency to enforce such legislation, the State Commission against Discrimination. In 1968, the Ives-Quinn Anti-Discrimination Law was renamed the Human Rights Law, and the State Commission against Discrimination was renamed the New York State Division of Human Rights.

The Law has been expanded over the years so to stay current with the changing American culture and with the needs of New Yorkers. For example, in 1974, the Law was broadened to protect people with disabilities; in 1991, the Law was amended to protect families in the area of housing; in 1997, the Law was changed to include an express provision requiring reasonable accommodations in employment for persons with disabilities; in 2002, the Law was amended to protect both religious practices and religious observances; in 2003, the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act was passed so to include sexual orientation among the protected traits/characteristics; and in 2003, the Law was extended to encompass military status.

Today, in 2007, the New York Human Rights Law stands as one of the most progressive in the country, and we are creating a Division that will be able to fully realize the Law’s mandate and potential.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE DIVISION IN 2006 AND IN 2007

The Law specifically provides that the New York State Division of Human Rights can be structured in any manner to best achieve its mission. For most of 2006, it was comprised of the Commissioner, five Deputy Commissioners (an Executive Deputy Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner for Regional Affairs, a Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs, a Deputy Commissioner for Public Information, and a Deputy Commissioner for Administration), a Chief Administrative Law Judge, a General Counsel, Directors of Regional Offices, and other employees who supported the work of the agency. It operated through its headquarters in the Bronx and through eleven offices throughout the State.

In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of its work and operations, the Division is undergoing a restructuring that will eliminate unnecessary positions, combine the work of related departments, and allocate resources according to strategic priorities. These initial changes in the Division will not necessitate any major increases in resources (either financial or human) for the 2007-08 fiscal year. Accordingly, the budget and workforce for the Division for 2007-08 will remain at its 2006-07 levels — that is, approximately \$20 million and approximately 200 employees.

THE NEW STRATEGY: FOUR PILLARS

I. INDIVIDUAL COMPLAINTS

For most of its history, including 2006, the Division focused its resources on addressing individual complaints of discrimination. The Division's work in this area has been less than exemplary in recent years, and has come under fire from the public, the Comptroller's Office, and certain members of the Legislature for what appeared to be indifference to both the substantive rights and the procedural rights of complainants, including the large backlog of cases.

Recognizing the problems caused by the backlog of cases, the immediate past Commissioner instituted measures to decrease the number of aged cases. These measures, however, were not tied to the statutory targets suggested by the New York State Legislature, did not address the issues that caused the backlog problem, and did not include an effective procedure to ensure that arguably meritorious cases were not cut off prematurely. These deficiencies are reflected in the data presented below for 2006.*

To put the data in context, it is useful to understand the process of addressing individual complaints.

A. The Complaint Process

For 2006, 100% of the investigations that were conducted by the Division were prompted by complaints filed by individuals. The Division did not make or investigate any cases of its own, despite its power to do so, and the complaint process focused more on settlement than on adjudication.

The process available to complainants in 2006 was straightforward. When an individual felt that s/he had been the victim of an illegal act of discrimination, s/he filed a complaint with one of the Division's regional offices, either in person or by telephone. If the complaint fell within the Division's jurisdiction, the regional office would assign an investigator to investigate the allegations of the complaint.

At an early stage in the investigative process, the regional office (normally through the investigator assigned to the case) would attempt to settle the complaint. If the complaint was not resolved through these discussions, the office would resume the investigation. The investigator, however, would continue to attempt to settle the case throughout the investigation process.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the regional office would determine whether "probable cause" existed to believe that an unlawful act of discrimination had occurred. Where it concluded that it had not, all proceedings in the Division would cease. (The complainant, however, could appeal the "no probable cause" determination to the New York State Supreme Court.)

If the regional office concluded that probable cause did exist, the case would proceed to the hearing process. In 2006, this process began with a pre-hearing conference, to once again attempt to settle the complaint. A hearing was scheduled only after these settlement discussions failed.

At the hearing, both the complainant and the responding party or parties, on their own or through representatives, would present evidence of their positions to the presiding Administrative Law Judge, which included witness (both lay and expert) testimony and documentary evidence. After the case had been fully presented, the Administrative Law Judge prepared and issued an order recommending to the Commissioner either a finding of unlawful discrimination or dismissal. The parties were allowed to submit objections to the recommended order before the Commissioner was called upon to render her final order.

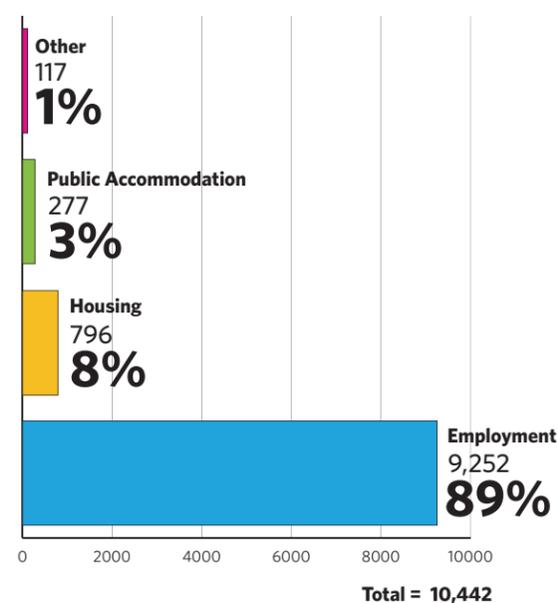
After the time period elapsed for the submission of objections, the Commissioner reviewed the recommended order and any

objections submitted. If the Commissioner found that the allegations were supported by the evidence, the Commissioner would issue her final order for the complainant, which could include the relief recommended by the Administrative Law Judge. If the Commissioner found that the allegations were not supported by the evidence, the Commissioner would dismiss the case. Any aggrieved party could appeal the Commissioner's final order to the New York State Supreme Court within sixty (60) days of its issuance.

