



Special Commissioner of Investigation
for the New York City School District

ANASTASIA COLEMAN
COMMISSIONER

**Annual Statistical Report of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City
School District for Calendar Year 2023**

The office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (“SCI”) is entrusted with autonomy in investigations concerning the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”), the largest school district in the nation. SCI has broad authority and discretion to conduct investigations to root out corruption, prevent waste and fraud, ensure safety, and eliminate the misuse of taxpayer resources. The SCI commissioner also serves as the inspector general for the New York City Teachers’ Retirement System (“TRS”) and the Board of Education Retirement System (“BERS”), evaluates and investigates all whistleblower claims involving DOE employees and vendors under the City Administrative Code, and serves as the investigative arm of the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board (“COIB”) regarding violations of Chapter 68 of the City Charter by DOE employees and others.

Calendar Year 2023 Statistics:

In Calendar Year (“CY”) 2023, SCI received a record 10,265 complaints. These complaints alleged misconduct, waste, fraud, financial mismanagement, and criminal activity within the DOE, TRS, and BERS, by employees, vendors, contracted workers, or volunteers. The complaints contained allegations of violations of administrative and criminal codes, various chapters of the City Charter, and the DOE Chancellor’s Regulations.

Specifically, in CY 2023, SCI:

- Investigated 393 cases that were opened in 2023 and closed 369 cases overall. The most frequent types of complaints SCI substantiated in CY 2023 were Employee Misconduct, Theft of Service, Falsifying Documents, and Inappropriate Relationships.
- Received 12 complaints specifically alleging violations of Chapter 68 of the City Charter as administered by the Conflicts of Interest Board (“COIB”) and identified potential conflicts of interest in an additional 12 cases.
- Investigated one complaint concerning BERS.

- Made 34 Policy and Procedure Recommendations in 29 cases.¹
- Substantiated, in 170 investigations, that 223 individuals or entities violated criminal statutes, the DOE Chancellor’s Regulations, or other administrative regulations.
- Referred 59 substantiated cases to the New York State Education Department (which licenses teachers, principals, and other pedagogues).
- Investigated 146 cases involving inappropriate or sexual misconduct by DOE employees or vendors, and substantiated allegations against individuals in 43 such cases.
- Made 287 personnel-related recommendations based on SCI’s substantiated findings.² The subjects investigated included teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and other DOE personnel, volunteers, and contracted service providers. SCI recommended disciplinary action in 56 instances, a majority of which included recommendations up to and including termination. SCI also made recommendations of 101 problem codes (as possible bars to future employment or contracts; these are often recommended when the subject has resigned or been dismissed before SCI has concluded its investigation), 40 financial recovery actions, 90 recommendations for appropriate disciplinary actions by DOE administrators, and seven other actions (e.g., retraining in lieu of disciplinary action, review of policy, review of vendor contracts). As a result of SCI’s investigations, many employees underwent special training (or retraining) related to their misconduct.
- In addition, 18 DOE employees and vendors who were the subjects of SCI complaints resigned during the pendency of SCI’s investigations.
- SCI received 21 complaints of retaliation for review under the NYC whistleblower statutes and completed reviews of six whistleblower claims received in 2023 or earlier, none of which were substantiated.³
- SCI substantiated 33 cases that identified to the DOE precise amounts of loss, theft, or mismanagement of funds, totaling more than \$1.5 million dollars. SCI also identified thousands of dollars due to loss, theft, or mismanagement of other monies for which an exact amount could not be determined.⁴ In addition, SCI was responsible for the continued collection and monitoring of restitution or fines in numerous cases.⁵
- SCI investigations led to one arrest.⁶

¹ SCI made numerous PPRs to the DOE in 2023, related to corruption hazards, mismanagement, and other ongoing or systemic deficiencies. All SCI PPRs are available on SCI’s website, including the date issued, the exact recommendation, the acceptance status, the implementation status, the implementation date, and the DOE response.

