

Models of a Local Human Rights Commission

Hamilton College Levitt Center for Public Affairs
College-Community Partnership for Racial Justice

by Cole Kuczek, Hamilton '23

Model 1: A Human Rights Commission focused on outreach, education, and public hearings. Minimal complaint investigation; referral of complaints to the State Division of Human Rights.

Model 2: A Human Rights Commission with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State Division of Human Rights. Complaint intake and investigation guided by the terms of the MOU. Also includes education and outreach and may allow for enforcement of state human rights law.

Model 3: A Human Rights Commission operating under and with the power to enforce a municipal human rights law, with powers similar to the State Division of Human Rights.

Model 4: Independently set up commission.

To set up a HRC through the municipality, enabling legislation must be passed at the local level, as authorized by **Article 12-D of NYS Municipal Law.**

I. Preface

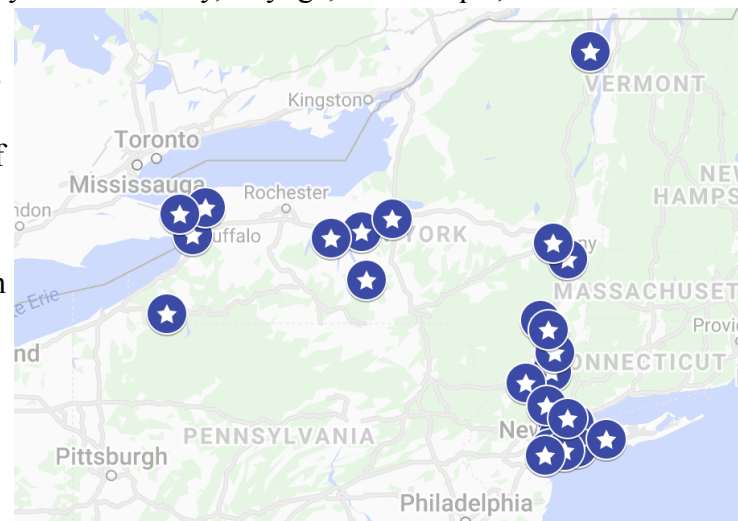
The New York State Human Rights Law prohibits discrimination against individuals in housing, employment, credit, and access to public places based on characteristics including: “age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, predisposing genetic characteristics, familial status, or marital status.” The law ensures that all individuals have the opportunity to gain employment without discrimination. The entire law can be accessed [here](#).¹

Discrimination complaints can be filed with the New York State Division of Human Rights for investigation. The state will then investigate these complaints, make a finding, and an Administrative Law Judge will decide whether to award compensatory damages. For more information (See section VI: Process, below).

¹ “2015 New York Laws :: EXC - Executive :: Article 15 - (Executive) Human Rights Law :: 296 - UNLAWFUL Discriminatory Practices.” Justia Law. Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://law.justia.com/codes/new-york/2015/exc/article-15/296>.

Additionally, under Article 12-D of NYS General Municipal Law, any local government has the ability to create a Human Rights Commission (HRC). According to this law, the governing board of a city, town, county may create a Commission by resolution, determine its composition, structure and level of funding.² The law gives HRCs responsibility to “foster mutual respect and understanding” among all groups in the community, ease tensions, and conduct outreach and education for the general welfare of the community.³ HRC’s established according to Models 2 above, also process discrimination complaints and forward them to the State Division of Human Rights. HRCs usually employ an executive director or a commissioner and an assistant, but rarely attorneys.

There were 30 commissions in New York State in the 1990s. **There are currently 22 active Human Rights Commissions**, at both county and city levels: Albany, Cayuga, Chautauqua, Clinton, Dutchess, Erie, Niagara, Ontario, Sullivan, Tompkins, Woodstock, Nassau, Onondaga-Syracuse, Orange, Rockland, Schenectady, Suffolk, Ulster, Westchester, NYC, Buffalo, and Auburn. The map of these commissions is shown to the right.⁴



Utica had a Commission on Human Relations, which was disbanded in 1996. The purpose of this commission was to hear “complaints regarding violations of the State Human Rights Law and prepare formal complaints, and provide education to the public promoting awareness of the New York State Human Rights Law.”⁵

Agencies that currently facilitate human rights in the Utica area are the Oneida County Employment Office and the Mohawk Valley Center for Refugees (“the Center”), which settles and supports refugees.⁶ The City of Utica also has an Access and Inclusion Committee. The Committee works with the Center, the MV Latino Association, and the NAACP⁷ to “encourage and foster participation among all people within the City of Utica [...] developing creative solutions and tracking progress to ensure access to opportunities [...] and to] help the City to better understand the needs” of the community.⁸

² “2015 New York Laws GMU - General Municipal Article 12-D - (General Municipal) COMMISSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS.” Justia. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://law.justia.com/codes/new-york/2015/gmu/article-12-d/>.