Other than the time for appeal (which applied to the parties only, and then only in court), the Division imposed no deadlines or timetables on itself for the completion of the investigation or the adjudication of these complaints.

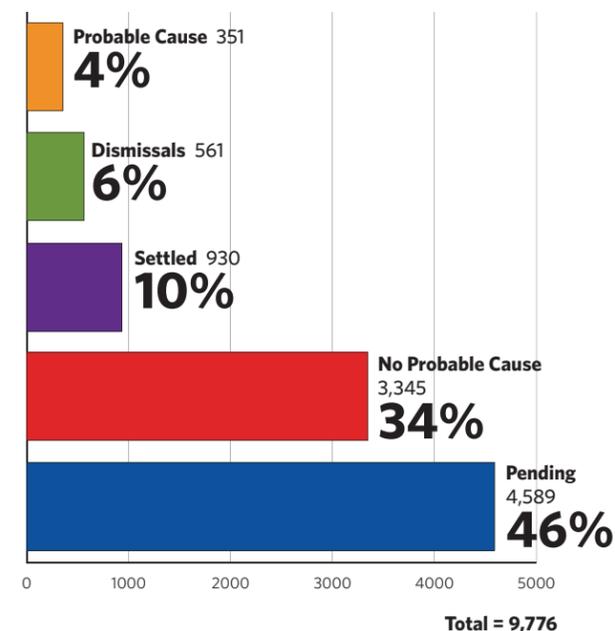
DHR I

2006
Cases Before the Division



DHR II

2006
Status of Investigations



B. Individual Complaints In 2006

In passing and enacting the New York State Human Rights Law, the lawmakers intended to create a process that would be more efficient and effective than the judicial process. Thus, they included non-binding time frames for each stage of the individual complaint process. Specifically, the Law provides that investigations should be completed within 180 days (approximately six months) from the filing of the complaint, and that those cases that warrant hearings should be heard and decided within approximately 465 days of the filing of the complaint. Simply put, the lawmakers intended the entire process to take six months for those cases not warranting a hearing, and approximately a year and three months for those cases that progressed to the hearing stage.

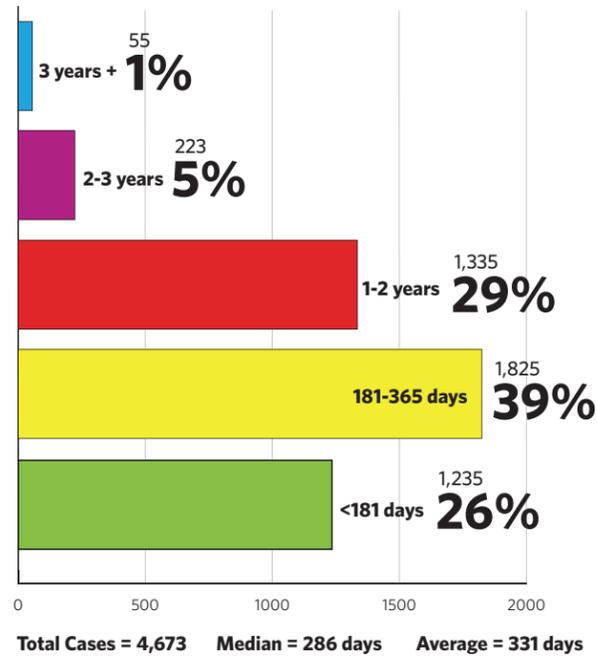
Because the Division had never adopted these statutory time frames, they did not govern the Division's work, and the work of the Division was never gauged against them. This Annual Report reports, for the first time, on the Agency's work against these timetables, and this report is not favorable.

i. The Timeliness of Investigations

In 2006, there were 10,442 cases before the Division, 9,776 of which were in some stage of investigation. See Division of Human Rights Chart ("DHR") I & DHR II. By the end of

DHR III

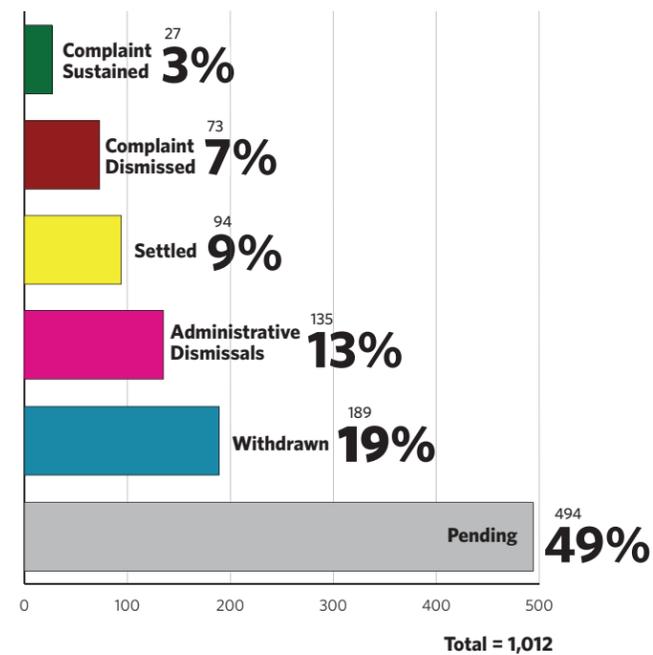
2006
Length of Investigations Completed (Non-Housing Cases)
Statute = 180 Days



the calendar year, the Division had completed investigations in 5,187 of the 9,776 cases (53% or 432 investigations per month). See DHR II. Less than a third (32%) of those cases was completed within the statutory target of 180 days. See DHR III & DHR IV. The majority of investigations (36%) took six months to a year to investigate. See *id.* 26% took one to two years to investigate, and 6% took over two years. See *id.* This means that in 2006, the average complaint took almost twice as long to investigate than the Law suggests (i.e., 180 days).

