

Department of Consumer Protection

At a Glance

Bryan Cafferelli, Commissioner

Maureen Magnan, Deputy Commissioner

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Established: 1959

Statutory Authority: CGS Chap. 416, Section 21a-1

Central Office: 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 901, Hartford, CT 06103

Number of employees (All Funds)	329
Recurring operating expenses -	\$36,694,585.28
General Fund Revenue -	\$54,104,482
Transportation Fund Revenue -	\$1,736,856

Organizational structure

Office of the Commissioner; Regulation of Food & Standards; Regulation of Drugs, Cosmetics & Medical Devices; Regulation of Alcoholic Liquor; Regulation of Occupational & Professional Licensing; Regulation of Public Charities; Regulation of Gaming; Investigations Division; License Services Division; Legal Services Office; Communications Office; Education and Outreach Office; Administrative Services Office; Operations Division (Technical Systems Unit and Complaint Center)

Mission

The mission of the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) is to ensure a fair and equitable marketplace as well as safe products and services for consumers in the industries that it regulates.

Statutory Responsibility

The Department of Consumer Protection is a regulatory agency that protects consumers from physical injury and financial loss that may occur as the result of unsafe or fraudulent products and services marketed in Connecticut. The extent of the Department's regulatory oversight is unique in that its jurisdiction dovetails frequently with that of other Connecticut state agencies.

The Department is responsible for enforcing numerous significant consumer protection laws, including but not limited to the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA), the Liquor Control Act, the Connecticut Pure Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act, the Connecticut Weights & Measures Act, and the Connecticut State Child Protection Act. The Department, which also regulates legalized gaming, Connecticut's Medical Marijuana Program (MMP), the Adult-Use Cannabis Program and many occupational trades and professional services, must be able to

mobilize staff at any time to respond quickly and effectively to a food, drug, product safety, or economic crisis affecting the marketplace or consumers in Connecticut.

Public Service

The Department of Consumer Protection continues to fulfill its mandate to protect Connecticut consumers through numerous enforcement and education channels. Public service provided by the Department during Fiscal Year 2023 included the following activities:

Regulating Alcoholic Liquor

- Through its Liquor Control Division, the Department worked to protect the health and safety of consumers in Connecticut by regulating all persons and firms involved in the distribution, sale, and dispensing of alcoholic liquor to prevent sales to minors and intoxicated persons, guarantee product integrity and ensure that licensed premises are safe and sanitary.
- Department staff conducted inspections and investigations to ensure compliance with the provisions of state laws and regulations pertaining to the manufacture, importation, sale, and dispensing of alcoholic liquor.
- The Department investigated alleged violations of the State Liquor Control Act and consumer complaints involving alcoholic liquor that included: the sale of alcohol to minors and intoxicated persons; improper pricing and labeling; violations of regulations regarding live entertainment; trade practice violations; and purchases of alcoholic liquor from prohibited entities. The Department continued improvements to a mobile inspection application to increase efficiency for agents conducting inspections.
- Department staff collaborated with state and municipal police officers to conduct joint actions to enhance enforcement of underage drinking laws. These included alcohol compliance operations that utilized minors recruited and trained by local police agencies. The Department additionally spearheaded working groups with other state agencies to enhance our underage drinking compliance and create new enforcement opportunities to combat intoxicated driving.
- The Department continued to increase its use of online services for permittees and applicants, expanding the number of self-maintenance options available online. These improvements enable license holders to make their own updates to permits and automatically provide notifications to the Department through online portals.
- The Department provided remote training and education to state law enforcement officers, liquor retailers and community members in strategies to deter access to alcoholic liquor by underage persons.
- All liquor control agent supervisors are now state-approved trainers for CT liquor laws & regulations.
- The Department continued working with the Governor's office and the legislature in streamlining the liquor control permitting process by updating statutes to reflect recent permit changes. The Department additionally helped streamline the temporary charitable permit considering feedback from consumers and the industry.
- The Department handled a steady and heightened flow of new applications across all permit types. The Department streamlined internal processes to keep the influx of

applications moving at a consistent pace and has begun the process of building online applications to ease application burdens. Several permit types are already utilizing solely online applications.

