

Freedom of Information Commission

At a Glance

COLLEEN M. MURPHY, *Executive Director/General Counsel*
Mary E. Schwind, *Managing Director/Associate General Counsel*
Thomas A. Hennick, *Public Education Officer*
Established – 1975
Statutory authority – CGS Section 1-200 et. Seq.
Central office – 18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106
Number of employees – 15
Recurring operating expenses – \$1,792,690
Organizational structure – Commission

Mission

To ensure citizen access to the records and meetings of all public agencies in Connecticut.

Statutory Responsibility

To ensure that all public agencies comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Public Service

The Commission holds hearings and renders decisions on citizen complaints alleging denial of access under the FOIA. It also conducts educational programs and prepares literature for public officials and the general public.

Improvements/Achievements 2011-12

The Commission continued its efforts to efficiently tackle its heavy volume of contested cases, placing emphasis on its ombudsman program as it had done the previous year. In 2011, staff resolved 486, or 68%, of the 719 cases, without a hearing. The remaining 233, or 32%, either went to a hearing.

Nonetheless, the continuing heavy proliferation of formal complaints makes accomplishing such efficiencies a formidable task. The Commission now averages close to 800 formal complaints a year, with 807 in calendar year 2008, 792 in 2009, 806 in 2010 and 719 in 2011. Prior to 2006, the highest number of complaints ever received by the Commission was 676 in 2000.

In other matters of interest:

- The Commission, with the support of the Connecticut Foundation for Open Government, unveiled its new educational video in 2012. The video offers insight into the rich history of Freedom of Information in Connecticut as well as examples of the need for open and accessible government. The video will be shared with citizens and public officials throughout the state.
- The Commission, again with the support of the Connecticut Foundation for Open Government, continued to craft its community outreach program aimed at the state's minority communities. A pilot program is underway targeting Spanish-speaking citizens. The program features Spanish-language videos and literature and is being distributed statewide.
- The Commission has provided an average of 82 speakers a year at a variety of venues for the past 5 years. A total of 86 speaking programs were offered in 2011. Between 90 and 95 have been scheduled for 2012.

Reducing Waste

The Commission is committed to regular reviews of its current operating procedures aimed at reducing waste and increasing efficiency.

Strategic Planning

- Hear and resolve cases in a timely fashion;
- Settle contested cases informally through ombudsman program;
- Defend the Commission through staff counsel in court appeals;
- Conduct workshops, provide speakers, publish Commission reports and other literature;
- Develop public policy positions with regard to issues of information accessibility, especially as they relate to such matters as emerging information technologies;
- Render declaratory rulings of general applicability under the FOIA;
- Expand and broaden community outreach program and
- Refine and expand training program for advisory board members and agency liaisons.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Commission is committed to equal employment opportunities for all.