DHR V

2006
In Hearing Process

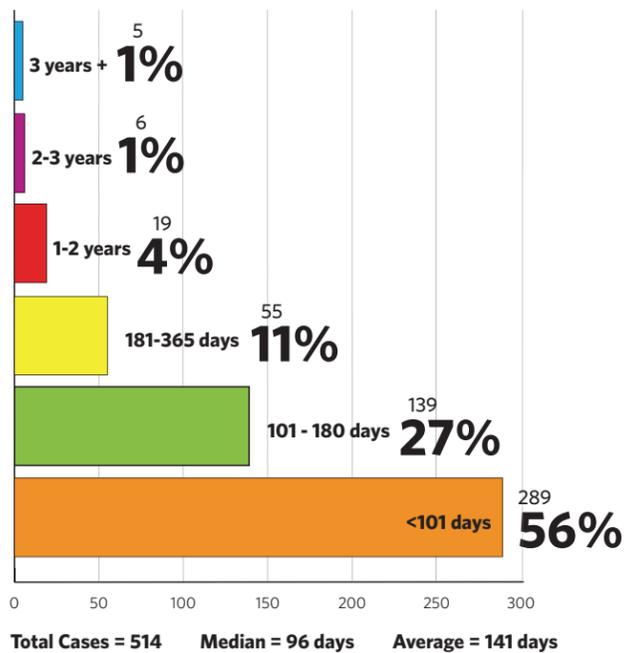


ii. The Outcomes of the Investigations

As noted above, in 2006, 5,187 complaints were investigated during the year. See DHR II. Of those 5,187 cases, 3,345 (64%) concluded with a finding of no probable cause (for respondents), and 351 (7%) concluded with a finding of probable cause (for complainants) — a ratio of almost ten to one in favor of respondents. Of the remaining conclusions, 930 (18%) were settled, and 561 (11%) were dismissed or withdrawn without benefits to the complainant. See *id.*

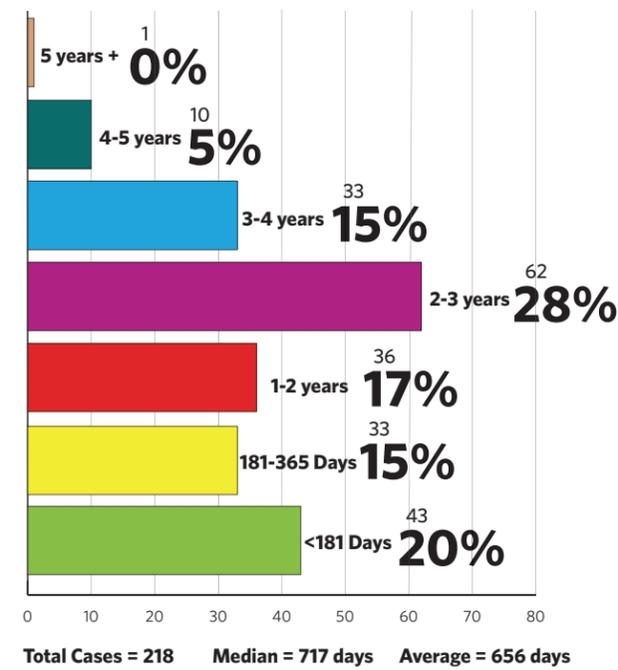
DHR IV

2006
Length of Investigations Completed (Housing Cases)
Statute = 180 Days



DHR VI

2006
Timeliness of Commissioner's Orders
Statute = 180 Days



iii. The Outcomes of the Hearing Process

By the end of 2006, 1,012 cases had been in the hearing process. See DHR V. Approximately half of those cases (518) were actually resolved during this process, 100 of which were resolved through a Commissioner's order after hearing. See *id.* Of those 100 orders, 73 were in favor of respondents, and 27 were in favor of complainants. See *id.* Of the remaining resolved cases, 189 (36%) were withdrawn by complainants, 135 (26%) were dismissed for administrative reasons (some of which could have included terms favorable to complainants), and 94 cases (18%) were settled. See *id.*

iv. The Timeliness of the Hearing Process

The Law suggests that those cases that proceed to hearing (that is, where probable cause is found) should be decided by the Commissioner within 180 days of the start of the hearing. Of the 218 orders that were issued by the Commissioner in 2006 — which include orders after hearings and approvals of certain settlements, dismissals, and withdrawals — only 43 (20%) were decided within the 180 target. See DHR VI. Thirty-three cases (15%) were decided between 181 days and 365 days, and 36 (17%) were decided between one year and