³ HRCs also have the power to conduct studies of human relationships in the community, inquire into incidents of tension and conflict in the community, to report complaints to the division of human rights under Article 15 of the NYS Executive Law, and to receive, accept, and use public grants under Article 12-D of the NY Municipal Law.

⁴ “Division of Human Rights.” Local Human Rights Commissions | New York State Division of Human Rights. Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://dhr.ny.gov/humanrightscommissions>.

⁵ “State and Local Agency.” Civil Rights Directory. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/crd/stateloc/ny.htm>.

⁶ “Many Cultures. One Community.” The Center. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.thecenterutica.org/>.

⁷ Mason, Greg. “Should Utica Revive Its Human Rights Commission?”

⁸ “Access and Inclusion Committee.” City of Utica. Accessed July 15, 2021.

<http://www.cityofutica.com/government/mayors-office/access-and-inclusion-committee/index>.

Stakeholders in the setting up of a HRC include: religious organizations, immigrants, refugees, undocumented individuals, minority racial and ethnic groups, veterans and those physically or mentally challenged.

II. Mission Statement & Aspects of Discrimination

Most HRCs publish a mission statement, declaring its values, purpose, and goals. Most HRCs also define the scope of discrimination they deal with, which usually aligns with the state's definition of discrimination. Below are examples of mission statements from HRCs across New York State:

“To foster mutual respect and enhance understanding among all racial, religious and ethnic groups in Schenectady County, and to assist individuals in securing their legal rights”⁹

“Strives to eliminate prejudice, intolerance, bigotry and discrimination; to encourage equality of treatment and prevent discrimination against persons based upon race, ethnic background, cultural background, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, nationality and age; and to assure respect for the civil liberties of all citizens”¹⁰

“To encourage and ensure that every individual has an equal opportunity to participate in the economic, cultural, and intellectual life of the community regardless of disability, creed, race, gender, age, or national origin”¹¹

“Give priority to addressing human rights violations, both acute and chronic, particularly those that put life in imminent peril. Make every effort to foster mutual respect and understanding among ethnic, cultural, religious and nationality groups. Initiate and maintain strategic alliances with local groups to build relationships with allied agencies whose work complements and supports our mission. Be committed to offering information that can reduce and/or eradicate tension and conflict among/between various groups in our community”¹²

“The mission of the Human Rights Commission exists to foster respect for the rights of all people and to explore opportunities for improving relations among all people of Ulster County”¹³

⁹ “Human Rights Commission.” Schenectady County. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.schenectadycounty.com/human-rights>.

¹⁰ “Commission on Citizens' Rights and Community Relations.” City of Buffalo. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.buffalony.gov/341/Commission-on-Citizens-Rights-Comm-Relat>.

¹¹ “Human Rights Commission.” City of Auburn . Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.auburnny.gov/human-rights-commission>.

¹² “Human Rights Commission.” Rockland County. Accessed July 13, 2021. <http://rocklandgov.com/departments/human-rights/>.

¹³ “Human Rights Commission.” Ulster County. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://ulstercountyny.gov/human-rights-commission>.

III. Local Enabling Law

According to Article 12-D of NYS General Municipal Law, “The governing board of any county, city, village or town may by resolution create a commission on human rights. The governing board shall determine the number of member of such commission, the terms of the members, the manner of appointment of the members, the selection of a chairperson and the compensation, if any, to be paid to them.”¹⁴ A HRC can be created by any municipality, as outlined in State municipal law.

Most HRCs are set up through a resolution (local ordinance or enabling legislation). Enabling legislation is passed by the municipal government and details office staff, powers and duties, composition of the commission, and responsibilities.