² SCI may make multiple personnel recommendations regarding any individual subject. These may include problem codes, restitution payments, disciplinary action, or other recommendations.

³ Further information regarding SCI’s processing of whistleblower cases in FY 2023 is published on our website (The Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District, [SCI Report of Whistleblower Complaints and Statistics for Fiscal Year 2023](#), [October 24, 2023]).

⁴ SCI frequently referred such matters back to DOE for its own audit and review of cases involving indeterminate monetary value such as time and leave issues or per session irregularities.

⁵ Restitution noted here consists of court ordered repayment of monies over a period related to past SCI cases. Fines during this period were issued by either the DOE or COIB.

⁶ Sheree Gibson, the former president of District 29 Presidents’ Council, was arrested on October 16, 2023, and charged with grand larceny in the third degree, grand larceny in the fourth degree, and falsifying business records. She was arraigned on October 17, 2023, and pled not guilty.

In CY 2023, SCI referred 7,509 complaints to other agencies. In addition, during or after its own investigations, SCI may also refer criminal findings to an appropriate prosecutor's office. In CY 2023, SCI referred 15 such cases to prosecutors' offices.⁷

DOE Anti-Corruption Report:

In November 2023, Special Commissioner Coleman made SCI's annual request that DOE Chancellor David Banks specify the DOE's most significant areas of corruption identified or addressed during the previous 12 months. SCI also requested that the DOE review the Department's responses from the previous year's report and reflect on the hazards identified and the progress or challenges faced in addressing those hazards.

The DOE responded to SCI's requests in January 2024, and described its practices and protocols concerning SCI's above-outlined request. The 2024 response specifically noted that two of its "most significant areas" were: (1) the DOE's Social Media Guidelines, and (2) the process for fingerprinting potential DOE employees and vendors.

Concerning the areas identified in its 2023 response to SCI's inquiries, the DOE provided updates in its 2024 letter to SCI. In summary, the DOE reported:

1. DOE Budget Process

As noted in the 2023 Anti-Corruption report, the court's decision in *Tamara Tucker, et al. v. City of New York et al*, 210 A.D.3. 565 (1st Dept. 2022) inspired concern that the DOE would be prevented from using its FY24 budget, according to the allocation given to it by the City Council. While the Appellate Division reinstated the DOE's FY23 budget, the appellate court ordered to DOE to change its budget process to ensure the Panel for Educational Policy (the "PEP") is given the opportunity to review and approve the DOE's estimated budget prior to the Mayoral approval and City Council vote on the City Budget.

Henceforth, the DOE's budget process will proceed as follows:

1. "DOE now uses the Mayor's Preliminary Budget, which is issued annually on January 16, to prepare the DOE's Estimated Budget; and
2. Using the Mayor's Preliminary Budget, rather than the Mayor's Executive Budget (which is issued annually on April 26), provides sufficient time for the 45-day public comment period and the PEP's vote on DOE's Estimated Budget to transpire before City Council votes on the City Budget in June."

⁷ Specifically, three cases to the New York County District Attorney's ("DA's") office; four to the Kings County DA's office, four to the Bronx County DA's office; two to the Queens County DA's office; one to the Richmond County DA's office; one to the Bergen County Prosecutor's office. In addition, SCI has worked regularly with both the Southern and Eastern District United States Attorney's offices.

2. Parking Permits

Per its response, “The new attestation was added to the current portal. The placard have been modified to reflect the updated language. The Parking Permit portal has been updated to capture vehicle registration information. Accordingly, a valid registration must be uploaded to the portal. Also, a feature has been added to the portal to enable DOE Parking Permit unit to verify/suspend/unsuspend permits and the DOE Parking permit has begun the process to verify/suspend/unsuspend permits since mid- September 2023.”

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Every officer and employee of the DOE is obligated to report immediately to SCI any knowledge of wrongdoing in the school system. We urge parents, students, and other concerned members of the community to get involved and help our children. If you suspect corruption, crime, or fraud at your child’s school, please contact (212) 510-1500, or file a complaint [online](#).