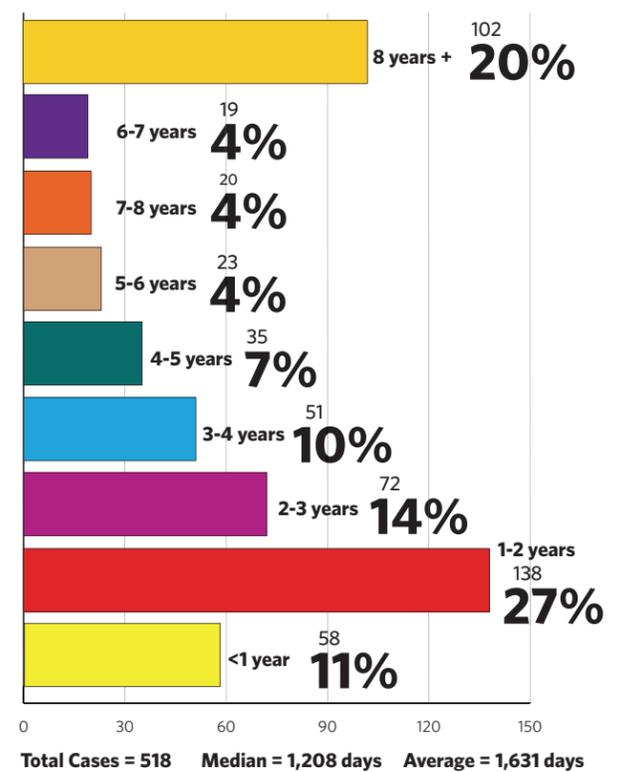
two years. See *id.* Most disturbing is the fact that it had taken over two years to issue decisions in almost half of the cases (106 cases or 49%). See *id.* This means that 80% of all of the cases that were resolved through Commissioner's orders in 2006 were untimely under the Law.

v. Outcomes and Timeliness of the Entire Process

The slowness in the process for individual complaints is best evidenced by a review of the cases that advanced to the hearing stage. The Law suggests that these cases be resolved within approximately 465 days from the filing of the complaint. In 2006, the median completion time was approximately 1,208 days (over two and a half times as long), and the average case took 1,631 days (over three and a half times as long) to resolve. See DHR VII. This was not the speedy administrative process that the New York Legislature envisioned when it enacted this great Human Rights Law.

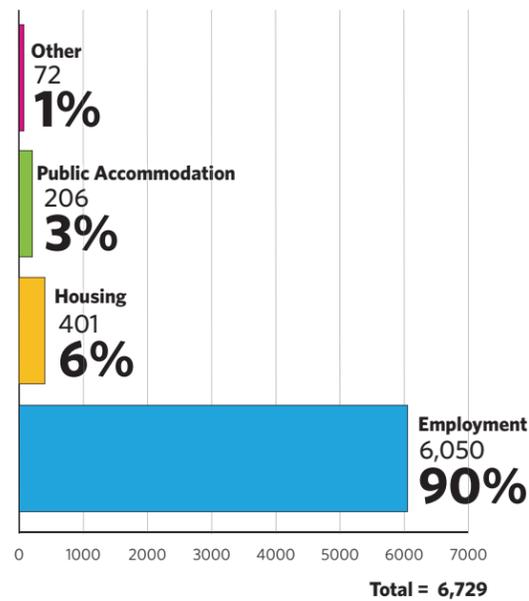
DHR VII

2006
Total Processing Time of Probable Cause Complaints
Statute = 465 Days



DHR I-A

As of March 31, 2007
Cases Before the Division



C. Individual Complaints In 2007

Committed to achieving the mission of the Law and to providing prompt justice, in January 2007, the new Commissioner made certain changes to the process and standards for individual complaints.

- First, for the first time in the Division’s history, the Commissioner adopted the statutory time frames as the Division’s standards.
- Second, the Commissioner simplified the filing process for individuals.
- Third, the Commissioner made clear that the resolution of investigations had to be governed by the probable cause standard (not some heightened standard of determination), and implemented a review process for cases that were deemed not to meet the probable cause standard.
- Fourth, the Commissioner relieved the Division’s investigators of the administrative duty of taking in complaints, so that they could focus more of their time on investigating cases and completing those investigations.

- Fifth, because the Division was being transformed into a law enforcement agency that works efficiently, it would no longer focus on achieving settlements, which slowed down the process, but would focus on efficient and effective investigation and adjudication.
- And, finally, the Commissioner made clear that each and every decision made by Division staff in connection with these complaints had to advance and further the mission of the Law and the Agency.

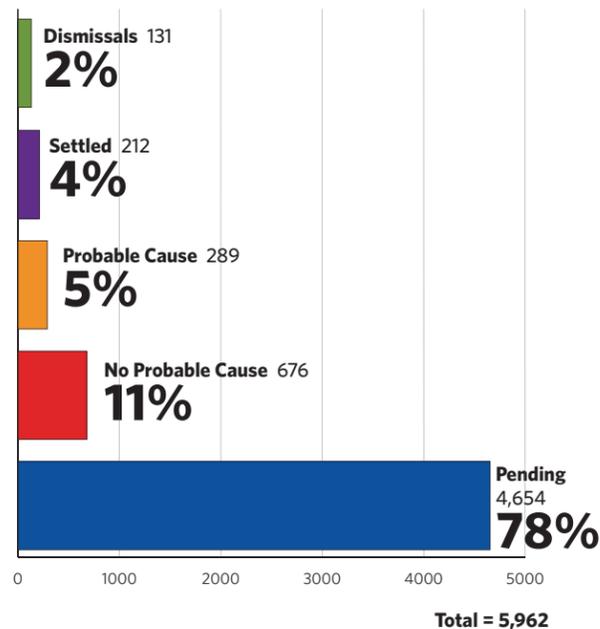
i. The Investigation Process

The data with respect to investigations for the first quarter of 2007 is mixed — presumably (and hopefully) because of the start-up time required to implement the new policies.

