

# Department of Consumer Protection

## *At a Glance*

**MICHELLE H. SEAGULL, Commissioner**  
**ARUNAN ARULAMPALAM, Deputy Commissioner** Established – 1959  
Statutory authority - CGS Chap. 416, Section 21a-1

Central office – 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 901, Hartford, CT 06103

<b>Number of employees (All Funds) -</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Recurring operating expenses -</b>	<b>\$24,349,517</b>
<b>General Fund Revenue -</b>	<b>\$58,249,386</b>
<b>Transportation Fund Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,902,134</b>

## *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 citizens 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) and many occupational trades and professional services, must be able to mobilize staff at any time in order to respond quickly and effectively to a food, drug, product safety, or economic crisis affecting Connecticut's marketplace or its residents.

### **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 2021 included the following activities:

#### **Regulating Alcoholic Liquor**

- Through its Liquor Control Division, the Department worked to protect the health and safety of Connecticut citizens by regulating all persons and firms involved in the distribution, sale, and dispensing of alcoholic liquor in order 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.
- 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 continued to increase its use of online services for permittees and applicants, allowing for temporary permits and renewals of liquor permits to be conducted online.
- The Department provided remote training and education to more than 200 law enforcement officers, liquor retailers and community members in strategies to deter access to alcoholic liquor by underage persons.
- All 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 removing outdated and underutilized permits, and creating permits more conducive to today's marketplace.
- While typical enforcements were significantly reduced as a result of the pandemic and the subsequent closing of many restaurants and bars in the liquor industry, the Department was a key team member in the regulatory enforcement of the Governor's Executive Orders.

#### **Regulating Drugs, Cosmetics & Medical Devices**

- The Department's Drug Control Division worked to protect the health and safety of Connecticut residents 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 Medical Marijuana Program now has over 54,000 patients, four producers, and eighteen dispensaries. A system improvement was made that provided a more efficient response time for patients in the program, and also reduced staff and supply costs.
- The Department posted on its website the answers to frequently asked questions from students, applicants, registrants and members of the pharmacy industry. Sample inspection reports and email addresses were also added online, to improve and simplify interactions with registrants and consumers. In response to COVID-19 the Drug Control Division wrote various guidance documents, assisted with the identification and writing of executive orders and implementation orders. The Division uses "Live Chat" to assist the public and registrants to communicate with the Division.
- The Department conducted presentations to professional and community organizations and presented at state and national pharmacy conferences and seminars.
- The Department expanded the Drop Box Program, which it has operated for several years. Currently, 101 drop box programs are operating in municipalities across the state and recently pharmacies began participating in the program as well. To date, more than 225,000 pounds of medication have been destroyed through this program. The program now has pharmacies with Drop Boxes.
- 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 Drug Control Division is in the process of implementing the Adult Use Cannabis laws.
- The Division has successfully developed mobile inspections using the newly purchased software program. These highly complex forms will be 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, manufactured food and cottage food laws, with a specific mandate to protect public health in the commerce of food and product safety laws related to children’s products and bedding. The Division also enforces weights and measures law in Connecticut to ensure a fair, honest, and open marketplace for the commerce of commodities.

The Department administered the grant funded quality improvement program related to food safety inspections – “Manufactured Foods Regulatory Program Standards” 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. This year the Food program was recognized for achieving full conformance with the Standards by FDA.

Last year we also received an additional grant amount to work with our State (Agriculture, Public Health and other State agencies) and our Federal partners to establish a food safety rapid response team.

Some of the tasks accomplished include:

- 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 Department responded to 22 traffic and highway accidents involving food and beverage products. The inspections are done in order to ensure that contaminated/adulterated foods were not distributed to the public.
- The Division responded to 564 complaints from consumers related to food, weights and measures, and product safety.
- Staff inspects 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.
- Audits of licensed heating fuel dealers that provide pre-buy fuel is also a priority
- Other tasks include package labeling inspections and consultation, unit pricing, price accuracy scanning and the accuracy of advertising of food and other consumer commodities, produce sampling, and gasoline station price signs to ensure that the contents and quality were represented correctly.
- Pursuant to a cooperative agreement with the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the

Agency conducts 20 effectiveness checks on recalls that affected Connecticut.

