



OEIG Investigation No.: 20-01425
Subject(s) Name(s): Quartrena Robinson and Angelia Sowell

Investigative Summary Report Publication

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Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor

Investigation Case No. 20-01425



I. INTRODUCTION: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES BUREAU OF CIVIL AFFAIRS INVESTIGATION

On October 16, 2019, an Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) Internal Security Investigator II, Angelia Sowell, submitted an internal complaint alleging that a coworker, DHS Employee 1, made racist and other abusive comments to her. DHS Bureau of Civil Affairs (BCA) Investigator Quartrena Robinson was assigned to investigate the allegations. The June 11, 2020 BCA Investigation Report and Recommendation for that investigation reflects that documents were gathered, information was received from Ms. Sowell, and that various other DHS employees who worked with or know DHS Employee 1 were interviewed and/or submitted written statements. According to the BCA Report, some of the documents and interviewees described prior incidents involving DHS Employee 1's conduct toward individuals other than Ms. Sowell, but none of the documentation or witnesses provided first-hand accounts of observing DHS Employee 1's statements or actions toward Ms. Sowell. The BCA Report reflects that DHS Employee 1 was also interviewed in the internal investigation, and that he denied Ms. Sowell's allegations.

The BCA Report concluded that Ms. Sowell's allegations of harassment based on race and sex were substantiated, and recommended that administrative action be brought against DHS Employee 1. After the report was issued, DHS Employee 1 filed an appeal on July 6, 2020 that argued, among other things, that BCA should have recused itself from the investigative process because Ms. Sowell had a previous working relationship with Ms. Robinson.

II. DHS REFERRAL TO THE OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE INSPECTOR GENERAL

On August 19, 2020, after DHS Employee 1 filed his appeal suggesting that Ms. Robinson may have had a conflict of interest, DHS referred the matter to the Office of Executive Inspector General (OEIG). The OEIG opened this investigation to review the underlying BCA investigation, and determine whether a conflict existed.¹

III. OEIG INVESTIGATION

A. Ms. Sowell And Ms. Robinson's DHS Positions

Since August 16, 2019, Ms. Sowell has been an Internal Security Investigator II with the DHS Office of Inspector General. Documents in Ms. Sowell's personnel file describe her position's responsibilities as including "conducting confidential, sensitive and complex investigations concerning reports of abuse, neglect, deaths, and serious injuries at State operated facilities and community agencies," "making initial assessments to determine if someone is in imminent danger in their present situation," and serving as an expert witness and testifying in criminal and administrative hearings. Her DHS personnel records reflect that prior to taking that position, Ms. Sowell worked as an ADA Specialist (Executive I) in DHS's Bureau of Accessibility

¹ In an October 1, 2020 OEIG interview, DHS General Counsel [DHS Employee 2] stated that although a pre-disciplinary hearing was held on July 20, 2020, the charges against DHS Employee 1 were withdrawn when the matter was referred to the OEIG. [DHS Employee 2] explained that the disciplinary charges against DHS Employee 1 could be reinstated.

and Job Accommodation (BAJA), beginning October 1, 2017. When Ms. Sowell worked in BAJA, her office space was on the sixth floor at 401 South Clinton Street in Chicago.

Ms. Robinson has been an Investigator (Executive I) with BCA since August 1, 2018. Documents in her personnel file describe that position's responsibilities as including responding to complaints of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and retaliation; conducting investigations; writing investigative reports and recommendations; responding to charges filed by the Illinois Department of Human Rights; and issuing position statements in response to charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Ms. Robinson's office at BCA also is located at 401 South Clinton Street in Chicago.

B. BAJA And BCA

OEIG investigators interviewed [DHS Employee 3], [DHS Employee 4], and [DHS Employee 5]² about BAJA and BCA, and about Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell's relationship before Ms. Sowell became an investigator in the DHS Office of Inspector General. [DHS Employee 3] is a former DHS Senior Public Service Administrator who said he was responsible for overseeing both BCA and BAJA from 2016 through August 2020, and served as the Bureau Chief of BCA.³ [DHS Employee 4] said that she has worked at BAJA since 1998, and had been the Acting Bureau Chief for approximately two years. [DHS Employee 5] said she has been a Public Service Administrator in BAJA since November 2007.

[DHS Employee 3] said that BCA and BAJA were both bureaus under the DHS Office of General Counsel, and that BCA conducts investigations of internal DHS complaints of discrimination and harassment, sexual harassment, and retaliation, among other responsibilities. [DHS Employee 4] said that BAJA is responsible for reviewing and approving reasonable accommodation requests from DHS employees with disabilities, and coordinating the implementation of the accommodations. [DHS Employee 3] said that in some BCA investigations, BCA investigators would request certain information from BAJA related to a reasonable accommodation. [DHS Employee 4] also said that BAJA's work intersects with BCA's work when BCA gets complaints involving allegations of discrimination based on disability. [DHS Employee 5] noted that the offices for BAJA and BCA are on the same floor.

[DHS Employee 3] said that he indirectly supervised Ms. Sowell when she worked in BAJA, and that Ms. Robinson was under his chain of command at BCA.⁴ [DHS Employee 3] said it was possible that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson interacted with each other when Ms. Sowell was in BAJA and Ms. Robinson was in BCA, when information was needed from BAJA for a BCA investigation. [DHS Employee 3] said that he was aware that Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell spoke in the hallways at work, but said that he did not consider that to be a friendship, and that he was not aware of a friendship between them.

² [DHS Employee 3] was interviewed on March 5, 2021; [DHS Employee 4] was interviewed on January 7, 2021; and [DHS Employee 5] was interviewed on January 20, 2021.

³ [DHS Employee 3] said he left DHS in August 2020 to take a position at another State agency.

⁴ [DHS Employee 3] said he also knew Ms. Sowell from when he was a Supervising Administrative Law Judge in the DHS Bureau of Hearings from 2015 to 2016, and she worked as a paralegal or administrative assistant in that bureau.

[DHS Employee 4] said that Ms. Sowell worked at BAJA from October 2017 to August 2019, and that she supervised Ms. Sowell for a short time as the Acting Bureau Chief. [DHS Employee 4] said that she introduced Ms. Sowell to Ms. Robinson early on after Ms. Robinson was hired at BCA. [DHS Employee 4] said that Ms. Robinson came into the BAJA offices quite often when Ms. Sowell worked there, and that they seemed to have formed a close bond. For example, she said that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson frequently went on breaks together, and that she saw Ms. Robinson standing at Ms. Sowell's work station chatting with Ms. Sowell multiple times a day. [DHS Employee 4] described them as "kind of joined at the hip for a while" before Ms. Sowell left the bureau, and that "they had gotten really close." [DHS Employee 4] said that Ms. Robinson stopped in less frequently after Ms. Sowell left.