As of March 31, 2007, 6,729 cases were before or had been before the Division in 2007, 5,962 of which were or had been under active investigation. See DHR I-A & DHR II-A. Of those 5,962 cases, 1,308 had been resolved in some way during the investigation process, an average of approximately 436 cases per month, see DHR II-A — which compares favorably to the rate for 2006 of 432 cases per month, but only slightly, see DHR II.

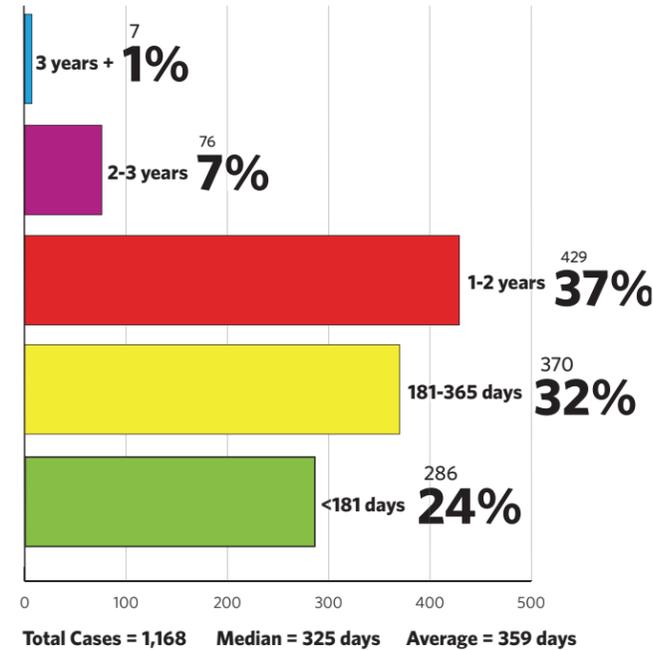
DHR II-A

As of March 31, 2007
Status of Investigations



DHR III-A

As of March 31, 2007
Length of Investigations Completed (Non-Housing Cases)
Statute = 180 Days



The complaints, however, appear to be taking more time to resolve. For the first quarter of 2007, 395 of the 1,308 cases (30%) resolved during the investigative stage were done so within 180 days, see DHR III-A & DHR IV-A — compared to 32% in 2006, see DHR III & DHR IV.

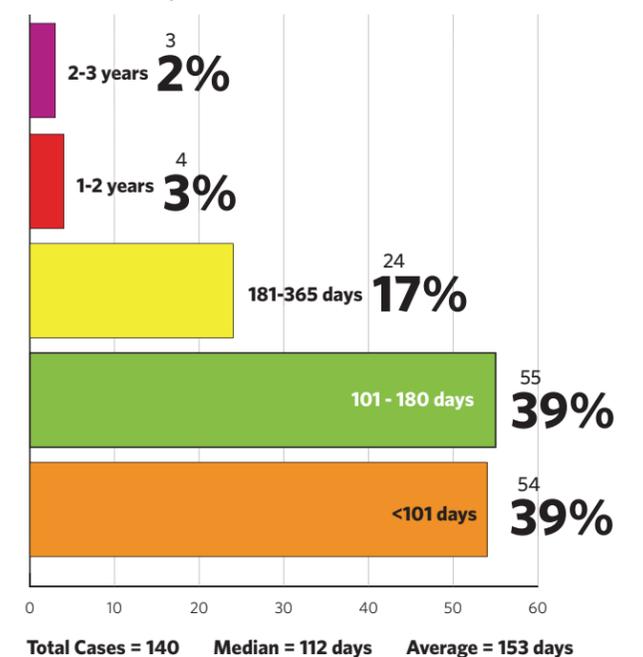
The investigation time may be explained by the fact that, during the first quarter of 2007, significantly more cases had received “probable cause” determinations across the Agency. Of the 1,308 investigations completed in the first quarter of 2007, 289 (22%) were closed through a finding of probable cause (for complainants), and 676 (52%) were closed through a finding of no probable cause (for respondents). See DHR II-A. This is a dramatic change from the numbers for 2006, which were 351 (7%) for complainants, and 3,345 for respondents (64%). See DHR II. Put another way, in 2006, approximately one in every ten investigations resulted in a finding of probable cause and was advanced to hearing. In the first quarter of 2007, more than one in every three cases was allowed to advance.

The Division believes that this shift in “probable cause”/“no probable cause” findings evidences the Division’s heightened sensitivity to complaints; but, it may have had the unintended consequence of prolonging the investigative process. The Division will continue to work to find and strike the right balance so that it is able to conduct the careful and thorough investigation that complainants deserve, but do so within the 180-day deadline.

Not surprisingly, because the Division focused less on settling cases during the investigative stage, the percentage of cases that settled during this stage in the first quarter of 2007 was lower than in 2006. In 2006, 930 (18%) of the cases being investigated settled during the investigation stage. See DHR II. Thus far in 2007, 212 (16%) of the cases resolved during the investigative stage were resolved through settlement. See DHR II-A.

