

THE BULLETIN

SOUTH CAROLINA HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION
1026 SUMTER STREET, SUITE 101, COLUMBIA, SC 29201 OR
P.O. BOX 4490, COLUMBIA, SC 29240

Fair Housing Division's Accomplishments

This fiscal year, the Fair Housing Division completed 75 case investigations. In the previous fiscal year, the Division completed 82 cases. The two years prior to that saw a completion of 47 and 49 cases, respectively. In this fiscal year, of the 75 cases completed, only 25 of them took longer than 100 days to investigate. This means that 66% of the Housing Division's cases were closed within 100 days. Nationally, only 40% of cases are completed that quickly, so SCHAC is markedly more efficient on average than most Fair Housing investigative agencies.

A Conciliation Agreement is a legally binding document, whereby all parties mutually agree to set terms, ending a SCHAC investigation. An agreement may provide monetary relief, or injunctive relief such as granting an accommodation or modification to a disabled tenant or resident in a housing development. For example, a conciliation agreement may give a tenant the right to have his service animal live with him, without paying additional rent, deposits, or fees to a landlord. The number of conciliated cases in the Fair Housing Division is up this year, with 26 total cases having been conciliated compared with 15 in the previous fiscal year. The Agency's website provides links to all public conciliation agreements successfully negotiated by our Fair Housing Division.

Fair Housing Division's Successful Connections with Local Groups

SCHAC's Fair Housing Division and the Columbia Housing Authority (CHA) are partnering with Richland County Government to complete an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH). The AFH is a legal requirement for Richland County and CHA that must be completed for each of these agencies to continue receiving federal housing and community development funding from the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). Specifically, the AFH is a study undertaken pursuant to 24 CFR Part 5.154 that includes an analysis of fair housing data, an assessment of fair housing issues and contributing factors, and an identification of fair housing priorities and goals specific to the County.

WHAT IS THE FAIR HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FHAP)?

HUD provides FHAP funding annually on a noncompetitive basis to state and local agencies that enforce fair housing laws that HUD has determined to be substantially equivalent to the federal Fair Housing Act. These agencies investigate and enforce complaints of housing discrimination that arise within their jurisdiction.

As a Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) agency for HUD, we welcome the opportunity to participate in this process. Examples of fair housing issues include regional demographics, segregation, racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty, access to opportunity, disproportionate housing need, publicly supported housing, access to persons with disabilities, and fair housing enforcement and outreach capacity.

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FIND US ON THE WEB AT WWW.SCHAC.SC.GOV



AGENCY NEWS

Who's Who?



Tracie Mefford

Tracie began with the agency this summer, and has quickly become a valuable asset to the legal team! Using her extensive knowledge from previous experience working for law firms and courts, she has adapted to the agency's processes seamlessly. Tracie has two daughters, a stepson, one grandson, and a couple of fur-babies at her home in St. Matthews.



Luis Gamarra Mendoza

Luis joined our agency this spring as a bilingual EEO investigator. Prior to this position, Luis worked at DHEC Department of Vital Records where he provided legal guidance to newly immigrated families. He has become a valuable asset to the team. Luis migrated from Lima, Peru at the age of five. He has three brothers and sisters.



Marcus Sumter

Marcus is from Hopkins. He previously worked at The State Newspaper where he gained several years' experience with accounts payable, receivables, and preparing journal entries. He is the youngest of five children and has 7 nieces and nephews.



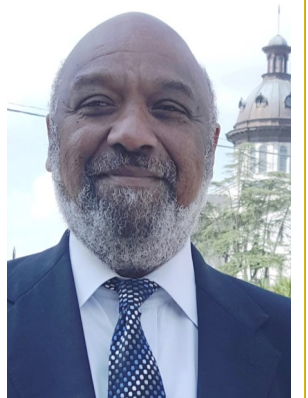
Emma Bennett Williams

Emma will start with SCHAC in October, serving as the first-ever, third attorney with the agency. Having been in private practice most recently, Emma has also served the Citadel as an ADA, Title VII, and Title IX coordinator, and therefore brings vast Human Resource experience with her to the agency. As a mother of two, she has her hands full when not honing her legal skills.