[DHS Employee 5] said that she and Ms. Sowell collaborated on certain things when Ms. Sowell worked in BAJA, and that she provided training and ongoing support to Ms. Sowell. [DHS Employee 5] said that Ms. Robinson would come to BAJA and speak with Ms. Sowell, including talking about personal matters and giving each other advice. For example, [DHS Employee 5] recalled an instance in which Ms. Robinson's dog was taken out of her yard, and Ms. Sowell was supportive and gave good advice to her. [DHS Employee 5] said that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson also took breaks together.

[DHS Employee 4] and [DHS Employee 5] said that there was a going-away get together for Ms. Sowell when she left BAJA. [DHS Employee 5] said Ms. Robinson, whom they called "Q," attended the party.⁵ [DHS Employee 4] said that Ms. Robinson gave Ms. Sowell a plant or planter, and that Ms. Sowell told her ([DHS Employee 4]) that Ms. Robinson had also sent her money through a cash app. According to [DHS Employee 4], Ms. Sowell said she could not accept the money because it was so much, and that she was going to let Ms. Robinson know that she could not accept it. [DHS Employee 5] said that Ms. Robinson gave Ms. Sowell little items that Ms. Sowell could take to her new office, and that Ms. Sowell told her ([DHS Employee 5]) that Ms. Robinson had also given her a gift card.

C. Ms. Sowell's BCA Harassment Complaint

On October 16, 2019, Ms. Sowell submitted a BCA complaint form with allegations against DHS Employee 1. DHS emails reflect a series of emailed communications between Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson on October 15, 2019, leading up to Ms. Sowell's submission of an official complaint form on October 16, 2019.

October 15, 2019

12:09 p.m.

⁵ OEIG investigators confirmed that in an August 13, 2019 email exchange, in response to a question from Ms. Robinson "to touch base . . . to see if you all were doing anything for Angie," [DHS Employee 4] told Ms. Robinson: "Yes, cake and punch reception 2-3 PM on [sic] tomorrow. BCA is invited!" Ms. Robinson responded on August 14, 2019: "Ok, great! I will participate."

Ms. Robinson emailed Ms. Sowell a link to the BCA Employee Discrimination Complaint form on DHS's intranet and instructed her to return the completed form to the DHS website or to [DHS Employee 3].

3:06 p.m.

Ms. Robinson again emailed Ms. Sowell, this time copying DHS Assistant General Counsel [DHS Employee 6], thanking Ms. Sowell for speaking with her that morning, and instructing her to communicate with her regarding the investigation "by the state office phone and/or email system."

3:17 p.m.

Ms. Sowell emailed the following only to Ms. Robinson, with the subject line, "Draft":

Hey Q,

Read and tell me what you think. It's hard for me to relive this. I know it needs spelling changes but I'm mentally drained.

Attached to this email was a three-page narrative titled "Discriminatory Remarks and Verbally Abusive Events," which described various incidents involving DHS Employee 1.

Ms. Robinson later responded in an email that thanked Ms. Sowell for her information, asked her to return a completed complaint form before BCA could proceed with the case, and advised that she would schedule a telephone interview with Ms. Sowell after receiving the complaint. Later that day, Ms. Sowell emailed Ms. Robinson and [DHS Employee 6] her State cell phone number, explaining that she did not have an office phone. Ms. Robinson responded, again copying [DHS Employee 6], stating that "[i]t is noted," and said that she would confirm the telephone interview once the official complaint was received.

October 16, 2019

At 12:35 p.m., Ms. Sowell emailed Ms. Robinson a completed BCA complaint form and narrative titled "Discriminatory Remarks and Verbally Abusive Events." The October 16, 2019 version of the narrative included with the complaint was twice as long as the draft narrative Ms. Sowell had emailed to Ms. Robinson the day before, and included numerous additional allegations against DHS Employee 1. For example, unlike the October 15, 2019 draft, the October 16, 2019 version included allegations that DHS Employee 1 did not allow Ms. Sowell to take lunch when she was in the field, causing her to become weak and ill; that he made an interviewee repeatedly say "[redacted] [redacted]"; that he called Ms. Sowell a "pig"; and that the previous week he had stared at her, and made her fear for her safety. The October 16, 2019 version also included new allegations that Ms. Sowell suffered severe emotional distress, was "literally living in fear" each day that she was under the same roof as DHS Employee 1, and that the harassment had aggravated her health problems and emotional health.

D. Assignment Of The Investigation To Ms. Robinson

The OEIG interviewed [DHS Employee 3], BCA Manager of Investigations [DHS Employee 7], and [DHS Employee 6] about the assignment of the investigation to Ms. Robinson.

1. Former Senior Public Service Administrator [DHS Employee 3]

In his OEIG interview, [DHS Employee 3] recalled that he received an email from DHS Office of Inspector General personnel, describing comments and threats Ms. Sowell said DHS Employee 1 had made to her. [DHS Employee 3] said he advised them to have Ms. Sowell fill out a complaint form, and that they also discussed whether DHS Employee 1 should be placed on administrative leave. [DHS Employee 3] said that Ms. Sowell did file a formal complaint with BCA, and said he believed she might have submitted it through her supervisor. He said he did not recall Ms. Robinson receiving an email from Ms. Sowell with the complaint.

[DHS Employee 3] confirmed that Ms. Robinson was the investigator assigned to Ms. Sowell's complaint. He said that BCA Manager of Investigations [DHS Employee 7] was in charge of assigning BCA cases to investigators, but that he also assigned cases, and had assigned cases to Ms. Robinson directly before. However, [DHS Employee 3] said he did not recall who determined that Ms. Robinson would be the assigned investigator on Ms. Sowell's complaint, or why Ms. Robinson was selected.⁶ [DHS Employee 3] said that during the investigation, he had discussions with Ms. Robinson regarding the status of the investigation, provided guidance to her, and reviewed some of her work. [DHS Employee 3] said he recalled reviewing the final report for the investigation and that he was involved in the decision about what findings to make.

[DHS Employee 3] said that Ms. Robinson did not disclose a friendship with Ms. Sowell when she was assigned to investigate Ms. Sowell's complaint, or at any point before, during, or after the investigation.

2. BCA Manager of Investigations [DHS Employee 7]

The OEIG interviewed [DHS Employee 7] on February 2, 2021. [DHS Employee 7] said that she has been the BCA Manager of Investigations since 1998, and that her office is in Springfield. [DHS Employee 7] said that Ms. Robinson has reported to her since August 2019. [DHS Employee 7] said that she assigns a majority of the cases to BCA investigators, but that occasionally the Bureau Chief also assigns cases. She said she believed that [DHS Employee 3] assigned Ms. Sowell's complaint about DHS Employee 1 to Ms. Robinson for investigation, but that she did not know why he selected her. [DHS Employee 7] said she sometimes asked Ms. Robinson about the progress of this case and provided guidance or direction on it, and that Ms. Robinson's comments during those discussions were no different than what any other investigator would make. [DHS Employee 7] said she was not familiar with Ms. Sowell, and that she was not aware of any relationship between Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson while the investigation was pending.