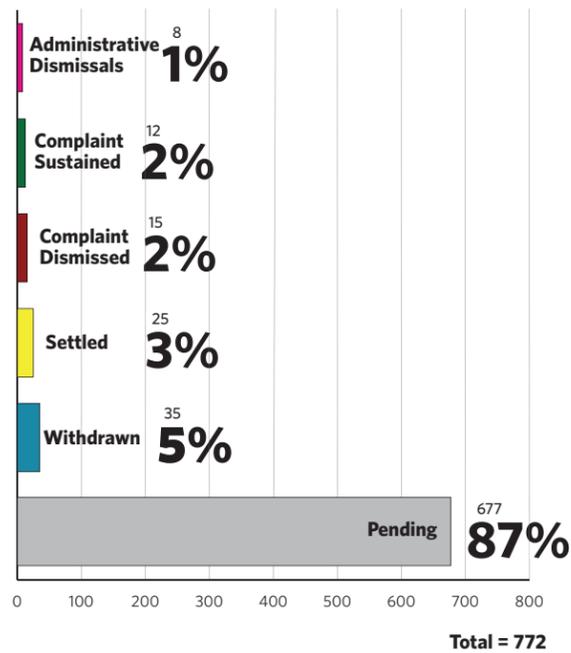
DHR IV-A

As of March 31, 2007
Length of Investigations Completed (Housing Cases)
Statute = 180 Days



DHR V-A

As of March 31, 2007
In Hearing Process



ii. The Hearing Process

The most dramatic change is seen in the cases that are resolved during the Division's hearing process. So far in 2007, 27 cases have been decided via Commissioner's orders after hearing. See DHR V-A. Of those cases, 12 (44%) were found in favor of complainants, and 15 (56%) were found in favor of respondents. See id. From complainants' point of view, this compares favorably with orders after hearing issued in 2006, where only 27 (27%) were decided in favor of complainants, and 73 (73%) were decided in favor of respondents. See DHR V.

In addition, there is a higher rate of settlement during the hearing stage thus far in 2007 than in 2006 — even though (indeed, more likely because) there has been a shift of focus from settlement to speedy adjudication. In 2006, 94 of the 518 cases (18%) resolved during the hearing stage were resolved through settlement. See DHR V. So far in 2007, 25 of the 95 cases (26%) resolved during the hearing stage were resolved through settlement. See DHR V-A. If the settlement rate continues at this pace — which the Division believes it will — the Division may experience over a 100% increase in the rate of settlement between 2006 and 2007.

The new approach has also affected the dismissals and withdrawal rates. In 2006, 135 cases (26%) were dismissed

administratively, see DHR V-A, compared to 8 (8%) thus far in 2007, see VII-A. The withdrawal rate, however, has not changed —36% for 2006 and for the first quarter of 2007. See id. The Division is reviewing the bases of these dismissals and withdrawals.

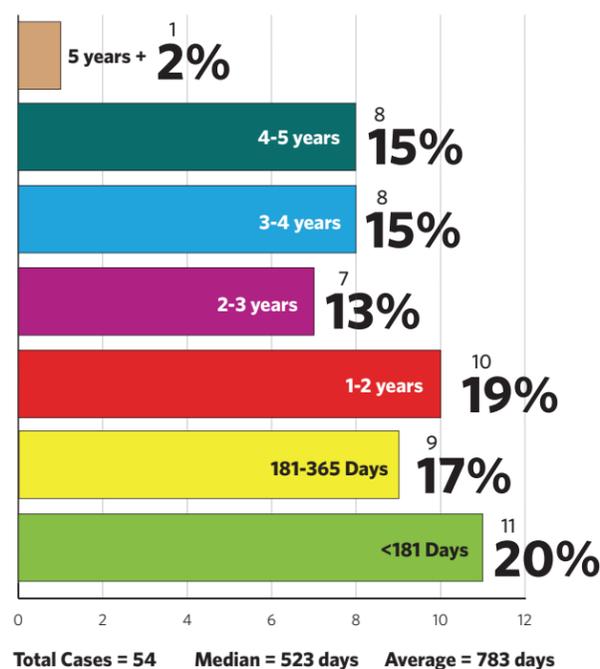
The Division has not yet experienced an increase in the number of orders being issued by the Commissioner. By the end of 2006, 218 cases that proceeded to hearing were resolved through Commissioner orders, an average of 18 a month. See DHR VI. For the first quarter of 2007, the Commissioner issued 54 orders, for an average of 18 orders per month. See DHR VI-A. However, the Commissioner has had no orders before her for more than a few weeks, and expects the number of orders to increase as the hearing process improves.

vi. The Timeliness of the Hearing Process

As noted above, the Law suggests that those cases that proceed to hearing (that is, where probable cause is found) be decided by the Commissioner within 180 days of the start of the hearing. In 2006, only 20% of the cases in hearing were decided within the 180-day target. See DHR VI.