Regulating Drugs, Cosmetics, and Medical Devices

- The Department's Drug Control Division worked to protect the health and safety of Connecticut consumers by regulating all persons and firms involved in the distribution of drugs, cosmetics, and medical devices.
- Through the Drug Control Division, the Department investigated alleged diversion of controlled substances by practitioners in both pharmacies and healthcare facilities, conducted pharmacy inspections and responded to consumer complaints regarding prescription errors. In collaboration with the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Drug Control Division investigated sales and distribution of controlled substances.
- Department staff assisted local law enforcement, the Connecticut Attorney General's Office, the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Connecticut office of the United States Attorney and the DEA in investigating and adjudicating cases of drug fraud in the state.
- Staff performed compliance inspections of all Drug Control licensees and registrants -- either as opening inspections, routine inspections, special inspections, or closing inspections. The Department continued operating and upgrading the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP), which protects public health and safety by requiring prescribers and pharmacists to access a patient's prescription history to help identify patterns of misuse, diversion and/or abuse. Law enforcement and regulatory personnel also have access to the program to assist with investigations related to doctor shopping, pharmacy shopping and fraudulent activity. The program conducted education and outreach to the general public on prescription drug abuse, safe storage and disposal of prescription medication and taking medications safely.
- Staff monitored compliance agreements of pharmacists in a probationary program due to drug addiction. The Department also oversaw the compliance of the various police departments' canine labs which involves the licensing of the labs as well as assisting with the canines used to detect drugs.
- In its regulatory and operational oversight of the Medical Marijuana Program, the Department implemented online registration procedures for patients, physicians, and caregivers, and conducted all compliance and investigative functions of the program.
- The Department conducted presentations to professional and community organizations and presented at state and national pharmacy conferences and seminars.
- The Department continues to expand the Drop Box Program, which it has operated for several years. Currently, 116 drop box programs are operating in municipalities across the state and recently pharmacies began participating in the program as well. From 2012 through 2022, more than 316,000 pounds of medication have been destroyed through this program.
- The Division's Prescription Monitoring Program continues to oversee the Connecticut Prescription Monitoring and Reporting System (CPMRS) collecting information

including, but not limited to, controlled substance prescriptions that were filled, patient demographic environment, CPMRS registration, CPMRS utilization, and interstate data sharing. There are currently 39,020 users registered within the CPMRS who upload information related to prescriptions filled for controlled substances, naloxone, diabetic medications and devices, and gabapentin. The Prescription Monitoring Program analyzes and interprets data collected within the CPMRS and provides the data quarterly through a newsletter and through the State's Open Data portal.

- Department staff continued to assist the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Public Health in managing the Chempak program for hospitals and first responders, and in the storage and dissemination of strategic medication. The Division also continued to assist the FDA in dissemination of drug recall notices to prescribers, pharmacists, and pharmacies via an electronic list-serve.
- The Department continued to house the Board Administrator for the Commission of Pharmacy and the Medical Marijuana Board of Physicians and successfully transitioned to a virtual platform for the meetings that was well received.
- The Division updated its Connecticut Comprehensive Drug Law resource, commonly referred to as the "Law Book", providing pertinent state statutes and regulations related to pharmaceuticals in one place, for easy access and enhanced continuity.
- This year's legislative session saw many changes for the Drug Control Division including:
 - Testing and HIV prophylaxis by pharmacists;
 - Prescribing of hormonal and emergency contraception by pharmacists;
 - Mobile pharmacies;
 - Unscheduled pharmacy closings;
 - Pharmaceutical marketing firm registrations;
 - Vending machines for OTC medications, devices, and sundries; and,
 - Secured boxes for naloxone.
- In January 2023, Connecticut launched its Adult-Use Cannabis Program making cannabis and cannabis products available for sale to adults over the age of 21. From its inception through the end of the SFY (June 30, 2023), adult-use cannabis retail sales totaled nearly \$56 million in the first 6 months. To date, there are 21 licensed cannabis establishments and 100 provisional license holders. Additionally, this year's legislative session created two new license types, cannabis testing laboratories and cannabis testing laboratory employees.
- The Division implemented the state's seed-to-sale cannabis tracking system, working to migrate all existing medical marijuana and new cannabis establishments into the new system. The system allows for the tracking of cannabis from a seed or clone through the stages of growth and manufacturing to the final point of sale, helping to prevent diversion and providing robust real-time data and information regarding the state's cannabis market. Data collected from the seed-to-sale tracking system has been made available online monthly on the State's Open Data portal, providing information including total cannabis retail sales in dollars, average product price and types of products purchased.
- To inform consumers about cannabis use, the Division developed several educational videos and materials related to safer cannabis use including, safe storage, safe disposal, what to do in the event of an accidental ingestion and information for healthcare providers and patients about the importance of discussing cannabis use. The Division also

partnered with other state agencies on the development of the statewide cannabis campaign, “Be in the Know”.