- 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 Agency supervised inspection work performed by municipal sealers of weights and measures in Waterbury, Danbury, New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford.
- The Department maintains unconditional recognition from the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology for the State Metrology Laboratory.
- Staff from the Division participates in the Connecticut Fuel and Generator Task Force and Traffic Incident Management task force and task forces for packaging and labeling
- 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. There were 45 toy/complaint inspections conducted last year.
- Contract inspections related to cooperative agreements with USDA, and FDA.
- Continued 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 among many others. This includes 29 referrals made through a specialized program with the Office of the Attorney General for criminal violations of the Home Improvement Act. Moreover, 35 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 157 Assurance of Voluntary Compliance settlements.
- Consumer Fraud Investigators received training on virtual currency and blockchain technology. This is to keep current with cutting edge currency used in fraudulent transactions. As society moves away from traditional forms of payment, such as checks, credit cards and cash, it is important to understand how virtual currency affects the marketplace as it relates to frauds and scams.
- Consumer Fraud Investigators attended the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators conference via webex. Investigators were trained to identify fraud and scams

related to COVID 19 and synthetic identities. The investigators also learned of federal powers in preventing imminent fraud schemes from the Department of Justice Consumer Protection Branch.

- 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. The Home Improvement Unit issued 172 Assurances of Voluntary Compliance to contract for violations of the Home Implementation Act. The unit referred 27 cases to the Office of the Attorney General for criminal violation of the Home Improvement Act.
- Public Charities Examination Unit conducts audits of registered charities. This unit also investigated 77 complaints which involve misappropriation of funds, unregistered charities and questionable financial transactions. In addition to the charity cases this unit provides support to the division by examining financial records and billings to determine the veracity of the allegations.
- The division Director and the Home Improvement supervisor serve as Intelligence Liaison Officers to the Connecticut Intelligence Center (CTIC). CTIC is Homeland Security's intelligence fusion center focused on counter terrorisms and intelligence gathering in Connecticut.
- Investigators inspected 197 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 7,606 calls and 6,774 online chats, as well as responded to 3,116 written consumer complaints during the year. Through facilitation of the complaints, the Complaint Center helped recover more than \$340,000 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. Throughout the pandemic, we also saw an increase in complaints about price gouging and failure to provide refunds for cancelled services.

### **Regulating Gaming**

- The DCP Gaming Division is responsible for regulating legalized gambling in the State of Connecticut which includes lottery, casino, off track betting and sealed ticket commerce that collectively generated revenue of \$542,956,006 . 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 \$347,700,000 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 \$192,738,864.
- Off Track Betting (OTB)/Pari-Mutuel Operations: Monitored OTB operations across 15 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 \$2,333,650 to the general fund.
- OTB/Municipal Contributions: In addition to General Fund disbursement, DCP Gaming Division also collected and disbursed OTB share to Municipalities hosting OTB facilities (FY 2020) - \$1,395,536.
- Keno/Tribal Contributions: DCP Gaming Division serves as conduit to monitor and ensure compliance of Keno share distribution to Tribal casinos, which in FY 2020 amounted to \$10,171,433.
- 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 \$183,492 in annual contribution in the form of license fees and taxes to the general fund.
- Lottery Retailer/OTB Facility Inspections: Gaming Division completed 512 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 2,237 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 8175 active licenses for Connecticut's tribal casino operations. These included, for FY 2020, 3113 for Foxwoods Casino and 5062 Mohegan Sun Casino active licenses.
- Gaming Enforcement Investigations: The Gaming Division conducted a total of 285 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, over 50 new instant scratch games (which were also forensically examined), and numerous new promotional programs such as Keno/Instant Ticket Parties, Second Chance drawings, and OTB Sports Trivia contests.
- 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.

### **Issuing Licenses, Permits and Registrations**

- In FY 21, the License Services Division efficiently and accurately processed more than 286,000 licenses, permits and registrations in 238 different categories, resulting in over 55 million dollars in revenue.

- The Division offered a single sign on option for renewal of certain credential types in March of 2021. This new process allowed third party service companies to log in and renew multiple DCP issued credentials under one log in and with one online payment. This drastically increased the number of online renewals for bedding and public charity licenses.
- In February 2021, the Department began emailing licenses to its 25,000 real estate licensees. This endeavor not only saved the Department the cost of issuing a printed license but allowed the licensee to receive their license quickly and efficiently through email. Licensees also were given the ability to print their license through the Department's online website.
- December 2020, the Division offered an online process for liquor shippers and wineries to submit their monthly liquor shipment reports. This new implementation drastically reduced the total number of reports received through the mail allowing staff to concentrate on application and fee posting. The online submissions linked directly to the shipper or winery permit making research easier and alleviating the need for large filing cabinets.
- Through the fiscal year and in response to Covid-19, the Division provided various opportunities for customers to make online license payments through the use of Anytime Payment. This increase in capacity resulted in a dramatic increase of online payments. The Division saw the use of Anytime Payment rise from 4,029 transactions in FY 20 to 10,270 transactions in FY 21.