The enabling legislation **sets up the human rights commission and lays out the roles and duties for the commission; this legislation is not a municipal human rights law.** (A municipal human rights law is parallel to state anti-discrimination law and may add additional protections. A local human right law entails employment of an enforcement officer, usually an administrative law judge.)

Below are examples of enabling legislation for HRCs across the state.

The [Ulster County](#) Human Rights Code outlines sections of the duties of the commissioner, the membership of the commission, and the authority of the commission.¹⁵

[Tompkins County](#)¹⁶

[City of Buffalo](#)¹⁷

[Nassau County](#)¹⁸

[Suffolk County](#)¹⁹

IV. Structure of the commission

Most HRCs have the same basic structure, involving a Chair and Vice-Chair, one or more support staff, and volunteer commissioners. Trained and supervised college students can perform

¹⁴ “2015 New York Laws GMU - General Municipal Article 12-D - (General Municipal) COMMISSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS.” Justia. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://law.justia.com/codes/new-york/2015/gmu/article-12-d/>.

¹⁵ “Article XXX Commission of Human Rights.” Ulster County, NY Code. Accessed August 4, 2021. <https://ecode360.com/10624794>.

¹⁶ “Tompkins County, NY: Article 26 Office of Human Rights/Human Rights Commission.” Tompkins County, NY Code. Accessed August 4, 2021. <https://ecode360.com/32006988>.

¹⁷ “Article 18 Boards and Commissions.” City of Buffalo, NY Code. Accessed August 4, 2021. <https://ecode360.com/13553605>.

¹⁸ “HRC Rules of Procedures Nassau County.” HRC Rules of Procedures | Nassau County, NY - Official Website. Accessed August 4, 2021. <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/4908/HRC-Rules-of-Procedures>.

¹⁹ “Suffolk County, NY: Human Rights Commission.” Suffolk County, NY Code. Accessed August 4, 2021. <https://ecode360.com/14942640>.

most of the functions of HRC staff. The number, type and funding of support staff varies. Many HRCs also have their own bylaws, which would need to be written once a HRC is implemented.

- The Syracuse/Onondaga County Human Rights Commission is led by a chair, and features up to 24 volunteer commissioners, 18 of whom are appointed by the County Executive—6 are from legislator recommendations, and 6 appointed by the Mayor of Syracuse.²⁰ Montanette Murphy, the Director of Human Rights, oversees the commission. In Syracuse/Onondaga, the HRC is a division of their Office of Diversity and Inclusion. **There are three related agencies in Syracuse/Onondaga County:** The Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the Syracuse/Onondaga Human Rights Commission, and the Justice Center Oversight Committee. This Committee reviews incidents in the jails and complaints from the inmates, and reports these back to the sheriff.²¹ Incidents include assault, sexual offense, injuries, suicide, and others. All commissioners are volunteers and there is a small support staff.
- By way of contrast, the Town of Woodstock has 7 volunteer commissioners, including a Vice-Chair and Chair.²²
- In Tompkins County, individuals apply to be one of 15 commissioners, with three-year terms. The County Legislature selects and appoints the commissioners.²³
- In Buffalo, there are 10 commissioners and one chairperson, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Common Council. There is a Chair and Vice-Chair, who serve one year terms.²⁴
- Suffolk County’s HRC has 15 members, including a Chair and Vice-Chair, appointed by the County Executive and approved by the County Legislature.²⁵ (Most HRC ordinances specify that the makeup of HRCs should be representative of the local population)
- The Schenectady County HRC also has a Jail Oversight Committee, which works with the correctional facility to ensure that inmates are being treated with dignity and civil rights are being upheld.²⁶ Schenectady also has an LGBT committee.

²⁰ “Onondaga County/Syracuse Commission on Human Rights.” Commission on Human Rights. Accessed July 13, 2021. <http://www.ongov.net/humanrights/>.

²¹ “A Local Law Creating An Onondaga County Justice Center Oversight Committee.” Onondaga Government, 2015. <http://www.ongov.net/humanrights/documents/2015LocalLawsDandEEstablishingJCOCandHRC.pdf>.