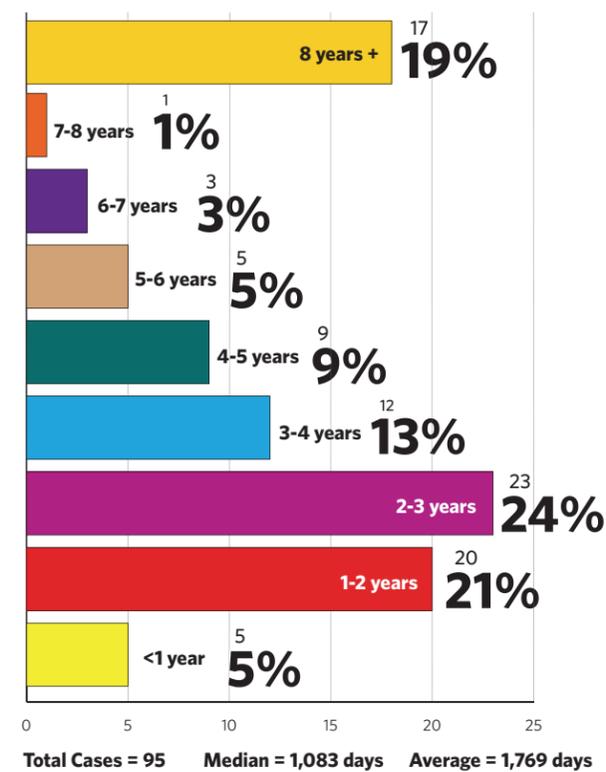
DHR VI-A

As of March 31, 2007
Timeliness of Commissioner's Orders
Statute = 180 Days



DHR VII-A

As of March 31, 2007
Total Processing Time of Probable Cause Complaints
Statute = 465 Days



That issuance rate has remained the same thus far in 2007, see DHR VI-A, which is explained, in part, by the fact that most of the cases presented to the Commissioner for orders were already outside of the 180-day time frame at the start of 2007.

vii. Timeliness of the Entire Process

Not surprisingly, the Division cannot yet assess if the total processing time is improving: What we do know, at this juncture, is that the cases that were resolved after hearing had a median resolution time of 1,083 days, compared to 1,208 days in 2006. See DHR VII & DHR VII-A. But the average resolution time for such cases was actually longer — 1,769 in 2007, compared to 1,631 in 2006. See DHR VII-A. The Division believes that this data may reflect the fact that the it is attacking the oldest cases more aggressively than in 2006. Needless to say, these will be important numbers to watch this fiscal year and to review in next year's Annual Report.

In short, the report with respect to individual complaints is mixed.

The bad news is that the Agency did not meet the statutory targets in the 2006-07 fiscal year, and that, for most of the past fiscal year, the process seemed to have favored respondents.

The good news is that beginning in January 2007, the Division committed itself to the statutory time frames in the Law, and that the cases are now being resolved in a manner that furthers the mission of the Law.

THE NEW STRATEGY: FOUR PILLARS

II. DIVISION-INITIATED INVESTIGATIONS AND/OR COMPLAINTS

As noted above, there were no Division-initiated investigations or Division-initiated complaints commenced in 2006. In fact, prior to the new leadership in 2007, there had not been a Division-initiated investigation or complaint in over a decade.

In the first quarter of 2007, the Commissioner invoked her statutory authority and initiated two investigations, on her own motion, into alleged discriminatory conduct. The first was issued in the first week of her tenure and involved the policies and procedures of the East Meadow, Long Island, school district with respect to the use of guide and service dogs by students. Of particular interest was the school district's refusal to allow one of its hearing-impaired students to bring his service dog into school with him, despite the Human Rights Law's mandate that such animals be allowed to accompany persons with such an impairment. The Division completed its investigation into this matter within weeks of the commencement of the investigation, and the matter is proceeding to a hearing.

In the second, the Commissioner initiated an investigation to look into whether tax preparation companies, including H&R Block, Jackson Hewitt, and Liberty Tax Service, were or are targeting low-income communities of color and military families for high interest tax refund loans, in violation of the Human Rights Law. That investigation is ongoing.

These Division-initiated investigations evidence the Division's renewed commitment to the vigorous enforcement of this State's great Human Rights Law.

III. POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Even though the Human Rights Law is one of the best civil rights laws in the country, the new Commissioner saw room for improvement — especially in streamlining the process and in making the law more robust.

A. Enhancing the Law

In February 2007, the Division recommended the following changes to the Law, among others:

i. The Complaint Form

Currently, the Law requires complainants to have their complaints notarized before filing. The Division believes that this requirement is an unnecessary burden on complainants, and is seeking its removal.

ii. Defaults

The Law now requires the Division to conduct a hearing on the merits before entering a default against a respondent — even where the respondent has failed to cooperate with the Division's procedures and has not answered in or appeared at the public hearing. The Division believes that it should be able to enter a default without the necessity of holding a separate hearing on the complaint. Before a hearing commences, the Division has already made a determination of probable cause, and, thus, there is an assurance that the matter is not frivolous. Indeed, the mere finding of probable cause means that the Division has concluded that there is evidence to support a finding of unlawful discrimination. Where no defense is being proffered by respondent to such a finding, the Division should be able to enter a default against the respondent without having to conduct a separate hearing, which only delays justice and expends valuable Agency resources.

iii. Filing Appeals

Currently, the Law requires the parties to file an appeal of a Division final order in the locale where the unlawful discriminatory practice took place or where the Division order requires that corrective action occur. The Division believes that it will benefit all parties and will further the mission of the Law to allow the parties to also appeal in the counties in which they reside or transact business.

iv. Civil Fines and Penalties

The Human Rights Law was enacted to protect the welfare, health, and peace of the people of the State. In order to effectuate these purposes, to deter future violations, and to vindicate the public interest, the Division concluded that it needs a system of fines and penalties to supplement the remedies presently available, which are generally equitable in nature. Accordingly, the Division is proposing a change in the Law so to allow it to impose civil fines and penalties in appropriate cases of employment, public accommodations, and other areas covered by the Law, in addition to housing (for which the Law currently allows).

v. Attorney's Fees and Expert Witness Fees

Another important change in the Law that the Division is proposing is to allow for the award of attorney and expert fees in all cases. Currently, the Law allows for such fees only in housing discrimination cases. But, the majority of cases before the Division are employment cases, which involve alleged victims who have been terminated or forced to leave their jobs because of intolerable conditions, such as pervasive sexual harassment. These complainants are in no position to pay for legal representation and/or experts. Allowing for the award of attorney and expert fees in all discrimination cases (including employment) would be consistent with the federal law and discrimination laws of many other states; would result in greater justice in those cases where discrimination is found; and would likely deter future discriminatory conduct.