⁶ DHS emails reflect that on the morning of October 16, 2019, Ms. Robinson emailed [DHS Employee 7] that she had an "Internal coming down the pipeline" regarding a DHS employee, which "Gr" sent her; in response, [DHS Employee 7] asked Ms. Robinson to be sure to let her know when Ms. Robinson received it as an official assignment.

3. BCA Assistant General Counsel [DHS Employee 6]

OEIG investigators interviewed [DHS Employee 6] on December 10, 2020. She said that Ms. Robinson had reported to her in the past, but that [DHS Employee 7] was Ms. Robinson's supervisor at the time of the investigation of DHS Employee 1. [DHS Employee 6] recalled that in August or September 2019, Ms. Robinson brought Ms. Sowell into [DHS Employee 6]'s office, and either Ms. Robinson or Ms. Sowell told her that she would never believe what was going on. [DHS Employee 6] said that Ms. Sowell then started to tell [DHS Employee 6] about allegations that subsequently were made in a complaint. [DHS Employee 6] said she told Ms. Sowell that a formal complaint would need to be filed in order to have the allegations investigated. [DHS Employee 6] said [DHS Employee 7] assigns cases to investigators, and that the Bureau Chief will occasionally assign cases as well; she said she did not know whether [DHS Employee 7] or [DHS Employee 3] assigned Ms. Sowell's complaint to Ms. Robinson.

E. BCA's Policies And Procedures

[DHS Employee 3], [DHS Employee 7], and [DHS Employee 6] said that there were no policies in place at BCA governing conflicts of interest or recusals; [DHS Employee 7] and [DHS Employee 6] added that BCA was in the process of developing such policies at the time of their interviews.⁷ [DHS Employee 3] said that, if an investigator felt they had a conflict, such as when they knew the employee outside of work, they should tell their supervisor, and then the supervisor and Bureau Chief would discuss whether to reassign the case. [DHS Employee 7] also said that it is informally shared with investigators that if they receive a case in which there is any relationship that could compromise the investigation, it should be brought to a supervisor's attention so that the case can be reassigned. [DHS Employee 3] said that if there was a relationship between Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell, Ms. Robinson should have told him, [DHS Employee 7], or [DHS Employee 6], and the investigation should have been assigned to someone else.

F. OEIG's Review Of Personal Phone Records

The OEIG identified Ms. Robinson's personal phone number on an Employee Emergency Information form and other records in her DHS personnel file, and subpoenaed phone records associated with that number. Records produced in response to that subpoena indicated that the phone number was a mobile number assigned to a subscriber named Quartrena Robinson.⁸ In the phone records, the OEIG identified calls and texts exchanged between Ms. Robinson's personal cell phone number and the personal phone number listed as Ms. Sowell's on her employment application and other forms in her DHS personnel file.⁹

Calls Exchanged before Sowell Draft Narrative Sent (Aug. 1 – Oct. 15, 2019)

⁷ In response to a request for policies relating to conflicts of interest and recusals in investigations, on December 2, 2020, DHS advised the OEIG that BCA was in the process of creating a conflict of interest policy.

⁸ Ms. Robinson also confirmed in her OEIG interview that this number was her personal cell phone number.

⁹ Ms. Sowell also confirmed in her OEIG interview that this number was her personal cell phone number.

The phone records reflected that during the two and one-half month period between August 1, 2019 and October 15, 2019, before Ms. Sowell sent her draft narrative of allegations to Ms. Robinson, approximately **767** text messages were exchanged between Ms. Sowell's and Ms. Robinson's personal cellular phone numbers.¹⁰ In addition, during that time period approximately **32** calls over 60 seconds long were exchanged between the numbers.¹¹

The chart below lists the calls over 60 seconds in length that were exchanged between Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell's personal cell phone numbers between August 1, 2019 and 3:17 p.m. on October 15, 2019:

Number of Calls: 32

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Initiated¹²</u>	<u>Duration (minutes)¹³</u>
08/01/19	12:27 p.m.	3
08/15/19	7:23 a.m.	2
08/19/19	12:39 p.m.	11
08/21/19	1:21 p.m.	14
08/22/19	10:07 a.m.	29
08/23/19	12:41 p.m.	15
08/26/19	7:20 a.m.	32
08/26/19	5:00 p.m.	29
08/27/19	7:09 a.m.	46
08/27/19	9:12 a.m.	8
08/28/19	7:12 a.m.	6
09/03/19	10:57 a.m.	5
09/04/19	7:07 a.m.	53
09/10/19	7:31 a.m.	27
09/11/19	4:16 p.m.	56
09/12/19	4:07 p.m.	40
09/13/19	7:38 a.m.	2
09/13/19	8:33 a.m.	14
09/13/19	11:10 a.m.	6
09/13/19	11:33 a.m.	1
09/17/19	7:11 a.m.	37
09/18/19	4:36 p.m.	41
09/20/19	7:11 a.m.	5
09/20/19	7:24 a.m.	14
09/26/19	7:00 a.m.	33
10/01/19	4:36 p.m.	42
10/01/19	5:19 p.m.	1

¹⁰ In this report, the OEIG included only texts and calls that the phone records indicated were "Completed Successfully," and excluded texts and calls listed on the phone records as "Abnormal Completion."

¹¹ There also were approximately 27 calls that were 60 seconds or less during this period.

¹² The phone records reflected times in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). For all calls and texts discussed in this report, times have been converted from Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) to Central Daylight Time or Central Standard Time, as appropriate, and rounded to the nearest minute.

¹³ For all calls discussed in this report, all duration has been rounded to the nearest minute.

10/03/19	5:10 p.m.	26
10/04/19	4:26 p.m.	52
10/07/19	4:31 p.m.	51
10/15/19	11:30 a.m.	14
10/15/19	12:52 p.m.	21

Some of the texts and calls during this period were made from Ms. Sowell's number to Ms. Robinson's number, and some of the texts and calls were made from Ms. Robinson's number to Ms. Sowell's number. The phone records reflected that during this period, approximately 22 of the calls were over 10 minutes long, and 11 of the calls were over 30 minutes long, including a 56-minute call made from Ms. Sowell's number to Ms. Robinson's number on September 11, 2019. Some of the communications occurred early in the morning or late in the evening. For example, a 33-minute call was made from Ms. Sowell's number to Ms. Robinson's number at 7:00 a.m. on September 26, 2019; on August 19, 2019, approximately 25 texts were exchanged between the numbers between 10:50 p.m. and 11:08 p.m.