²² “Human Rights Commission (HRC).” Town Of Woodstock: Boards & Committees: Human Rights Commission (HRC) [Digital Towpath]. Accessed July 14, 2021. <https://townwoodstock.digitaltowpath.org:10111/content/Boards/View/15>.

²³ “Human Rights Commission Advisory Board.” Tompkins County NY. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www2.tompkinscountyny.gov/humanrights/commission#>.

²⁴ “Commission on Citizens’ Rights and Community Relations.” City of Buffalo. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.buffalony.gov/341/Commission-on-Citizens-Rights-Comm-Relat>.

²⁵ “Suffolk County Human Rights Commission.” Suffolk County NY. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Human-Rights-Commission>.

²⁶ “Human Rights Commission.” Schenectady County. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.schenectadycounty.com/human-rights>.

- Nassau County HRC has a Job Development Center and multicultural and community relations programs to promote unity and cooperation.²⁷

Three potential models:

Structure Option 1: Small-staff model. The commission has 10-12 commissioners. There is a Chair of the HRC, but no Executive Director. This commission is completely run by volunteers.

Structure Option 2: Medium-staff model (eg, Syracuse-Onondaga HRC). 20-30 commissioners. The commissioners are all voluntary and unpaid. There is also a chair and vice-chair. There is also an executive director.

Structure Option 3: Full-staff model. The HRC has 18-24 commissioners, with a chair and vice-chair. The HRC also has an executive director, secretary, assistants and administrative support, and investigators. This HRC may hire or contract with an attorney to advise petitioners.

V. Memorandum of Understanding

A HRC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is an agreement that the Commission enters in with the State, that gives the local commission powers to operate in a similar way to the State Division.

For example, the Tompkins County MOU (up until 2008), gave “the county office the authority to investigate complaints, and without it they could only help complainants submit their reports of discrimination to the state division.”²⁸

A MOU is necessary for a HRC that does not operate under a municipal human rights law to have investigatory authority. It gives the local HRC powers to take in complaint forms and investigate the alleged case.

Ulster County HRC also has a MOU with the state division, which allows the commission to conduct investigations and intake if necessary. The official MOU document can be accessed [here](#).²⁹ The form specifies the responsibilities of the commission, including required training of volunteers and employees of the commission, intake responsibility to process complaints through

²⁷ “Services Guide.” Services Guide | Nassau County, NY - Official Website. Accessed July 14, 2021. <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/421/Services-Guide>.

²⁸ Cone, Jaime. “A Close Look at the Office of Human Rights.” Ithaca Times, December 7, 2016. https://www.ithaca.com/news/ithaca/a-close-look-at-the-office-of-human-rights/article_c285fdd2-ac1b-11e6-9441-976661cdd837.html.

²⁹ “MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ULSTER COUNTY.” Ulster County Legislature. Accessed July 14, 2021. <https://legislature.ulstercountyny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/MOU.pdf>.

the HRC, keeping files and records, and upholding confidentiality.³⁰ This document is signed by the HRC commissioner, the state commissioner, and the chairman of the county legislature.

The New York City HRC has numerous MOUs with multiple divisions. The MOUs are listed on their website [here](#).³¹ For example, in 2017 the HRC had a MOU with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for a Cultural Diversity Campaign. In 2016, the Commission agreed to a MOU with the Department of Housing Preservation for fair housing.

A MOU would be necessary for the HRC to have investigatory, enforcement and other powers under the state human rights law. This is the main way commissions are allowed to conduct intake and investigations.

VI. Process

The process of handling discrimination complaints varies depending on whether or not the commission has a municipal human rights law, or if the commission has a MOU with the New York State Human Rights Division. If the HRC operates under a municipal human rights law or if the complaint is being processed by the State Division of Human Rights, the HRC can proceed with intake of the petitioner and investigate **and enforce. It should be noted that enforcement of anti-discrimination laws at the local level can be done pursuant to a municipal human rights law or a MOU that outlines local enforcement of state laws.**

Because there are only a few examples of municipalities that have a human rights law, most complaints are handled by the State in areas without a HRC MOU. An example of the process under a local human rights law is from New York City's Human Rights Commission that can be found [here](#).³² For places like New York City that have a municipal human rights law on the books, the commission can conduct intake, investigation, and enforcement in a way similar to the State Division. This is the normal process for an area with a municipal human rights law:

Intake → Filing of the complaint → Investigation → several options (ex: mediation) → Determination ruling of probable/no probable cause → decision goes to an Administrative Law Judge → potential for appeal.³³

For New York City's HRC which operates under municipal law the intake phase begins with an interview to gather information and evidence, and then initiate a complaint. The next phase, after

³⁰ Responsibilities of the state division include allowing HRC access to state publications and materials, training for HRC officers, forms, and identification of the HRC on the state website.