- Effective July 1, qualifying patients and caregivers were no longer required to pay a registration fee for their Medical Marijuana certification, improving access to individuals in need of this medication. As of June 30, 2023, there were 42,179 qualifying patients, 3,715 caregivers and 1,702 certifying providers registered with the Medical Marijuana Program. Benefits for qualifying patients registered in the Medical Marijuana Program include a wider variety of cannabis products, larger transaction limits and tax-free purchases.
- The Division successfully implemented the use of mobile inspections developed last year. These highly complex forms have been a significant enhancement for inspectors and credential holders.

Regulating Food, Standards, and Product Safety

Through the Food, Standards and Product Safety Division, the Department enforces packaged and manufactured Food laws, Weights and Measures laws and Product Safety laws with a specific mandate to protect public health in the commerce of food and product safety. The Division also enforces weights and measures law in Connecticut to ensure a fair, honest, and open marketplace for the commerce of commodities.

As part of that goal the Department administered the grant funded quality improvement program related to food safety inspections – “Manufactured Foods Regulatory Program Standards” (MFRPS) in collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), with a particular focus on ensuring that food safety inspections done by State inspectors are equivalent to those completed by FDA inspectors. This ensures that consumers in Connecticut as well as those consumers of food products produced in Connecticut are protected from food related injury or illness. The program also prepares staff and the regulated public for the requirements under FSMA. The Food program has been recognized for achieving full conformance with the MFRPS Standards by FDA. We continue to work to maintain conformance in inspections.

The Department also received an FDA grant to host a Rapid Response Team (RRT) for food emergencies in Connecticut. The RRT is an interagency work group designed to promote cooperation and quick response to such emergencies. We work with Agriculture, Public Health, and other agencies to promote those ideals.

Staff conducted inspections of food-processing plants, warehouses, retail food stores, bakeries, nonalcoholic beverage plants, frozen dessert plants, vending machine locations, apple juice and cider plants. The Department is working diligently to fulfill the Department’s inspection mandate under the State’s Uniform Food and Drug Act to protect the public health in the intra-state commerce of food.

The following milestones for Food, Standards and Product Safety are listed below:

- Overall, the Department responded to 522 complaints from consumers related to food, weights and measures, and product safety.

- The Department responded to 27 traffic and highway accidents involving food and beverage products. The inspections are done to ensure that contaminated/adulterated foods were not distributed to the public.
- Staff inspect gasoline stations, heating oil dealers and all weighing and measuring devices used in commerce, such as retail store scales, motor truck scales, petroleum meters and home delivery truck meters.
- The Department checked packaging, labeling, unit pricing, price accuracy scanning and advertising of food and other consumer commodities, produce sampling, restaurant menus, advertisements, and gasoline station price signs to ensure that the contents and quality were represented correctly.
- Pursuant to a Cooperative Agreement with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Agency conducts Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) inspections. Last year we did over 33 such inspections.
- The Department maintained a cooperative agreement with the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) to conduct effectiveness checks for CPSC recalls. The Department conducted up to 25 effectiveness checks for CPSC recalls. The effectiveness checks are done in cooperation with the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, ensuring that recalled items are removed from store shelves.
- Staff worked cooperatively with the Departments of Motor Vehicles and Public Safety on the Commercial Vehicle Safety and Inspection program, ensuring the accuracy of portable truck scales used in the State's highway safety enforcement programs to prevent overweight trucks from posing a threat to the driving public and damage to the State's highways and roadways.
- The Department supervised inspection work performed by municipal sealers of weights and measures in Waterbury, Danbury, New Haven, Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Stamford.
- The Department has struggled to maintain recognition from the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology for the State Metrology Laboratory after the departure of the last Metrologist. The good news is that we have hired a new metrologist, and that person is working diligently to regain recognition.
- Staff from the Division participates in the Connecticut Fuel and Generator Task Force and Traffic Incident Management task force.
- Nationally the Department participates on the board for the Manufactured Food Regulatory Standards Program Alliance and the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO).
- Product Safety is responsible for enforcing the furniture and bedding sales requirements, and the State Child Protective Act regulating children's products such as toys. Product safety also regulates other product safety items. Bedding and furniture have become increasingly important owing to the resurgent issue of bed bugs in our State and the perceived toxicity of fire retardants.
- Division staff continue to maintain a list of toxic substances that should not exist in children's products in cooperation with the Department of Public Health, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Trinity College. The list is published on the DCP website.