***Texts and Calls between Sowell Draft Narrative Sent and Official Complaint Sent
(October 15th at 3:17 P.M. – October 16th at 12:35 P.M.)***

As noted above, DHS emails reflect that Ms. Sowell emailed a draft narrative of her allegations to Ms. Robinson on October 15, 2019 at 3:17 p.m. (addressed to "Q"), and emailed her official BCA complaint form with a longer, more detailed narrative to Ms. Robinson on October 16, 2019 at 12:35 p.m. During the intervening 21 hours and 18 minutes, the phone records reflect that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson exchanged 3 texts and 7 calls, beginning one minute after Ms. Sowell emailed her draft narrative. The total duration of the calls was approximately 2 hours and 13 minutes. Those texts and calls are listed in the chart below:

Number of Texts: 3
Number of Calls: 7
Total Duration of Calls: 2 hours 13 minutes

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Initiated</u>	<u>Duration</u>
10/15/19	3:18 p.m.	(text)
10/15/19	3:19 p.m.	(text)
10/15/19	3:19 p.m.	4 seconds
10/15/19	3:24 p.m.	(text)
10/15/19	3:28 p.m.	18 minutes
10/15/19	4:18 p.m.	19 minutes
10/15/19	4:38 p.m.	13 minutes
10/15/19	5:12 p.m.	18 minutes
10/15/19	8:05 p.m.	54 minutes
10/16/19	8:22 a.m.	11 minutes

G. OEIG Interview Of Angelia Sowell

OEIG investigators interviewed Ms. Sowell on March 16, 2021. She said that she has been an investigator with the DHS Office of Inspector General since August 2019, and in that position her duties include investigating abuse and exploitation of DHS clients with mental, physical, and cognitive disabilities. She confirmed that prior to that position, she worked in BAJA.

Ms. Sowell said that when she started working for the DHS Office of Inspector General, she was assigned to work with DHS Employee 1. She described numerous incidents involving DHS Employee 1, including that he:

- Called other employees dumb, and said they take two-hour lunches and then sleep at work;
- Said that 98% of the investigators were promoted because of seniority, race, and gender (Ms. Sowell noted that 98% of the investigators in the office are Black women);
- Referred to the hires of several other employees as the season of “hire a Cuban, Asian, and lesbian”;
- Referred to Ms. Sowell as a “nice old lady”;
- Forced an interviewee to repeat a racial slur multiple times;
- Told Ms. Sowell that as an investigator she would be called “[redacted], [redacted], [redacted],” and other names, and she needed to get used to it;
- Required Ms. Sowell to say “Semper Fi” to him every morning, meaning to always be faithful, which she found intimidating;
- Became upset when she went for training with other investigators, and called her a pig or guinea pig;
- Said that her husband, who is part Cuban, looked funny; and asked if he was a foreigner;
- Asked how she could afford her car and what her husband’s side job was, which Ms. Sowell interpreted as implying he was a drug dealer;
- Did not let her take lunch, and kept her past her working hours;
- Told her that in a previous position with the Department of Corrections he lived for tactical team calls, “so he could go beat the [redacted] out of black and brown people”;
- Stood by the copier to keep her from coming out of her office;
- Told her that because of his training in the Marines he could kill her in seven seconds; and
- Told her he wanted to crush DHS Office of Inspector General Bureau Chief [DHS Employee 8] “into a [redacted] taco.”

Ms. Sowell did not identify witnesses to nearly any of the incidents she described in her interview.¹⁴ She explained that DHS Employee 1 was very smart and knew what he was doing by only making his comments when no one else was around.

Ms. Sowell said that after she spoke with a Bureau Chief about the issues with DHS Employee 1, a DHS Office of Inspector General Deputy Inspector General emailed her that she had the right to file a complaint. Ms. Sowell said she filed a formal complaint about DHS

¹⁴ Ms. Sowell said that another employee was present when DHS Employee 1 made the alleged comment that because of his Marines training he could kill her in 7 seconds; according to the BCA Investigation Report, in the internal investigation the other employee said that he did not recall DHS Employee 1 making that statement. Ms. Sowell also noted that another investigator had told her that she heard from Bureau Chief [DHS Employee 9] that on one occasion when [DHS Employee 9] was standing outside Ms. Sowell’s door, she ([DHS Employee 9]) overheard DHS Employee 1 make unidentified inappropriate comments.

Employee 1 with BCA in October 2019, and that she believed she emailed the complaint form to the address listed on the form. Ms. Sowell said no one assisted her in completing the complaint and filing it because she “didn’t need any assistance.” She said she did not discuss the incidents involving DHS Employee 1 with anyone at BCA prior to filing the complaint, and that it was not accurate that she spoke with Ms. Robinson and [DHS Employee 6] about the situation with DHS Employee 1 prior to filing the complaint; she then stated that she did not know if she spoke with them prior to the complaint. During her interview, Ms. Sowell was shown a copy of the October 16, 2019 complaint form, and she confirmed the DHS Civil Affairs complaint email address to which she said she sent it. She said she did not believe she sent the complaint form to anyone else. Later in the interview, she said she did not recall if she emailed Ms. Robinson a copy of the complaint that was filed.

Ms. Sowell said she provided a witness list to the BCA investigator, and when asked specifically to whom, Ms. Sowell responded: “I think her name was, uh, Investigator Robinson.” Later in the interview, when Ms. Sowell discussed a call she had made to the BCA investigator, she said, “I think her name was Quartrena or Catina Robinson.” Ms. Sowell said that Ms. Robinson interviewed her by phone after the complaint was filed.

Ms. Sowell said that when she worked in BAJA, she met Ms. Robinson when Ms. Robinson was new at BCA. She said that on “one or two occasions,” Ms. Robinson came to pick up documents from BAJA or Ms. Sowell emailed her documents, and that she would also see Ms. Robinson “in passing.” However, Ms. Sowell said that was “the extent of me knowing her,” and that she “didn’t know her.” Ms. Sowell said that she did not go on breaks or spend time chatting with Ms. Robinson, explaining, “I didn’t know her like that.” Ms. Sowell said that BAJA had a party for her when she left to start her position at the DHS Office of Inspector General, to which the whole floor was invited, and stated that she believed Ms. Robinson gave her a plastic sign for her desk; she denied that she received any other gifts from Ms. Robinson, including money. Ms. Sowell said it would be inaccurate to say she had a personal relationship with Ms. Robinson outside of work, and said that she would “absolutely not” consider Ms. Robinson a friend.