³¹ "Memoranda of Understanding." NYC Government. Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/about/memoranda-of-understanding.page>.

³² "Complaint Process - Flowchart." NYC Government. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/complaint-process-flowchart.page>.

³³ "Complaint Process - Flowchart." NYC Government. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/complaint-process-flowchart.page>.

the complaint is filed, is investigation. The complaint will be sent to the respondent who will be given a fixed period of time to reply. Next is a mediation phase, the investigator, and the chair/executive director of the HRC, will meet informally with both the parties to see if a settlement can be reached without further proceedings. If this is not achievable, the Chair of the HRC, will determine whether there is Probable Cause that a violation of State and/or local law has occurred. If probable cause is determined, the case will be tried for compensatory damages to the complainant, in front of an Administrative Law Judge. The Judge will rule, and file a report. The last stage is the appeal, where either party can petition for review by the State Supreme Court.³⁴

Westchester County also has a municipal human rights law. In March 2000, the Board of Legislators passed this law, making it “unlawful to commit discriminatory acts in employment, housing, public accommodation and credit against individuals because of their group identity based on their race, color, religion, ethnicity, creed, age, national origin, alienage or citizenship status, familial status, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.”³⁵ Additionally, in 2005, this law became the first and only human rights law in NY to “prohibit discrimination in both employment and housing against victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and stalking.”³⁶ The entire law can be found [here](#).³⁷ This law is another example of a HRC that can operate under a municipal human rights law.

Suffolk County’s HRC which has a MOU with the state, but not a local human rights law, starts with intake, where the petitioner will be consulted about the complaint. Then, the HRC will decide if the case is within its jurisdiction. If it is, the HRC will draft a complaint. The respondent answers the complaint, and then an investigation takes place. After that, there will be a ruling on probable cause (evident or not evident), and the case is then tried by a local Administrative Law Judge for damages. Then there is time for appeal.³⁸ This process is similar to New York City’s, however there is not a local human rights law, instead a MOU with the state. Suffolk County can enforce compensatory damages through the MOU that the HRC has set up with the state division.

Similarly, Ulster County has a MOU with the State Division of Human Right, but not a local, municipal human rights law. The MOU specifies that Ulster has the ability to intake individuals

³⁴ “Steps in the Complaint Process.” NYC Government. Accessed July 13, 2021.
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/steps-in-the-complaint-process.page>.

³⁵ “Human Rights Law.” Westchester Gov. Accessed August 12, 2021.
<https://humanrights.westchestergov.com/file-a-complaint/human-rights-law>.

³⁶ “Human Rights Law.” Westchester Gov.

³⁷ “Chapter 700 - Human Rights.” Municode library - Westchester County Code of Ordinances. Accessed August 12, 2021.

https://library.municode.com/ny/westchester_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodelf=PTIVOTLOLAACRE_CH700HURI#TOPTITLE.

³⁸ “Complaint Process.” Suffolk County Government. Accessed July 15, 2021.

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Human-Rights-Commission/Complaint-Process>.

who may have been discriminated against and file complaints with the division.³⁹ However, most of the Ulster Human Rights Commission’s work focuses on mediation and conciliation. In Ulster County, there have been very few cases that have gone to the enforcement stage. Tompkins County also handles complaints this way.⁴⁰

There is an option for establishing an HRC other than working with a MOU or a local enabling law. This option is an independent commission, not associated with any local jurisdiction. Such a commission is set up by volunteers or a third-party organization like a college. There is such an HRC in Putnam County, where citizens independently established the commission. (In 2020, Putnam County legislators rejected an HRC,⁴¹ stating the county had “too few problems to justify it.”⁴²) An independent commission does not receive public funding. This type of commission can engage in educational outreach and direct individual complaints to the State Division of Human Rights. The structure of an independent commission is dependent on local needs.⁴³

VII. Incident Report or Complaint Form

A main purpose of Human Rights Commissions are to deal with discrimination complaints. Whether this is helping draft the complaint with the complainant and then sending it to the State Division, or processing the complaint in house, each HRC has some form of complaint form.