B. Enhancing the Division's Rules of Practice

The new Commissioner is also reviewing the Division's regulations that effectuate the Human Rights Law to find ways to further the Law's mission, to enhance effectiveness and efficiencies, and to further streamline the complaint process. We hope to be proposing such changes by the third quarter of 2007 for public review and comment.

C. Enhancing the Division's Services to the Public

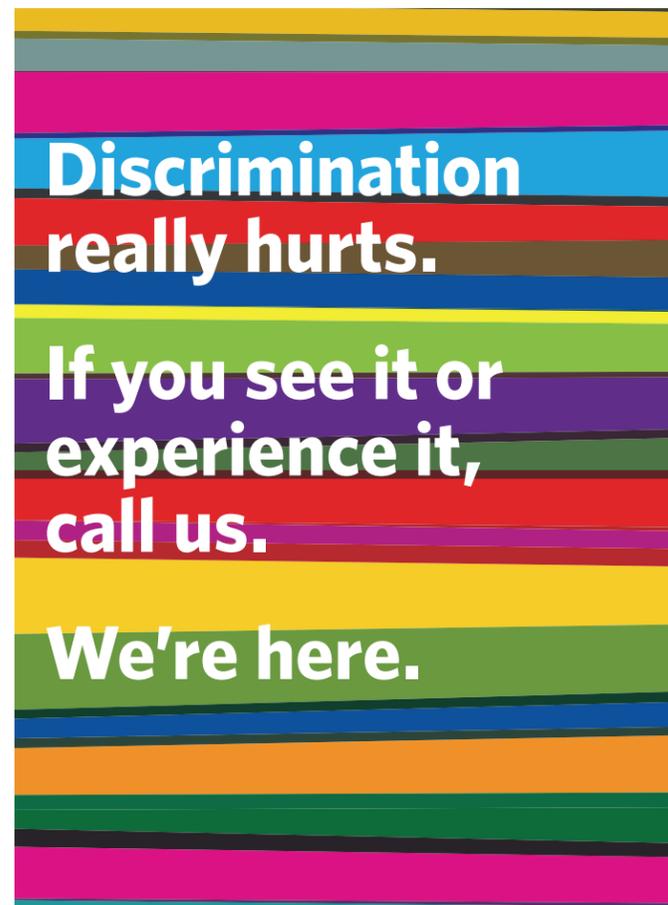
The new Commissioner is committed to ensuring that the Division operates in a way that furthers the Division's mission and her vision, which includes ensuring full and easy access to the complaint process. To this end, within weeks of her arrival, the new Commissioner simplified and standardized the complaint form, and made it available to the public via its website. She also required all regional offices to accept walk-in complaints during business hours — versus via an appointment-only process, which most regional offices were using. Finally, the Commissioner opened the Bronx office up to the public. Prior to her arrival, that office simply served as the locale for headquarters and did not accept complaints, other than in housing cases. The Commissioner hired a full-time in-take specialist, and now the Bronx office is open to all complainants for the filing of complaints.

The Division will continue to look for ways to improve its services to the public, and looks forward to reporting on its progress in this regard in next year's Annual Report.

THE NEW STRATEGY: FOUR PILLARS

IV. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Division has renewed its commitment to serve the people of New York by, among other things, ensuring that New Yorkers know about their great Law and the forum available to them at the Division. To that end, the new Commissioner created a new look and message for the Division's publicly-available materials. The new look is bold, and reflects aggressiveness and inclusiveness. The new message is that the Division "is here" — both to help victims of discrimination and to prosecute wrongdoers:



This new look and message will be incorporated across the Agency over the next several months, both in its physical space and in all of its materials.

In addition to revamping its look and message, the new Commissioner has been traveling throughout the State, meeting with legislators and political leaders, communities, constituency groups, not-for-profit organizations, and members of the legal community — all in effort to learn more about the problems facing New Yorkers in the area of civil rights and how the Division can improve to help New Yorkers address those problems.

The Division has also become aggressive in making the public aware of its existence and its work through the media, which reaches more people than state fairs, conferences, reports, and individual meetings. For example, the Agency worked hard to educate the press and the public by issuing press releases and conducting interviews on the new Commissioner's vision for the Agency and the Division-initiated investigations that were commenced during the first quarter in 2007. This effort resulted in several news stories that highlighted the Agency and its activities — all an in an attempt to let New Yorkers know that "we're here," both to enforce and to help.

CONCLUSION

I hope that the 2006-07 Annual Report provides an overview of where the Division has been and where it plans to go.

I also hope that you will visit our website — at

www.dhr.ny.state.us

— to remain abreast of our work and activities, and our progress in achieving full civil rights for all New Yorkers.

**"every individual . . .
has an equal opportunity
to participate fully in
the economic, cultural
and intellectual life of
the State"**

CALL US. WE'RE HERE.

HEADQUARTERS

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**Discrimination
really hurts.**

**If you see it
or experience it,
call us.**

We're here.

The data in this Report reflects the best information available at the time of publication, and may be refined or revised over time. Of particular note are the total number of cases, which do not include cases in litigation or bankruptcy, and the nature and number of dismissals, which, for 2006, may include resolutions favorable to complainants.