MEDIATION/ADR

Mediation or Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a voluntary process designed to facilitate case closure by bringing the parties in dispute together and reaching a mutually acceptable solution. An impartial mediator who is trained to help people discuss their differences facilitates negotiations between the two parties. It precludes the investigation process and usually results in both Respondent and Complainant coming away with a "win-win" solution to the problem.

Larry McBride has been with SCHAC for 36 years, and has worn many hats during his career with the agency. Larry has a passion for seeking resolution in matters pending before the agency, and has a special talent for getting cases resolved quickly. In an average month, he will attempt mediation in over a dozen cases, and sees nearly 75% of those settle. In his spare time, Larry can be found entertaining his beloved grandkids.



State Agencies host “No Blame, No Shame: A Conversation About Race” Panel Discussion



Pictured above left to right: Julie Smithwick, Jacqueline Blackwell, Sue Berkowitz, Brencce Pernell and Sheriff Leon Lott

On August 7th, the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission partnered with the South Carolina State Museum to host a panel discussion titled: “No Blame, No Shame: A Conversation About Race”. The discussion was held in conjunction with the State Museum’s blockbuster exhibit *RACE: Are We So Different?* The event was well-attended with nearly 100 community members in the audience. Local media coverage was excellent with all four local television stations on-hand.

Dr. KenZoe Brian J. Selassie, pictured right, Department Chair of English, Foreign Languages and Mass Communications in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at Benedict College was the Moderator of the discussion. Dr. Selassie’s research focuses on Black life dynamics in American popular culture’s mass media and the intersections of race and culture through intercultural communication. We appreciate Dr. Selassie for the energetic, articulate and considerate exuberance he brought to our discussion.



Panel members were: **Jacqueline Blackwell**- Blackwell has 34 years of experience in law enforcement as a Lieutenant, Juvenile Officer, Victim’s Advocate, and as a Criminal Investigator with Clarendon County Sheriff’s Office, Manning Police Department and South Carolina State University Police Department.

Brencce Pernell- South Carolina native who holds degrees from Duke University, Harvard University and New York University School of Law.

Julie Smithwick- Founder and Executive Director of PASOs, a community-based organization in South Carolina affiliated with the University of South Carolina and four other health-focused institutions throughout the state, and works with families from 29 of 46 counties of South Carolina.

Leon Lott- Serving in his 20th year as Sheriff of Richland County, he has over 40 years of law enforcement experience. Sheriff Lott graduated from the University of South Carolina, FBI National Academy, FBI National Executive Institute, Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Furman University’s SC Diversity Leadership Academy.

Sue Berkowitz- An attorney and director of the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center. South Carolina Appleseed fights for low income South Carolinians to overcome social, economic and legal injustice. Sue has focused her practice in the areas of health, welfare, hunger and consumer issues.

SOUTH CAROLINA HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



Commissioner
Raymond Buxton, II

Si usted piensa que ha sido discriminado en la vivienda o en el empleo, debe ponerse en contacto con la Comisión de Asuntos Humanos. La Comisión investigará su queja y si hay una violación de la ley, la Comisión puede ayudarle a conseguir soluciones legales a los que usted tiene derecho. Si es necesario, la Comisión puede llevar casos de discriminación a una audiencia o a la corte. No importa su estado legal, la Comisión lo ayuda.

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Mission Statement

Our mission is to eliminate and prevent unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations and promote harmony and betterment in the lives of South Carolina’s residents.

Vision Statement

The South Carolina Human Affairs Commission's Vision is to be well known with a positive image and a mission that is understood and accepted by the public. SCHAC is a fully resourced, customer-friendly agency with a diverse, well-trained and efficient team working together effectively in a safe and supportive work environment in fulfillment of the Agency's mission.

Inclusion Works

An Employer Summit on Hiring Individuals
with Disabilities in South Carolina



Save the Date

October 12, 2016

11:45 AM – 1:45 PM



803.779.5121
800.681.6805
TTY 803.779.0949



This is a **FREE Employer Summit** on hiring individuals with disabilities. Join us for two hours packed with information on the benefits of hiring inclusively.
Lunch will be provided.

**Space is limited. To reserve your space today go to:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/26645483358>**

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