### **Regulating Occupational & Professional Licensing**

Through the Occupational & Professional Licensing Division, the Department administered professional licensing procedures that ensured that only qualified, competent individuals were licensed in the occupational trades and in several professional licensing categories. The Occupational and Professional Licensing Division ensures that applicants for Building and Construction related licensure examinations possess the required education, training and specific knowledge within such licensed scope of work. The Division also administers the Real Estate and Real Estate Appraisal related licensure examinations and investigations. Division staff conducts continuing education audits of individual licensees or registrants within the occupations of: Architecture, Real Estate, Real Estate Appraisal, Registered Interior Designers, Landscape Architects, Home Inspectors, Electricians and Plumbers.

- The Department enforced laws governing just under 115,000 licensees in 173 credential types and administered nationally standardized examinations.

The administrative functions of the Boards, Commissions, and Councils are carried out by the Occupational and Professional Licensing 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 2021:**

- 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 191 compliance meetings, 37 formal hearings/administrative complaints, 64 formal hearing decisions, 174 Settlement Agreements, Consent Decrees and Stipulations, 28 Assurances of Voluntary Compliance, 12 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: 55 consumer claims were processed from the Home Improvement Guaranty Fund resulting in \$ 501,162.86 paid; 2 claims processed from the New Home Contractor Guaranty Fund with \$156,931.75 ordered paid; and 0 consumer claims were processed from the Health Club Guaranty Fund; and 0 consumer claims were processed from the Real Estate Guaranty Fund. In addition, in FY 2021, the Guaranty Funds collectively contributed a total of \$2,487,797.78 to the State's General Fund. Throughout 2020, the Agency's new vehicle arbitration ("Lemon Law") program ordered (approximately) \$1,990,915 million in restitution to 59 consumers.
- The Department's Education and Outreach unit was forced to cancel the State's seventh Cross-Cultural Communication Symposium due to COVID-19 restrictions. The agency will convene another in fall of 2021. This event has consistently drawn over 200 attendees, representing the state's business, nonprofit and direct service communities, in addition to members of law enforcement and other state agencies. This symposium is intended to provide skills and knowledge to those in state agencies and nonprofits who are charged with reaching out to the public, especially underserved communities, in order to assure that every resident of Connecticut has the knowledge of and access to nonprofit and state services.
- Staff continued to write a bi-monthly consumer column for 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.
- 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 residents, 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 \$tart 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 1,000 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, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.
- 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 to 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.
- Due to restrictions required by COVID-19, the Department's staff was unable to present and distribute print information at conferences, seminars, and professional and community programs, and engage in speaking engagements to educate the public on issues relating to privacy, identity theft, fraud, food safety, home improvement, homemaker companion aides, real estate, and financial literacy. Normally, the department would reach audiences including sanitarians, home builders, home improvement professionals, homeowners, home buyers, professional trades groups, business leaders, senior citizens and students.
- 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 residents in the State.
- The Department is a member of the Trafficking in Persons Council, working with other state agencies, law enforcement and nonprofits to develop laws and policy that protect vulnerable populations that may be targeted by traffickers.

### **Improvements/Achievements 2020 – 2021**

During Fiscal Year 2021, the Department of Consumer Protection realized numerous improvements and achievements.

- The Department's Complaint Center implemented a chatbot feature within the chat system, providing 24/7 coverage as well as stock answers and referrals for many frequent questions/issues.
- A number of divisions have implemented a new digital mobile inspection system that integrates with our licensing and enforcement software. This has allowed for quicker inspection processes, as well as better capture and interpretation of the data.
- The agency participated in the rollout of the new business.ct.gov site as one of the first agencies integrated into the new business "one-stop" product.
- 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 Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist 2, Cenit Mirabal, 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 Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist serves as DCP's Equal Employment Opportunity Officer reporting directly to the Agency's Commissioner, Michelle H. Seagull and is responsible for the Agency's Affirmative Action Plan. The EEO Specialist 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 EEO Specialist 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.

- In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, 56.7 percent of the Department's employees were female and 43.3 percent were male, with the following composition: 68.5 percent white, 16.5 percent black, 10.2 percent Hispanic, and 4.8 percent Asian.