Performing Investigations, Protecting Against Fraud and Resolving Complaints

- Through the work of the Investigations Division, the Department investigated a variety of cases that resulted in criminal, civil and administrative actions, primarily under the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act, the Home Improvement Act, the Homemaker Companion Act, the Solicitation of Charitable Funds Act, occupational and professional licensing; real estate sales and brokers; and real estate appraiser, among many others. This includes 86 referrals made through a specialized program with the Office of the Attorney General for criminal violations of the Home Improvement Act. Moreover, 15 cases were referred to the Office of the Chief State's Attorney for criminal violations of occupational licensing statutes.
- Investigators continue to work cooperatively with the Department of Public Health and Department of Social Services' Protective Services for the Elderly, to make certain homemaker companion agencies were properly carrying out contracted services and not working beyond the scope of their registration. Through multi-agency collaboration, elderly clients who were victimized by unscrupulous caregivers were able to receive continuous care and remain in a safe environment.
- Occupational Trades inspectors increased the number of construction site inspections. These inspections ensured that workers were properly credentialed for the work being performed. As a result of license compliance checks, the Inspectors issued more than 150 Assurance of Voluntary Compliance settlements.
- Consumer Fraud Investigators received training on cybercrimes and elder fraud scams from the National White Collar Crime Center. For example, they have obtained and utilized specific interviewing skills exclusive to elder targets of fraud. They have learned to conduct cyber investigations, process digital evidence, and investigate network intrusions. Resources and investigative tools for such investigations are available to us from the National White Collar Crime Center. The investigators received training on Artificial Intelligence from the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators. Additionally, through successful negotiations and well-established interviewing skills investigators establish and secure fair and safe marketplace practices; in physical and electronic marketplaces in which egregious issues, unfair trade practice patterns and trends, and price gouging have occurred. Some cases have resulted in full financial restitution for the consumer.
- Home Improvement Investigators assisted several law enforcement agencies with resolving storm-chaser scams, chimney repair scams, driveway paving scams and other contractor fraud. Homeowners paid deposits to unscrupulous contractors for renovation work and in many cases, none of the work was performed. Investigators have also been busy dealing with solar cases involving fraudulent sales tactics, failed or no repairs of equipment and contracts that are difficult to terminate, and firms that have gone out of business. The Home Improvement Unit issued Assurances of Voluntary Compliance to contractors for violations of the Home Implementation Act and also unit referred cases to the Office of the Attorney General for criminal violation of the Home Improvement Act.
- The Public Charities Examination Unit conducts audits of registered charities. This unit also investigated several complaints of violations of the Solicitation of Charitable Funds Act, involving allegations of misappropriation of funds, questionable financial transactions, deceptive fundraising, and unregistered charitable organizations. In addition to the charity cases, this unit provides support to the Investigations Division by examining financial records and billings to determine the veracity of the allegations.

- The real estate unit received 300 complaints as a result of the pandemic housing surge. The buyers waived inspections and as a result did not learn of the true condition of the home until after the closing. Other complaints involved inflated values and earnest money not being returned upon termination of a purchase agreement.
- The Home Improvement supervisor and a special investigator serve as Intelligence Liaison Officers to the Connecticut Intelligence Center (CTIC). CTIC is Homeland Security's intelligence fusion center focused on counter terrorism and intelligence gathering in Connecticut.
- Investigators inspected nearly 200 Mobile Home Park communities for licensing and regulatory compliance.
- In order to address emerging challenges of fraud detection and prevention, the division's staff received training certifications from International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators (IAFCI), National White Collar Crime Center (NW3C), Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE), New England State Police Information Network (NESPIN) and Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists (ACAMS). Investigators maintain these certifications by earning continue education credits.

Complaint Center

- The Department's Complaint Center responded to 9,540 calls, as well as responded to 3,913 written consumer complaints during the year. Through facilitation of the complaints, the Complaint Center helped recover more than \$679,000 in value for consumers. The most common complaints were with home improvement contractors; licensed tradesmen and professionals; telecommunications, cable and utility companies; general retail stores, both online and in-store; warranty providers; funeral homes; bills by medical providers; homemaker-companion agencies, health clubs; and broad scams of every type and delivery mechanism.

Regulating Gaming

- The DCP Gaming Division is responsible for regulating legalized gambling in the State of Connecticut which includes lottery, casino, off track betting, sports betting and sealed ticket commerce that collectively generated revenue of \$702,985,597. This was accomplished through a rigorous program of monitoring, inspecting, auditing, investigations, and licensing safeguards designed to ensure integrity of the gaming process and protect the interests of players and the public at large.
- Lottery Operations: Monitored lottery commerce for compliance and integrity in all aspects of operations to include instant and terminal based games, drawing operations, promotions, multi state games, technical testing, and conducting liaison with gaming system and ticket printing vendors. This comprehensive program of regulation resulted in a transfer of approximately \$ 404,000,000 to the general fund.
- Casino Operations: Monitored slot machine and cage operation integrity through detailed audit and technical inspection of video facsimile slot machines resulting in slot machine contribution to the General Fund which was approximately \$213,681,722.
- Off Track Betting (OTB)/Pari-Mutuel Operations: Monitored OTB operations across 10 including Torrington that closed in November 2022 locations throughout Connecticut as

well as authorized online wagering and out of state hub operations that coordinated racing events all over the world. Collected and disbursed OTB contributions totaling \$2,318,211 to the general fund.

- ADW – Advance deposit wagering: Collected and transferred ADW funds to the General Fund in the amount of \$1,263,728.
- OTB/Municipal Contributions: In addition to General Fund disbursement, DCP Gaming Division also collected and disbursed OTB share to Municipalities hosting OTB facilities - \$1,465,546.
- Keno/Tribal Contributions: DCP Gaming Division serves as conduit to monitor and ensure compliance of Keno share distribution to Tribal casinos, which in FY 2022 amounted to \$12,034,749.
- Sealed Tickets Operations: DCP Gaming regulates, licenses, and monitors sealed ticket industry by vetting ticket prize structures, labeling, truth in advertising and design. Additionally, background investigations are conducted as part of suitability inquiries for licensing of printers and distributors. These efforts yielded approximately \$204,864 in annual contribution in the form of license fees and taxes to the general fund.
- Lottery Retailer/OTB Facility Inspections: Gaming Division completed 7,395 gambling regulation inspections and visits through unannounced and random basis to ensure compliance with all State statutes and regulations related to gaming, and to educate agents on State statutes and regulations related to Lottery.
- Lottery Drawing Operations: DCP Gaming Lottery Drawing Officers and Gaming Regulation Officers managed 2,560 lottery drawings to ensure the integrity of the games.
- Casino Employee Gaming License Investigations: The Department assured that only suitable individuals worked in Connecticut’s gaming industry by coordinating and conducting appropriate background checks before licensing, registering, or issuing permits to individuals, organizations, and vendors to be employed by, or contracted with, gaming licenses or permittees within the State, including those businesses authorized to sell lottery tickets. Through these efforts, the Department processed 8,898 active licenses for Connecticut’s tribal casino operations. These included 3,183 for Foxwoods Casino and 5,715 for Mohegan Sun Casino active licenses.
- Gaming Enforcement Investigations: The Gaming Division conducted a total of 279 investigations and monitored gaming operations to ensure that all gambling activities were consistently conducted in a fair and honest manner, and to detect and prevent fraudulent gaming activity. These efforts resulted in 10 arrests.
- Change/Modification/New Game vetting and approval: The Gaming Division evaluated and approved changes or modifications to wagering systems and related equipment to ensure the integrity of lottery games and operation of Off-Track Betting. Examples included new game technology such as Fast Play Lottery game, and other new instant scratch games (which were also forensically examined), and numerous new promotional programs such as Second Chance drawings and consumer sales promotions.
- Chronic Gamblers Support: The Department supported treatment and rehabilitation for chronic gamblers through public awareness activities and by ensuring that funding for such programs is provided pursuant to Section 17a-713(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- Retail Sports Wagering: Monitored RSW operations across 9 locations throughout Connecticut (15 RSW locations have been allocated for CT). During this period, the

Torrington location closed, and the Shelton (Arooga's) location came online. 8 locations are now managed by Sporttech, and 1 location (Shelton) is managed by CLC. All facilities were inspected and found to be following the Regulation of the Department of Consumer Protection concerning Online Casino Gaming, Retail and Online Sports Wagering, Fantasy Contests, Keno, and Online Sales of Lottery Tickets. Retail Sports Wagering payments to the state for this period totaled \$1,544,915.

- DCP Gaming Regulators attended both the G2E and the GLI 2023 Regulators Roundtable Conference, NAGRA and the SBCA North America Summit and participated in the high-level discussions encompassing next-generation technologies and the evolution of gaming. Discussion included: AI in Gaming, convergence of digital opportunities and risks, iGaming and iLottery, Next-gen Casino Management Systems, Sports Wagering Platform Partnerships, Mobile Expansion on Tribal Lands, and Regulated Gaming in the Cloud. Through these conferences, the attending DCP Gaming Regulators were able to establish valuable networking relationships within the regulating community.
- Online Sports Wagering: There are three (3) Online Gaming Operators providing revenue to the State of Connecticut (FanDuel, DraftKings & Rush Street Interactive) for Online Sports Wagering. Online Sports Wagering payments to the State of CT totaled \$16,676,067.
- On-Reservation Online Casino: Collected \$105,940 from the operation of online casino on the Mashantucket and Mohegan tribal reservations.
- Daily Fantasy Contests: There is currently one licensed provider of Daily Fantasy Contests operating in the State of CT (DraftKings). The payments to the State of CT for Daily Fantasy Contests totaled \$686,967.
- Online Casino Gaming: There are two (2) Online Gaming Operators providing revenue to the State of CT for Online Casino Gaming (FanDuel & DraftKings). Online Casino Gaming payments to the State of CT totaled \$49,077,319.
- The DCP Gaming Division has received more than 1,800 online casino game submissions from FanDuel and DraftKings of which, 1,069 are currently active and 45 have been denied/rejected.
- The month of June ushered in the addition of another Gaming License Type for associated employees of Online Gaming Entities. The approved *Live Game Employee License* will join the *Gaming Key* and *Gaming Occupational Employee License* credentials, which currently consist of 254 and 1,290 Active new and renewed Licensees, respectively.
- Fantasy, Retail Sports, and Online Sports and Casino Gaming Operations: DCP Gaming GROs conducted 135 investigations in matters related to various aspects of gaming such as: OGSP employee theft, unbalanced gaming equipment, deceptive marketing/promotion practices, licensing, game integrity, unauthorized soft launch of games, incorrect jackpot odds configuration, etc. One investigation resulted in a felony arrest for theft of \$49,000. Twenty-One (21) of these investigations have been referred to DCP Legal for administrative action. DCP Gaming GROs reviewed 132 patron complaints filed relating to Online Sports and iCasino Gaming.

Issuing Licenses, Permits and Registrations

- In FY 23, the License Services Division efficiently and accurately processed more than

274,000 licenses, permits and registrations in 207 different categories, resulting in over 53 million dollars in revenue.

- The Division offered online initial, renewal and reinstatement applications for off-track betting facilities and their employees. The same online functionality was also implemented for gaming service vendors and their employees.
- In July 2022, the Division successfully moved all applications for home improvement contractors, salespeople, and new home construction contractors to an online process. Considering this area receives approximately 4,500 new applications a year, it was a considerable undertaking. In addition, the Division renewed 25,000 home improvement contractors and salespeople through an online only process. The online support needed for this change was considerable.
- The Division absorbed the Occupational and Professional Licensing Division. That division was responsible for approximately 130 credential types and 55,000 license holders. The majority of staff handling those credentials retired, making this transition a considerable undertaking. New employees were hired, existing staff were trained, processes were reviewed and streamlined for efficiency.
- As part of the transition above, the Division constructed, tested, and implemented 95 online applications for occupational trade applicants for exam. The Division worked with the Connecticut Labor Department, its exam vendor, and the Department IT staff to facilitate the Division assuming the application process functions. The Division has also made numerous website updates and communications to streamline this process. An applicant now receives exam approval within one week compared to 3 weeks previously.
- The Division began emailing license certificates to engineers, land surveyors and architects. This streamlining initiative will save the Department nearly \$18,000 annually in the cost of mailing certificates.

Regulating Boards, Commissions, and Councils

The administrative functions of the Boards, Commissions, and Councils are carried out by the Operations Division for the following:

- State Board of Accountancy
- Plumbing and Piping Work Examining Board
- Heating, Piping, Cooling and Sheet Metal Work Examining Board
- Electrical Work Examining Board
- Elevator Craftsman Work Examining Board
- Fire Protection Sprinkler Work Examining Board
- Automotive and Flat Glass Work Examining Board
- Home Inspector Licensing Board
- Architectural Licensing Board
- State Boards of Examiners for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors
- State Board of Landscape Architects
- Real Estate Commission
- Real Estate Appraisal Commission
- Mobile Manufactured Home Park Council

Legal, Information Technology, Communications and Outreach/Education functions

likewise supported the mission of the Department during FY 2023:

- Through its Legal Division, the Department enhanced enforcement of consumer protection laws by effectively resolving issues of concern with persons and establishments it regulates. These initiatives included 235 compliance meetings, 42 formal hearings/administrative complaints, 49 formal hearing decisions, 133 Settlement Agreements, Consent Decrees and Stipulations, 6 Assurances of Voluntary Compliance, 0 subpoenas/civil investigative demands, and 0 Declaratory Ruling were issued.
- The Department processed and provided monetary restitution to consumers who were financially damaged in the areas of home improvement, new home construction, real estate, and health club closings. Specifically: 148 consumer claims were processed from the Home Improvement Guaranty Fund resulting in \$1,544,120.91 paid; 2 claims processed from the New Home Contractor Guaranty Fund with \$60,000.00 ordered paid; and 46 consumer claims were processed from the Health Club Guaranty Fund with \$17,701.30 ordered paid; and 0 consumer claims were processed from the Real Estate Guaranty Fund. In addition, in FY 2023, the Guaranty Funds collectively contributed a total of \$1,021,502.00 to the State's General Fund. Throughout 2022, the Agency's new vehicle arbitration ("Lemon Law") program ordered restitutions to (approximately) 56 consumers.
- The Department's Education and Outreach sponsored its seventh Annual Cross-Cultural Communications symposium drawing over 200 attendees representing the state's business, nonprofit, direct service provider, educational, law enforcement, and government sectors, the annual symposium is intended to educate and inform those providing services for underserved and marginalized communities in order to assure that every resident and consumer in Connecticut has the knowledge of and access to state and nonprofit services.
- Staff continued to write a bi-monthly consumer column for the Tribuna, the state's only newspaper translated into both Spanish and Portuguese. In addition, we now contribute a monthly consumer awareness column in the state's largest Polish language newspaper, and a new Spanish language newspaper, La Vision.
- We also represent the Department on several commissions and boards that address services to underserved and marginalized audiences. Staff represents the Department on the Emergency Support Function (ESF)-15 for Public Communications within the State's Unified Command Structure, and in the ESF-15 Diverse Communities Task Force to understand and address the needs of underserved communities, this year acting as the co-chair of the ESF-15 Task Force on Diverse Communities. This task force was activated to address the discrete communication needs of underserved and non-English speaking communities in the state regarding health and safety information related to COVID-19 and vaccine hesitancy. Staff also serve on the Trafficking in Persons Council, Jump Start Board, the Lt. Governor's Council on Women and Girls, Financial Literacy sub-committee, and the Coalition for Elder Justice Steering Committee.
- The Department continued to inform and educate the public by developing print and web materials on numerous issues related to consumer protection, and to the industries the Department regulates. This includes an updated and comprehensive Career in the Trades Guide, and an updated DCP general brochure.
- The Department news releases and announcements about its initiatives, investigations, recall and scam alerts, and other consumer issues resulted in over 10,000 unique print and

broadcast news stories in local, statewide, and national publications. Most of the news stories simultaneously appeared online, on local, state, or national news media websites, thus remaining accessible to the public.

- The Department continued to enhance its ability to provide important consumer information via social media through Facebook and Twitter, and launched a LinkedIn page to share content, as many consumers and licensees get information from LinkedIn.
- The Department continues to be a leader in efforts to address specific consumer scams directed at immigrants and refugees in the state. In addition, the department worked on a regular basis with the FTC to bring federal programs to the state level. We expanded our work to include other governmental organizations in our efforts to communicate with all underserved audiences. We also expanded our education and outreach partnerships with other state agencies. We continue to work on issues of elder abuse through our involvement on the Coalition for Elder Justice Steering Committee. We also worked with the Department of Banking to co-chair the Financial Literacy working group of the Governor's Council on Women and Girls.
- As a member of the Coalition for Elder Justice in Connecticut, the Department collaborated with other public and private stakeholders to address issues of financial fraud and other abuses affecting older consumers in the State. The Department is also a member of the Trafficking in Persons Council, working with other state agencies, law enforcement and nonprofits to develop laws and policies that protect vulnerable populations that may be targeted by traffickers.