Ms. Sowell denied that she informed Ms. Robinson about her issues or concerns about DHS Employee 1 before filing the complaint because “[o]nce I left there, I didn’t . . . keep contact with her like that.” Ms. Sowell said: “We never talked on the phone or anything like that outside of work. We . . . didn’t know each other like that.”¹⁵

H. Personal Phone Records For Ms. Sowell’s OEIG Interview Date

The OEIG reviewed Ms. Robinson’s personal cell phone records for the date of Ms. Sowell’s OEIG March 16, 2021 interview. That interview ended at 3:17 p.m. The phone records reflect that four minutes later, at 3:21 p.m., a *five-hour* call was made from Ms. Sowell’s number to Ms. Robinson’s number.¹⁶

¹⁵ In light of Ms. Sowell’s misrepresentations in her OEIG interview about her communications with Ms. Robinson and their relationship, the OEIG did not use further time and resources to continue to investigate the allegations against DHS Employee 1 following Ms. Sowell’s OEIG interview.

¹⁶ Ms. Sowell’s OEIG interview lasted approximately 5 hours and 50 minutes, including preliminary procedures and a break. Ms. Sowell consented to the OEIG audio recording the interview. At the beginning of the interview, the OEIG

***Date of OEIG Interview of Ms. Sowell
(March 16, 2021, ending at 3:17 P.M)***

Duration of Call: 5 hours 2 minutes

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Initiated</u>	<u>Duration</u>
03/16/21	3:21 p.m.	5 hours 2 minutes ¹⁷

I. OEIG Interview Of Quartrena Robinson

OEIG investigators interviewed Ms. Robinson on July 7, 2021. She said she has been an Investigator (Executive I) with BCA since approximately August 2018, and that she has been temporarily assigned to an Executive II position in DHS Workplace Violence since approximately July 2020. Ms. Robinson said that her duties include investigating discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and workplace violence claims made by employees, applicants, and customers. She added that her job as an investigator is to “ensure a fair and unbiased investigation” is conducted.

Ms. Robinson said that [DHS Employee 3] gave her an email he had received from the DHS Office of Inspector General that said that Ms. Sowell had made allegations. She said that [DHS Employee 3] instructed her to call Ms. Sowell to see what was going on, and report back to him about what she learned. Ms. Robinson said she then called Ms. Sowell, who gave her information about her allegations, and that the call was within a few days before October 16, 2019. When asked how she got Ms. Sowell’s phone number to call her, Ms. Robinson said that [DHS Employee 3] gave it to her on a “sticky note.” Ms. Robinson said she reported to [DHS Employee 3] what Ms. Sowell had said, and then he decided to move forward with an investigation.

Ms. Robinson said that [DHS Employee 3] told her that he wanted her to investigate Ms. Sowell’s allegations and instructed her to email the official BCA complaint form to Ms. Sowell to fill out. Ms. Robinson said she emailed Ms. Sowell the complaint form, and that Ms. Sowell returned it to her. During her interview, Ms. Robinson identified Ms. Sowell’s October 16, 2019 complaint and said she received it around the date shown on it. She said she did not provide any guidance to Ms. Sowell about how to fill out the form or what to put in the complaint, and that everything she said to Ms. Sowell about the complaint form is documented in emails maintained on BCA’s shared drive. Ms. Robinson said she did not recall Ms. Sowell asking anything about filling out the form. She said that she did not read any documents about Ms. Sowell’s allegations, other than the DHS Office of Inspector General email that [DHS Employee 3] gave her, before she

investigators informed Ms. Sowell that the OEIG did not consent to any other audio recording of the interview (*see* Illinois eavesdropping law, 720 ILCS 5/14-2), and Ms. Sowell stated that she was not recording the interview herself.

¹⁷ The phone records also reflect another successfully completed call from Ms. Sowell’s personal phone to Ms. Robinson’s personal phone at 3:21 p.m., lasting 1 minute, and a call identified as an abnormal completion at that time, lasting 15 minutes. Materials produced with the phone records explain that an abnormal completion occurs with a network interruption. The OEIG followed up with the mobile communications company for clarification of why the records might show multiple calls from the same number starting at the same time, but was advised that they did not have further information.

received the October 16, 2019 complaint. She said that other than these conversations with [DHS Employee 3] and Ms. Sowell, she did not have any discussions with anyone else regarding Ms. Sowell's allegations against DHS Employee 1 prior to October 16, 2019.¹⁸

Ms. Robinson said that when she began working at BCA in 2018, and started to receive cases, her "common sense" prompted her to ask [DHS Employee 3] whether she should remove herself from investigating cases involving DHS caseworkers, because she previously worked as a caseworker. She said [DHS Employee 3] told her to let him know if she felt any apprehensions about her ability to do the investigation when she was assigned a complaint, and if she did not have any, she could continue to be the assigned investigator.

Ms. Robinson said that initially, she did not have any concerns about being assigned as the investigator on Ms. Sowell's complaint, until [DHS Employee 3] told her that it was a "high profile" case, and that there might be pushback from the DHS Office of Inspector General. She said she told [DHS Employee 3] that she was new to BCA, and asked why she was being assigned instead of an investigator who had been there longer; she said she also questioned if she was the best investigator for the complaint. Ms. Robinson explained that although she started working at BCA over a year earlier in August 2018, she had not investigated a complaint involving DHS Office of Inspector General individuals before. Ms. Robinson said that [DHS Employee 3] told her that he trusted her and would be there to help her. Ms. Robinson said that other than that conversation, she did not express or discuss any concerns about the complaint with anyone else until a 2021 conversation with [DHS Employee 7] about needing documentation of what actions were taken so she could close out the case.¹⁹

Ms. Robinson said that she did not interview Ms. Sowell after the official complaint form was received because her initial call with Ms. Sowell prior to receiving the official complaint form had been lengthy and Ms. Sowell gave her a lot of information at that time; however, she said she later contacted Ms. Sowell for follow-up information as needed, mostly by email. Ms. Robinson said she investigated Ms. Sowell's allegations by requesting information about the demographics of the employees in Ms. Sowell's department, requesting information from Human Resources, and reviewing documents about previous incidents involving DHS Employee 1. She said she also interviewed various individuals, including DHS Employee 1, whom she said she interviewed along with BCA Assistant General Counsel [DHS Employee 6].²⁰

Ms. Robinson said that her investigation revealed that DHS Employee 1 had a prior pattern of issues with other women, but she acknowledged that she did not identify anyone who witnessed

¹⁸ Ms. Robinson said that she and Ms. Sowell did not have a conversation with [DHS Employee 6] about the allegations prior to October 16, 2019.

¹⁹ Ms. Robinson also said this conversation with [DHS Employee 7] took place around the time she learned that DHS Employee 1 had filed an appeal.

²⁰ DHS emails reflect that on Sunday, March 8, 2020, an email was sent to Ms. Robinson's State email address from "Shyree Robinson," with the subject "Memo to self regarding the interview at Madden 3-6-2020." The email summarized issues the author had with "[DHS Employee 6]" at the interview, and stated: "As we got further into our discussion I could not help but to feel that [DHS Employee 1] was no longer the accused but Angie was. . . I felt I was the investigation [sic] went from fact finding to protecting her as an African American women [sic] not only against [DHS Employee 1] but now [DHS Employee 6][.]" Various employment documents in Ms. Robinson's DHS personnel file list Ms. Robinson's full name as "Quartrena Shyree Robinson."

