



The Advocate

Update on COVID-19 and Racial Challenges

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Shambra Mulder, Ph.D.

Office of the Ombudsman and Administrative Review



The staff within the Office of Ombudsman and Administrative Review (OOAR) has been amazing! You have all risen to the challenge and adapted well during these uncertain times. The COVID-19 pandemic that required so many of us to work from home starting in March, 2020, exposed several administrative changes needed to ensure Kentucky's citizens continued to receive our office's responsive services.

Concurrently, widespread re-emerging racial concerns and protests prompted the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) to create a series of discussions and activities around the topics of race, racism, bias, and equity. The CHFS Executive Team held a training session to discuss ways to provide Cabinet services in a more equitable manner. CHFS Secretary Eric Friedlander sponsored a "Lunch & Learn" event for all staff about racial trauma on July 9, 2020. (I encourage all CHFS staff who were able to participate to provide feedback and ideas at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LS3T9JB>).

The OOAR staff had a follow-up training and discussion about race and equity on July 27, 2020 on MS Teams. A meeting summary and other related accomplishments will be discussed in next month's columns. I look forward to us getting together and learning how to better deal with these issues as we serve the people of Kentucky together.

Statewide Announcements:

Jason Glass is the new Kentucky Commissioner of Education. Read more here: <https://wfpl.org/kentucky-board-of-education-names-jason-glass-to-lead-the-states-public-schools/amp/>.

Gov. Beshear asks private and public schools on July 27, 2020 not to open to in-person classes until at least the 3rd week in August.

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Words of the Month

Equitable — (adjective) fair and reasonable; treating everyone in an equal way. Word origin: mid-16th century from French *équitable*, from *équité*. (Source: [Oxford Learner's Dictionary](#)).

Equitable Rule

A rule that is issued by a court of equity that is just and fair. (Source: [Black's Law Dictionary](#)).

Employee spotlight:



Lee Ann West

Lee Ann West joined the Ombudsman's Complaint Review Branch as a Citizen Assistance Specialist 15 years ago, after serving as an eligibility worker in Harrodsburg for 5 years. She is a graduate of Sullivan University. "Ms. West always goes above and beyond for family, friends, and the citizens of Kentucky," her supervisor Sherry Carnahan said. During the COVID crisis, she has worked tirelessly to manage her caseload and assist so many others.

Lee Ann volunteered with Black Achievers and Leaders in the Making, and also raised her cousin, now enrolled at EKU.

Division Report: Sherry L. Carnahan, CRB Manager

The Ombudsman's Complaint Review Branch (CRB) consists of 13 Citizen Assistance Specialists who cover Protection and Permanency (6), Family Support (5), and Child Support (2). There is also an Executive Assistant who works with Family Support, and two Administrative Specialist III.

CRB receives about 40,000 contacts per year through CHFS Listens based in our area, Constituent Services, telephone calls, mail, and walk-in submittals. We review citizen complaints involving CHFS programs, such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, KTAP, Child Support, Protection and Permanency, Behavioral Health, and Public Health, and work to resolve them. We also provide information to individuals who need food, utilities, or rent assistance.

Since the [KYCOVID19.ky.gov](https://www.ky.gov/covid19) web portal was launched, CRB has also received 19,803 requests for information and assistance. CRB also reports trends and patterns to Cabinet leadership.

In Memoriam — Marcel Herron



July 31, 1963—April 24, 2019

Your life was one of kindly deeds,
A helping hand for other's needs,
Sincere and true in heart and mind,
Beautiful memories left behind.

SUBMISSIONS INVITED —

This is your newsletter, so let's make it an outstanding record of who we are and what we do. You can email something of interest directly to:

carolyn.vose@ky.gov, with an email subject line — **"Month, 2020 Newsletter submission."**

Keep In Mind:

Turn in the self-assessment if you are coming into a state office to work. Turn these in weekly to your manager.

What have you done to support yourself, your family and colleagues while working remotely?

Office of the Ombudsman and Administrative Review

275 East Main Street, 2E-0
Frankfort, KY 40621

Phone: 502-564-5497

Fax: 555-555-5555

E-mail: CHFSlistens@ky.gov



A bi-weekly podcast was announced by Secretary Friedlander celebrating frontline workers, Cabinet leaders, and beneficiaries of CHFS programs. It also covers health, happiness, safety and resilience. Julianne Hatton will contact Cabinet leadership for ideas, or you may submit your own ideas to: chfs.community@ky.gov.

Why Advocate?

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax

