



**State of Connecticut**  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 2, Hartford, CT 06103  
*Promoting Equality and Justice for all People*

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EDITH PESTANA

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**COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHY**

Edith Pestana received her BA and MS in Geology from Rutgers University during which time she tutored and taught problem solving courses at Rutgers to students from inner city schools. She was also a science docent at the Newark Museum teaching inner city kids and persons with mental disabilities for five years. She moved to Houston, Texas in the mid 1980's and worked in environmental consulting traveling extensively across the country where she first became aware of the environmental inequities in lower socioeconomic and minority communities. In 1988 she moved to New Haven, CT and subsequently received an MPH from Yale Medical School. In 1990 she began working as an epidemiologist for the Connecticut Department of Public Health and performing exposure assessments of communities living adjacent to Superfund sites. Ms. Pestana also provided assistance to the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program in the drafting of the Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention Regulations. In 1994 she collaborated with the Latin Kings and the New Haven Health Department in the identification of a street drug made with embalming fluid that was being marketed to adolescent children in New Haven and believed to have been the cause of death of a twelve year old boy. Subsequently, Ms. Pestana led a statewide emergency room advisory of the illegal drug in collaboration with the State Department of Emergency Medicine and the Yale New Haven Hospital Department of Emergency Medicine.

Since 1994, she's been with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection as the first Administrator of the Environmental Justice Program. At CTDEP, she was responsible for the oldest continuous environmental justice program in the country including the program's design, policy and regulatory development and implementation. The Environmental Justice Program's mission is to ensure that all residents of the state receive equal protection under environmental and public health law and have equal access to the state's natural resources.

She has served on numerous advisory boards and commissions including, the State's Commissioner on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), Yale Medical School's Department of Pediatrics' Adopt-A-Doc Program, the state Lead Poisoning Prevention Task Force, the State Housing Code Task Force, Christian community Action, Inc., the Yale University Peabody Museum Associates Council, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and Friends of Elizabeth Park.

In 2003, she received the Public Service Award from the Secretary of State for her work at the CHRO. In June 2007, Ms. Pestana was recognized by the Association of Yale Alumni in Public Health and placed on the Public Service Honor Roll for a career serving the social mission of public health. In 2009, she received a Distinguished Service Award from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

Most recently Ms. Pestana was elected to the Board of Directors for the Association of Yale Alumni in Public Health. She has published government public health assessments, and numerous articles and curriculum on environmental justice.