DHS Employee 1's comments and actions toward Ms. Sowell. Ms. Robinson said she drafted the BCA Investigation Report, it was reviewed by various managers, and [DHS Employee 3] made the decision regarding what findings to make and gave the final approval for the Report. Ms. Robinson said she conducted the investigation in an "unbiased and fair manner," as required.

Ms. Robinson said that she later learned that DHS Employee 1 had filed an appeal of the findings, and said she reviewed DHS Employee 1's appeal document on BCA's electronic system and was aware that DHS Employee 1 had suggested that she and Ms. Sowell were friends. She said she also learned that the matter had been referred to the OEIG.²¹ When asked whether she has had contact with Ms. Sowell since the conclusion of the internal investigation on June 11, 2020, Ms. Robinson said that Ms. Sowell emailed her to ask what was going on because she thought the investigation was closed; Ms. Robinson said she did not recall when Ms. Sowell reached out to her, and said that she did not respond.²²

When asked to describe her working relationship with Ms. Sowell when Ms. Sowell worked at BAJA, Ms. Robinson responded, "I guess I really wouldn't." She confirmed that the BAJA offices were on the same floor as her office at BCA, but said she did not go on lunch breaks or other breaks with Ms. Sowell. She said that she would sometimes call or email Ms. Sowell if she needed information from her for an investigation (after initially contacting [DHS Employee 4]), and sometimes would go to the BAJA offices to follow up on a request. She said she would occasionally visit Ms. Sowell's cubicle to pick up or drop off items for an investigation, but maintained that those contacts were always work related. She said that making contact with Ms. Sowell to obtain information for her investigations was "really the gist of" her contact with Ms. Sowell when Ms. Sowell worked at BAJA, and said that they did not speak about personal matters. Ms. Robinson said that when Ms. Sowell left BAJA to work for the DHS Office of Inspector General, she gave Ms. Sowell a card that cost \$0.50, and a plaque that cost \$1; she denied giving Ms. Sowell any gifts of monetary value.

Ms. Robinson said she had no relationship with Ms. Sowell other than that she just worked with Ms. Sowell. She said she does not have a personal relationship with Ms. Sowell outside of work, and never has had a personal relationship with her, including before Ms. Sowell submitted her complaint against DHS Employee 1. She said they have never socialized outside of work.

Ms. Robinson said she only made phone calls to Ms. Sowell on her (Ms. Robinson's) office desk phone, and only at work. Ms. Robinson said she has never spoken to Ms. Sowell through texts or calls outside of work. She said she believes that Ms. Sowell emailed her State cell phone number to her (Ms. Robinson), and said that after she received that email from Ms. Sowell, she used that number to contact Ms. Sowell going forward.²³ Ms. Robinson said she has never spoken to Ms. Sowell through phone calls at work, other than work-related calls when Ms. Sowell worked

²¹ DHS emails reflect that on August 24, 2020, a DHS employee advised Ms. Robinson that the matter had been referred to the OEIG to review.

²² In her OEIG interview, Ms. Sowell said she contacted Ms. Robinson to determine what was going on, after Ms. Sowell received a letter from the OEIG. The OEIG verified that it sent a letter to Ms. Sowell dated August 25, 2020, notifying her of her rights as a person who had been identified, in a complaint filed with the OEIG, as having been subjected to alleged discrimination, harassment, or sexual harassment. See 5 ILCS 430/20-63.

²³ As noted above, DHS emails reflect that on October 15, 2019, Ms. Sowell emailed Ms. Robinson and [DHS Employee 6] her State cell phone number, explaining that she did not have an office phone.

at BAJA, and calls about Ms. Sowell's complaint at the direction of [DHS Employee 3]. Ms. Robinson stated she has never sent a text to, or received a text from, Ms. Sowell's personal cell phone, or texted with Ms. Sowell on any phone. Ms. Robinson also said that she has not spoken with Ms. Sowell about the OEIG's investigation.

IV. ANALYSIS

The State of Illinois Code of Personal Conduct states that State employees "hold a position of public trust," and have "a responsibility to the people of the State of Illinois to act with integrity."²⁴ Both Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell are DHS investigators, entrusted with the responsibility of gathering facts, including accurately reporting witness statements; assessing evidence; weighing the credibility of witnesses; and ultimately making recommendations that may result in serious consequences for other employees and DHS clients. Moreover, they carry out these duties in the most sensitive of cases, involving matters of abuse and exploitation of DHS clients with mental, physical, and cognitive disabilities (in Ms. Sowell's case), and discrimination and harassment of DHS employees (in Ms. Robinson's case). The OEIG's investigation revealed that contrary to these duties, Ms. Robinson compromised the investigation of serious allegations of harassment by failing to disclose and take necessary action to address her potential conflict of interest, and that both Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell made false statements and intentional omissions in the OEIG investigation about their communications and relationship. Unfortunately, as a result, the OEIG is unable to determine whether the serious allegations against DHS Employee 1 are true.

The Code of Personal Conduct requires State employees to "take appropriate action to identify, disclose, and avoid potential conflicts of interest with the performance of their official duties."²⁵ In addition, State employees should "avoid any action that creates the appearance of a violation of . . . the ethical standards set forth in this Code."²⁶ Ms. Robinson's friendship with Ms. Sowell should have been raised by Ms. Robinson before she was assigned to investigate Ms. Sowell's allegations about DHS Employee 1. Phone records show that they frequently texted and called each other on their personal phones during the months before Ms. Sowell submitted her complaint. In addition, as both [DHS Employee 4] and [DHS Employee 5] recounted, when Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell worked on the same floor at DHS's offices on South Clinton Street in Chicago, they observed that Ms. Robinson frequently visited Ms. Sowell's work space and that Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell went on breaks together. Despite this, Ms. Robinson failed to take appropriate action to raise this issue when Ms. Sowell made allegations about DHS Employee 1.

When she first became aware of Ms. Sowell's allegations, Ms. Robinson should have immediately disclosed her potential conflict with Ms. Sowell to managers. Instead, Ms. Robinson accepted the assignment to investigate the allegations and conducted the investigation. Moreover, the evidence strongly suggests that Ms. Robinson did not maintain the objectivity necessary to conduct a fair and impartial investigation. For example, Ms. Robinson spoke with Ms. Sowell on their personal phones for over two hours after Ms. Sowell asked for her thoughts about Ms. Sowell's draft narrative of her allegations, and following those communications Ms. Sowell

²⁴ Code of Personal Conduct, at 2 (2017 & rev. 2021).