Each complaint form has similar sections. These sections include: personal data/information, summary of allegations and category of the complaint, date of incident, who/what the complaint is being filed against, and particulars of complaint.

Some complaint forms, like the Town of Woodstock HRC complaint form, shown below, offer a section for the complainant to explain what they would like to happen with their case. This is not the case for most complaint forms however, as the commission usually handles how the case will proceed after the complaint is noted.

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Woodstock Human Rights Commission: Complaint Form

Resolution:

What would you like to see happen to resolve your issue? Please explain.

Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____

Print Name: _____

THE DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE
legislature. Accessed July 14, 2021.

2.tompkinscountyny.gov/humanrights/commission#.
te after Sharp Debate.” Putnam County Courier, August 10,
uman-rights-commission-in-6-3-vote-after-sharp-debate/.
” The Highlands Current, August 28, 2020.
n/.

⁴³ Crocco, Holly. “Putnam Considers Human Rights Commission to Combat Hate: The Examiner News.” The Examiner News | SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS, January 27, 2020. <https://www.theexaminernews.com/putnam-considers-human-rights-commission-to-combat-hate/>.

⁴⁴ “Woodstock Human Rights Commission: Complaint Form.” Town of Woodstock. Accessed July 20, 2021. <https://townwoodstock.digitaltowpath.org:10111/content/Boards/View/15:field=documents;/content/Documents/File/1504.pdf>.

Three more examples of sections from complaint forms are shown in **Appendix A**.

VIII. Funding

HRCs rarely receive state grants, so funding is provided by the local government. Funding supports an executive director, support staff, office space, travel, equipment/materials, though these are not all funded in every HRC. For example, Ulster County has no separate office space and is housed in the County Office building; in Syracuse, funding supports the executive director, educational campaigns, and materials.

Amount and types of funding vary greatly. The Syracuse-Onondaga Commission had a budget of \$300,000 in 2009.⁴⁵ However, the commission now runs on a budget that funds the Director of the Commission, around \$82,000 (from last recorded data).⁴⁶ There were changes in the last few years, resulting in a decrease in the scope of the commission, and a subsequent decrease in funding.

The most recent budget for Ulster County's HRC can be found here [on page 178](#).⁴⁷ The budget for 2020 was \$132,404.

Tompkins County has a higher budget, despite being "under scrutiny" in 2016 from legislators in the county due to short staffing and what they considered to be an unclear mission.⁴⁸ Despite concerns from legislators, the budget was around \$330,000 in 2016 and \$334,762 in 2020. The budget for 2020 can be found [here](#).

Nassau County allocated \$476, 614 budget for their Human Rights Commission in the current year.⁴⁹

IX. Education, Community Outreach and Involvement of Students from Local Colleges

- Other than assisting with discrimination complaints and adjudication, the main function of HRCs is to educate the public on human and civil rights law, and to conduct outreach in the community. The Syracuse-Onondaga HRC has taken this as their primary role. The HRC hosts public hearings whenever a human rights issue is in the news. Recently, the HRC held virtual public hearings on race relations in DeWitt and also on the impact of

⁴⁵ Tarr, Jason. "Human Rights Commission Shines a Light on Discrimination." Democracy Wise, March 29, 2009. <https://democracywise.syr.edu/?p=5248>.

⁴⁶ Breidenbach, Michelle. "After Jail Deaths, Onondaga County Hires Director of Human Rights Commission." Syracuse.com, March 22, 2019. https://www.syracuse.com/news/2015/08/after_jail_deaths_onondaga_county_has_new_director_of_human_rights_commission.html.

⁴⁷ Ryan, Patrick K. "Ulster County Executive Budget." Ulster County, 2020. <https://ulstercountyny.gov/sites/default/files/2020%20Executive%20Operating%20Budget.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Cone, Jaime. "A Close Look at the Office of Human Rights." Ithaca Times, December 7, 2016. https://www.ithaca.com/news/ithaca/a-close-look-at-the-office-of-human-rights/article_c285fdd2-ac1b-11e6-9441-976661cdd837.html.