Improvements/Achievements 2022 – 2023

During Fiscal Year 2023, the Department of Consumer Protection realized numerous improvements and achievements, including:

- The Department developed the framework for the recently created adult-use cannabis marketplace, including the launch of an online licensing system for the nine different business types that can participate in the market and drafting comprehensive policies and procedures for regulating the newly created industry. The market launched in January 2023, and experienced steady growth in the first 6 months as new businesses continued to open.
- The Department continued to increase its use of online services for liquor permittees and applicants, expanding the number of self-maintenance options available online. These improvements allowed license holders to make their own updates to permits and automatically provide needed notifications to the Department through online portals.
- The Department processed and provided monetary restitution to consumers who were financially damaged in the areas of home improvement, new home construction, real estate, and health club closings. Specifically: 148 consumer claims were processed from the Home Improvement Guaranty Fund resulting in \$1,544,120.91 paid; 2 claims processed from the New Home Contractor Guaranty Fund with \$60,000.00 ordered paid; and 46 consumer claims were processed from the Health Club Guaranty Fund with \$17,701.30 ordered paid; and 0 consumer claims were processed from the Real Estate Guaranty Fund. In addition, in FY 2023, the Guaranty Funds collectively contributed a total of \$1,021,502.00 to the State's General Fund. Throughout 2022, the Agency's new

vehicle arbitration (“Lemon Law”) program ordered restitutions to (approximately) 56 consumers.

- The Department’s Education and Outreach sponsored its seventh Annual Cross-Cultural Communications symposium drawing over 200 attendees representing the state’s business, nonprofit, direct service provider, educational, law enforcement, and government sectors, the annual symposium is intended to educate and inform those providing services for underserved and marginalized communities in order to assure that every resident and consumer in Connecticut has the knowledge of and access to state and nonprofit services.
- The Department implemented a new credential for Real Estate Teams which has already resulted in the registration of over 450 teams of real estate professionals.
- The Department has continued to increase the use of the State’s eLicense system. Several additional credentials, reports or other features were added to the online system, including the ability to file well-drilling reports online, initial applications for accountants and several upgrades in the liquor permitting area. These enhancements have been well-received by credential holders. After it began emailing liquor renewal notices, for example, the Department saw an increase in the number of timely renewals and saw the overall online renewal submission rate increase from 54% to 78% in the first 6 months.
- The Department continues to host interns from colleges and universities all over the country in its intern program, bringing in students to learn from and contribute to the Department’s mission and goals.

Equal Employment Opportunity Reporting Requirement

The Department of Consumer Protection is firmly committed to the principles and objectives of equal employment opportunity for all individuals. The Department's full-time Human Resources Associate-EEO, Jeniaya Petteway, coordinates and monitors the Department's programs and ensures compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title II and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Fair Employment Practices Act, state Affirmative Action regulations, Contract Compliance laws, and other applicable laws.

The Department of Consumer Protection is an Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity employer and has undertaken numerous steps this past year to effectuate equal opportunity in its hiring, promotions, trainings, and other employment-related duties, as well as in the provision of the programs and services that fall under the Department’s authority. Information concerning these activities would be too voluminous to relate here but are detailed in the Department’s recent Affirmative Action Plan, approved by the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. The Department did not knowingly do business with any bidder, contractor, sub-contractor, supplier of materials, or licensee who discriminates against members of any class protected under C.G.S. Sec. 4a-60 or 4a-60a.

The DAS Equal Employment Opportunity Unit partners with our participating client agencies to assure that agency programs are fair and equitable, provide equal employment opportunity, and comply with state and federal laws and guidelines. These assurances are fulfilled by: Preparing and implementing affirmative action plans; collaborating in the selection and hiring process; providing a process for complaints of discrimination; and educating staff of their rights and

obligations in affirmative action laws.

The Human Resources Associate-EEO serves as DCP's Equal Employment Opportunity Officer reporting directly to the Agency's Commissioner, Bryan Cafferelli and is responsible for the Agency's Affirmative Action Plan. The Human Resources Associate-EEO directs and administers all aspects of DCP's EEO/AA program including developing strategic affirmative action programs; interpreting and administering pertinent laws and regulations; investigating complaints of discrimination and reporting findings to the Commissioner and or designee; offering remedies on any discriminatory conduct that occurs; and counseling staff on equal employment opportunity matters. In addition, the Human Resources Associate-EEO prepares materials and conducts training to heighten knowledge of equal employment opportunity laws and affirmative action goals and also serves as the agency's ADA coordinator.