²⁵ *Id.* at 3.

²⁶ *Id.*

submitted a longer and more detailed version of the narrative with her official complaint. In addition, following her interview of DHS Employee 1, Ms. Robinson emailed herself that she felt the investigation had gone “from fact finding to protecting” Ms. Sowell.

Ms. Robinson failed to take appropriate action to disclose her relationship with Ms. Sowell, and avoid either an appearance of, or an actual conflict of interest that relationship created. Therefore, that allegation is [REDACTED].²⁷

Even more disconcerting, both Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell made false statements and intentional omissions in the OEIG’s investigation. The State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Ethics Act) requires State employees to cooperate with OEIG investigations.²⁸ Failure to cooperate includes “intentional omissions and knowing false statements.”²⁹

During her OEIG interview, Ms. Sowell made the following statements:

- She never talked with Ms. Robinson on the phone outside of work;³⁰
- She did not inform Ms. Robinson about her issues with DHS Employee 1 before filing the complaint; and
- No one assisted her in completing the complaint and filing it.

During her OEIG interview, Ms. Robinson made the following statements:

- She has never spoken to Ms. Sowell through texts or calls outside of work;
- She only made phone calls to Ms. Sowell on her (Ms. Robinson’s) office desk phone, and only at work;
- She has never sent a text to, or received a text from, Ms. Sowell’s personal cell phone, or texted with Ms. Sowell on any phone;
- She did not read any documents about Ms. Sowell’s allegations, other than the DHS Office of Inspector General email that [DHS Employee 3] gave her, before she received the October 16, 2019 complaint;
- She did not provide any guidance to Ms. Sowell about what to put in the complaint; and
- She has not spoken with Ms. Sowell about the OEIG’s investigation.

These statements were false, and/or intentional omissions.

Communications and Relationship

Contrary to their statements that they did not call and/or text each other aside from limited calls about work matters, phone records show that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson regularly

²⁷ The OEIG concludes that an allegation is “[redacted]” when it has determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that a violation of law or policy has occurred, or that there has been fraud, waste, mismanagement, misconduct, nonfeasance, misfeasance, or malfeasance.

²⁸ 5 ILCS 430/20-70.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ During her OEIG interview, Ms. Sowell even feigned an inability to recall Ms. Robinson’s name, stating at one point that “I think her name was, uh. Investigator Robinson,” and later in the interview saying, “I think her name was Quartrena or Catina Robinson.”

exchanged texts and called each other numerous times on their personal phones. In just a two-and-one-half month period before Ms. Sowell sent Ms. Robinson her draft narrative of allegations, they exchanged approximately **767** text messages, and approximately **32** calls that were over 60 seconds long, on their personal phones. Moreover, most of the communications during this period occurred after Ms. Sowell began working at the DHS Office of Inspector General, when Ms. Robinson no longer would have had need to obtain BAJA information from her.

In addition, many of the calls were lengthy, including approximately 11 calls that were over 30 minutes long during that period. The communications also occurred on a daily or near-daily basis, including early in the morning and late at night. For example, Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson had a 33-minute call on their personal phones at 7:00 a.m. on September 26, 2019, and exchanged a series of texts between 10:50 p.m. and 11:08 p.m. on August 19, 2019. Such extensive communications on personal phones further show that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson have more than a mere working relationship, and that evidence is corroborated by the BAJA employees interviewed in the OEIG investigation, who described observing a much closer relationship between Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson than the passing work acquaintance Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson described to the OEIG.

Discussion of Complaint

The emails and phone records also refute Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson's statements regarding their discussions of the allegations prior to Ms. Sowell's filing her official complaint. On October 15, 2019, the day before she submitted her official complaint, Ms. Sowell emailed a three-page draft narrative of her allegations to Ms. Robinson (addressing her "Hey Q"), and asked her to "[r]ead and tell me what you think." Ms. Robinson did not respond to the email to say that she was not going to do so, but rather thanked her for her information. Beginning immediately thereafter, Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson exchanged three texts and spoke to each other on their personal phones multiple times, for a total of over two hours, including a lengthy call at 8:05 in the evening. Following these communications, Ms. Sowell submitted her official complaint, along with a significantly revised version of the narrative of allegations that was twice as long as the draft she sent Ms. Robinson the day before.

Given that Ms. Sowell emailed her draft narrative discussing her issues with DHS Employee 1 to Ms. Robinson the day before she filed her complaint, Ms. Sowell's statement in her OEIG interview that she did not inform Ms. Robinson about her issues with DHS Employee 1 before filing the complaint, was false.

This evidence also provides strong reason to believe that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson were not truthful in their OEIG interviews when Ms. Sowell said that no one assisted her in completing the complaint and filing it, and when Ms. Robinson said that she did not provide any guidance to Ms. Sowell about what to put in the complaint or even read any other documents about the allegations. Their calls and texts after Ms. Sowell asked Ms. Robinson to read the draft narrative, and the fact that following those communications Ms. Sowell submitted a significantly revised version of the narrative, provide reasonable cause to conclude that Ms. Robinson provided Ms. Sowell guidance in how to revise her narrative before Ms. Sowell submitted her official complaint. This is only bolstered by the fact that when asked in her interview whether she had

provided any guidance to Ms. Sowell about what to put in the complaint, Ms. Robinson never mentioned that she had received an email from Ms. Sowell asking her to read a draft of her narrative.

Discussion of OEIG Investigation

In addition, when asked in her OEIG interview whether she had contact with Ms. Sowell since the conclusion of the internal investigation on June 11, 2020, Ms. Robinson only stated that Ms. Sowell had emailed her on one occasion to ask what was going on. Ms. Robinson omitted telling investigators about the five-hour call she received from Ms. Sowell minutes after Ms. Sowell's OEIG interview ended on March 16, 2021.

The allegation that Ms. Sowell and Ms. Robinson failed to cooperate with the OEIG's investigation, through their false statements and/or intentional omissions in their OEIG interviews, is [REDACTED].

Finally, and most troubling, Ms. Sowell's allegations about DHS Employee 1, if true, describe serious and offensive misconduct that should be addressed. DHS Employee 1, however, has denied the allegations, and there are no witnesses with direct knowledge that can corroborate what Ms. Sowell alleges DHS Employee 1 said and did to her. As a result, the case against DHS Employee 1 rests almost entirely on what Ms. Sowell said happened, and on her credibility. Unfortunately, Ms. Sowell's believability has been undermined by the false statements she made during the OEIG's investigation, and the collusive nature of her interactions with Ms. Robinson during the DHS and OEIG investigations. As a result, the OEIG is simply unable to determine whether DHS Employee 1 committed the misconduct she has alleged.