⁴⁹ "Review of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget & Multi Year Plan." Nassau County Legislature. Office of Legislative Budget Review, 2021. <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/30678/Review-of-the-Fiscal-Year-2021-Budget-and-Multi-Year-Plan?bidId=>

Covid-19 in the area.⁵⁰ The Syracuse-Onondaga HRC also operates food giveaways, sandwich Saturdays, and engages in education on human rights including sexual harassment, employment, LGBTQ, and landlord-tenant relations.

- Nassau County’s HRC, hosts employment fairs.⁵¹
- Part of the Rockland County HRC’s mission is to “meet with local officials, schools, and community, religious and ethnic groups to hear their needs, concerns, ideas, and recommendations first hand.”⁵²
- Tompkins County has a program called “Human Rights 4Kidz,” where the commission introduces children to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, including “engaged reading, creation of a human rights chain, matching games, human rights word search and vocabulary, role playing, and interactive storytelling.”⁵³
- And the Dutchess County HRC has a program called “100 Cups of Coffee,” which is a dialogue project, in which the HRC provides a space for individuals to meet to express their concerns and comments about their neighborhood.⁵⁴ This provides a constructive space in which community leaders, police, regular citizens, can meet to facilitate conversation about the community.
- Ulster County involves two local high school students each year as a part of the commission. Nassau County also has an internship program, where they offer college credit to college students, who are assigned “different projects based on their area of study and interest.”⁵⁵
- Suffolk County offers a similar opportunity, where the commission provides an internship program for students to assist in the investigation and complaint process, learning what an investigator would do.⁵⁶

X. Conclusion

⁵⁰ “Annual Report 2020.” Onondaga County/Syracuse Human Rights Commission, 2020.

http://www.ongov.net/humanrights/documents/HRC_2020_Annual_Report.pdf.

⁵¹ “Human Rights Commission.” Human Rights Commission | Nassau County, NY - Official Website. Accessed July 21, 2021.

<https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/414/Human-Rights-Commission>.

⁵² “County of Rockland, New York :: Human Rights Strategy Announced.” Rockland County Website. Accessed July 21, 2021.

<http://rocklandgov.com/departments/county-executive/press-releases/2020-press-releases/human-rights-strategy-announced/>.

⁵³ “Human Rights 4Kidz.” Tompkins County NY. Accessed July 21, 2021. <https://www2.tompkinscountyny.gov/humanrights/hr4k#>.

⁵⁴ “100 Cups of Coffee.” Dutchess County Gov. Accessed July 21, 2021.

<https://www.dutchessny.gov/Departments/Human-Rights/100-Cups-of-Coffee.htm>.

⁵⁵ “NASSAU COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION.” Nassau County. Accessed July 21, 2021.

<https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2332/InternApplication-NCCHR-fillable-b?bidId=>.

⁵⁶ “Internship Opportunities.” Human Rights Commission - Internships. Accessed July 21, 2021.

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/departments/human-rights-commission/internships>.

The model that a new commission could take will depend on the goals of the commission. **Model 1** and **Model 2** are feasible options in this plan. **Model 4** would be an option if the municipality rejects the proposal of a HRC. In this case, **Model 4** would be set up independently, with outside funding separate from the municipality. **Model 1** requires the hiring of an executive director and materials for education, but would be easier to set up. If the HRC is to focus primarily on education and outreach, this would be the model to follow. On the other hand, if the area wants to have greater powers in investigation and intake, **Model 2** is the best fit. This would require a MOU with the state, which requires greater work, but once established the commission can conduct intake and investigations. Both are feasible models, depending on the goals of the commission.