V. [REDACTED] AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of its investigation, the OEIG concludes that there is **REASONABLE CAUSE TO ISSUE THE FOLLOWING [REDACTED]**:

- **[REDACTED]** – DHS Bureau of Civil Affairs Investigator Quartrena Robinson failed to take appropriate action to disclose the appearance of, or an actual, conflict of interest before investigating Ms. Sowell's complaint, in violation of the State of Illinois Code of Personal Conduct.
- **[REDACTED]** – DHS Bureau of Civil Affairs Investigator Quartrena Robinson failed to cooperate with the OEIG's investigation, by making false statements and intentional omissions during her OEIG interview, in violation of the Ethics Act.
- **[REDACTED]** – DHS Office of Inspector General Internal Security Investigator II Angelia Sowell failed to cooperate with the OEIG's investigation, by making false statements and intentional omissions during her OEIG interview, in violation of the Ethics Act.

As DHS investigators, Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell both hold positions of public trust, and the public they serve relies upon them to do their jobs with integrity. Moreover, their ability

to conduct fair and impartial investigations that can be relied upon depends on this integrity. For instance, one of an investigator's primary roles is to gather facts based on interviews and to report on those interviews in an objective and truthful manner. Investigators often have to testify in hearings regarding their reports and the evidence summarized in those reports. Thus, an investigator's credibility is essential to being able to fully conduct their work with any reliability. Given what appear to be Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell's efforts to manipulate the DHS investigation, coupled with their blatantly false statements to the OEIG in its examination of the truth regarding the DHS investigation, the OEIG recommends that Ms. Robinson and Ms. Sowell be terminated.

Finally, the BCA personnel interviewed in the investigation said that at the time of Ms. Robinson's investigation of Ms. Sowell's complaint there were no policies in place at BCA governing conflicts of interest or recusals, but that BCA was in the process of developing such policies at the time of their interviews. The OEIG highly recommends that BCA continue that process and implement policies requiring investigators and other staff to disclose any relationships that could compromise an investigation, prior to working on an investigation, so that such disclosures can be properly reviewed and assessed by management prior to assignments being made. Understanding that BCA employees may often have working relationships with other individuals at DHS, this does not necessarily require recusal. This case, however, reflects the important need for employees to make disclosures and for appropriate evaluations to be made prior to conducting investigations. Furthermore, because of these potential scenarios, investigators should be trained, if they are not already, on maintaining appropriate protocols and boundaries when investigating, such as being careful not to have personal communications with individuals involved in the investigation while it is pending.

No further investigative action is needed, and this case is considered closed.

Date: July 29, 2021

Office of Executive Inspector General
for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor
69 W. Washington Street, Ste. 3400
Chicago, IL 60602

By: Angela Luning
Deputy Inspector General

Sarah Williams
Investigator



JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Department of Human Services

Grace B. Hou, Secretary

Office of the General Counsel

69 West Washington • 9th Floor • Chicago, Illinois 60602

August 17, 2021

Via E-Mail to Sherry Bult, Senior Paralegal, at [REDACTED]@illinois.gov, on behalf of:

Susan M. Haling
Executive Inspector General
Office of the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor
69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400
Chicago, Illinois 60602

RE: Response to the Final Report for Complaint Number 20-01425

Dear Executive Inspector General Haling:

This letter responds to the Final Report for Complaint Number 20-01425. That Report includes three [REDACTED] allegations, and also makes several recommendations. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is reviewing the Report and its accompanying evidentiary materials. Your office will receive an update regarding this matter within one month. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robert J. Grindle, DHS' Ethics Officer.

Regards,

/s/ Grace B. Hou by /s/ Robert J. Grindle

Grace B. Hou
Secretary



JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Department of Human Services

Grace B. Hou, Secretary

Office of the General Counsel

69 West Washington • 9th Floor • Chicago, Illinois 60602

September 17, 2021

Via E-Mail to Sherry Bult, Senior Paralegal, at [REDACTED]@illinois.gov, on behalf of:

Susan M. Haling

Executive Inspector General

Office of the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor

69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400

Chicago, Illinois 60602

RE: Updated Response for the Final Report for Complaint Number 20-01425

Dear Executive Inspector General Haling:

This letter updates the response of the Department of Human Services (DHS) to the Final Report for Complaint Number 20-01425. That Report includes three [REDACTED] allegations and also makes several related recommendations. In short, DHS is following each of these.

First, DHS has begun the disciplinary process against the two DHS employees named in the Final Report. Because this process is governed by the Collective Bargaining Agreement, it may take some time before all disciplinary action is complete.

Second, DHS has finalized and approved a Bureau of Civil Affairs-specific, formal conflict of interest policy to govern Bureau of Civil Affairs (BCA) employees. That policy requires BCA investigators and other staff to disclose any relationships that could potentially compromise an investigation. BCA leadership is also finalizing materials for a staff training, to occur within the next few weeks, to address the conflict of interest policy and related matters, such as maintaining appropriate protocols and boundaries during an investigation.

Finally, DHS is currently taking steps to promulgate a policy for all employees regarding identifying and avoiding conflicts of interest, and disclosing any potential conflicts to a supervisor.

Your office will receive updates regarding this matter as the disciplinary process proceeds. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robert J. Grindle, DHS' Ethics Officer.

Regards,

/s/ Grace B. Hou by /s/ Robert J. Grindle

Grace B. Hou, Secretary



JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Department of Human Services

Grace B. Hou, Secretary

Office of the General Counsel

69 West Washington • 9th Floor • Chicago, Illinois 60602

October 18, 2022

Via E-Mail to Sherry Bult, Senior Paralegal, at [REDACTED]@illinois.gov, on behalf of:

Susan M. Haling

Executive Inspector General

Office of the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor

69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400

Chicago, Illinois 60602

RE: Updated Response for the Final Report for Complaint Number 20-01425

Dear Executive Inspector General Haling:

This letter updates the response of the Department of Human Services (DHS) to the Final Report for Complaint Number 20-01425. That Report includes three [REDACTED] allegations and also makes several related recommendations. The recommendations have now been fully implemented.

First, DHS has discharged the two DHS employees named in the Final Report. As of October 17, 2022, all personnel activity regarding these two individuals is complete, and they are discharged effective October 17, 2021.

Second, as previously indicated, DHS had developed a Bureau of Civil Affairs-specific, formal conflict of interest policy to govern Bureau of Civil Affairs (BCA) employees. That policy is in effect, with existing staff having received training on the policy and new staff being educated on the policy as part of the onboarding process.

Finally, on October 4, 2021, DHS promulgated a policy for all employees regarding identifying and avoiding conflicts of interest, and disclosing any potential conflicts to a supervisor.

With all activity related to this Final Report complete, DHS now considers this matter closed. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robert J. Grindle, DHS' Ethics Officer.

Regards,

/s/ Grace B. Hou by /s/ Robert J. Grindle

Grace B. Hou, Secretary