Appendix A



COMMISSION ON CITIZENS' RIGHTS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS Incident Report



Shaded area – Office use only:

CASE NUMBER	FORM	FILING DATE	
Name of person or organization alleging harm:		HOME PHONE ()	BUSINESS PHONE ()
STREET ADDRESS	CITY	COUNTY ERIE	STATE NY
EMAIL ADDRESS		May we contact you using this email? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Against whom is the complaint being filed?		BUSINESS PHONE ()	
STREET ADDRESS	CITY	COUNTY ERIE	STATE NY
Date(s) of the alleged discrimination/incident:			
If the individual you named above appeared to be acting for a company, check here: <input type="checkbox"/> and fill in below:			
Company Name:		Company Address (City, State, Zip):	
If the above complaint pertains to the Buffalo Police Department, please provide the following information, if available.			
Police District: _____			
Number of Police Officers Involved: _____			
Please provide the names of Police Officer(s) and Title(s), if available:			

Reasons you believe you were discriminated against (check all that apply):			
<input type="checkbox"/> Race <input type="checkbox"/> Color <input type="checkbox"/> Religion <input type="checkbox"/> Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation <input type="checkbox"/> National Origin <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Group <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnam-era or disabled Veteran status <input type="checkbox"/> Retaliation <input type="checkbox"/> Familial Status <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Identity and Expression <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain):			
Have you filed a complaint with another agency and or Attorney?			
Are there witnesses that you feel could provide evidence in your support? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		If this complaint is based on employment discrimination please answer the following:	

⁵⁷⁴⁴“COMMISSION ON CITIZENS’ RIGHTS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS Incident Report.” City of Buffalo Government. Accessed July 20, 2021. <https://www.buffalony.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1839/Discrimination-Complaint-Form-PDF?bidId=>

**County of Ulster
Human Rights Commission**

Patrick K. Ryan
County Executive



Tyrone Wilson
Commissioner, Human Rights
Phone: (845) 334-5492
Fax: (845) 340-3149
Email: tywi@co.ulster.ny.us

COMPLAINT FORM

Instructions:

To file a complaint with the Commission on Human Rights:

- 1) Please fill out this form, answering all of the questions. If you are filling out the form on a computer, please print out the form when you are finished. *You will not be able to save the completed form.* If possible, please type. If you are filling out the form by hand, please print.
- 2) Attach copies of any documents that you think will help the Commission review your case (pay stubs, letter of termination, performance evaluation, disciplinary notice, etc.)
- 3) Return the complaint form to the Commission at the office located at 244 Fair St, Kingston, NY 12401.
- 4) Keep a copy of your complaint, and copies of any documents that you attach, for your own records.

Please feel free to visit our website at UlsterCountyNY.org

If you have any questions, want information, or need help filling out the form, please call our office (845) 334-5492 to speak with the Director of the Commission.

Particulars of Complaint

Please specifically explain what happened to you, including the acts done and dates of the occurrence. The complaint must be filed within one year from the date of the occurrence of the alleged unlawful discriminatory practice. If the alleged unlawful discriminatory practice is of a continuing nature, the dates of its occurrence shall be considered to be any date subsequent to the date that it stopped.

Please explain how these acts affected you or others:

⁵⁸ "Complaint Form." County of Ulster Human Rights Commission. Accessed July 20, 2021.
<https://ulstercountyny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2020%20UC%20Human%20Rights%20Complaint%20Form.pdf>.



County of Onondaga
Office of Diversity and Inclusion

John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 15th Floor
421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, New York 13202

Phone: 315.435.3565
Human Rights: 315.435.3565
MWBE: 315.435.5065

www.ongov.net

J. Ryan McMahon, II
County Executive

Monica Williams
Chief Diversity Officer

Human Rights Commission Intake & Title VI, ADA & LEP Plan Complaint Form

Name of Complainant:		Date of Complaint:	HRC Staff:
Person Harmed:		Date of Summary:	Mode of Contact:
Mailing Address:		Phone Numbers:	Referred By:
Town:	Zip:	Email:	

Does Complainant believe they have experienced discrimination? YES NO *Not Sure*

If Yes, by whom? _____ From what program or location? _____

If Yes, I believe this discrimination was because of my (*check all that apply*):

- Sex Race / Color (specify: _____) Ethnicity (specify: _____)
- National Origin Primary Language (specify: _____) LGBT Identity or Gender Expression
- Disability Other (specify: _____)

Summary of Allegations:

Complaint Category:

⁵⁹ "Human Rights Commission Intake & Title VI, ADA & LEP Plan Complaint Form." County of Onondaga. Accessed July 20, 2021. <http://www.ongov.net/humanrights/documents/HumanRightsComplaintForm.pdf>.