



ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

# OFFICE OF EQUITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT CY2025

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# 2025 OVERVIEW

OEHR was founded in 2021 to support Anne Arundel County government by ensuring that leaders have the data and resources to provide all residents and stakeholders with the benefits of living, working, and conducting business in Anne Arundel County.

In 2025, OEHR's first priority was the development of a two-year strategic plan - focusing the office's activities from January 2025 through December 2026 (when County Executive Steuart Pittman's administration will conclude). The strategic goals are as follows:

## STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

### 1. Engage

Provide learning opportunities through awareness, education, and programmatic activities.

### 2. Equip

Build capacity within the workforce and community using data, tools, frameworks, resources, and networks that enhance equity and compliance.

### 3. Operationalize

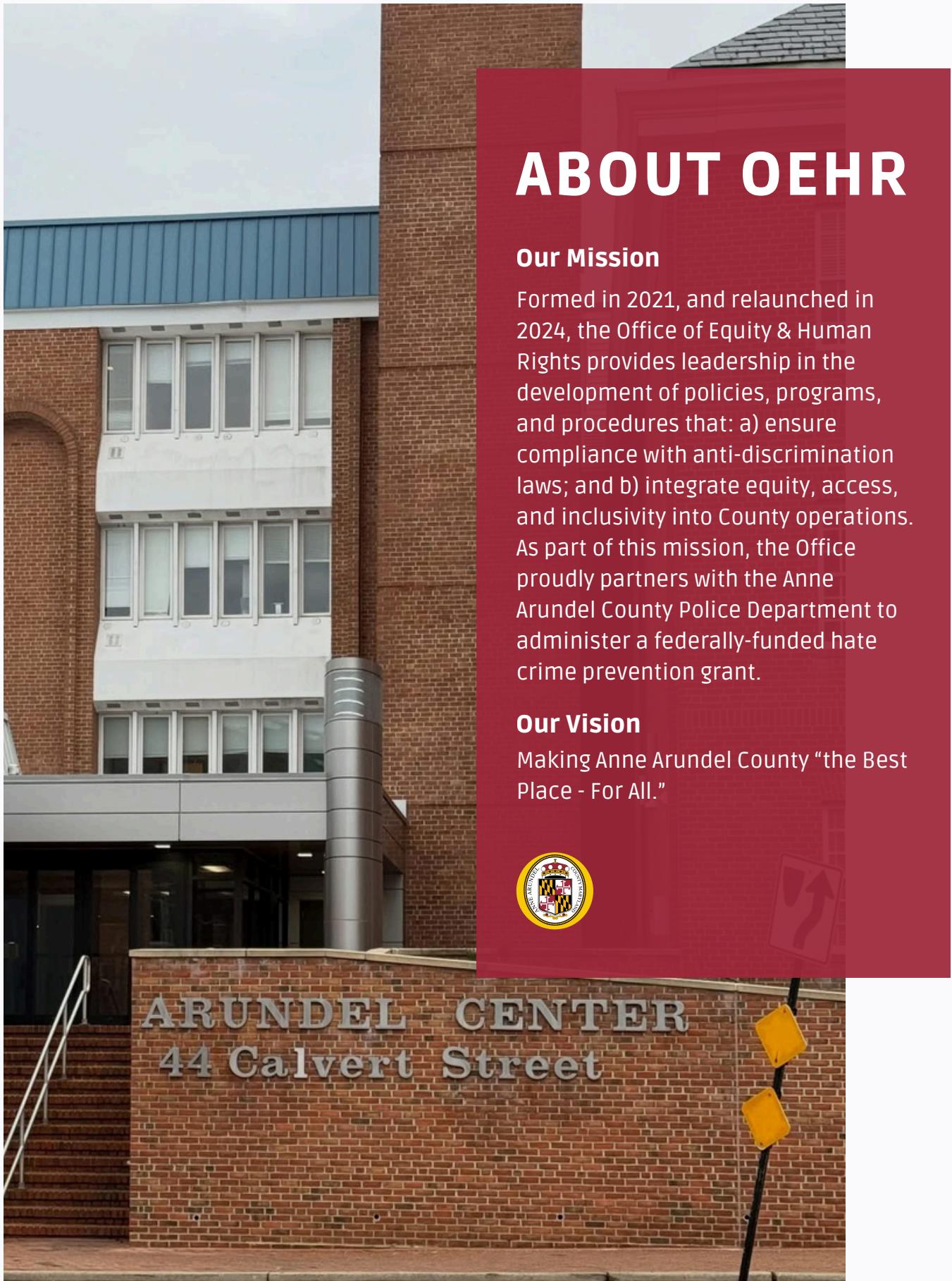
Conform countywide policies, programs, and procedures to reflect best practices for compliance and equity.

### 4. Evaluate

Apply the appropriate tools and methods to measure the impacts of policies, programs, and procedures on achieving anticipated outcomes.

By late January 2025, and for several months thereafter, numerous federal executive orders required staff to reevaluate our programmatic goals to determine impacts on planned activities. OEHR's activities were, and still are, fully compliant with federal and state laws.

This annual report summarizes the Office's key initiatives and accomplishments. To access OEHR's resources, visit [www.aacounty.org/oehr](http://www.aacounty.org/oehr) and [www.aacounty.org/nohatehere](http://www.aacounty.org/nohatehere).



# ABOUT OEHR

## Our Mission

Formed in 2021, and relaunched in 2024, the Office of Equity & Human Rights provides leadership in the development of policies, programs, and procedures that: a) ensure compliance with anti-discrimination laws; and b) integrate equity, access, and inclusivity into County operations. As part of this mission, the Office proudly partners with the Anne Arundel County Police Department to administer a federally-funded hate crime prevention grant.

## Our Vision

Making Anne Arundel County "the Best Place - For All."



# OUR VALUES

In fulfilling OEHR's mission, staff commit to the following values:

**01**

## **Accountability**

Assume personal and collective responsibility for the office's data-driven goals, objectives, and outcomes.

**04**

## **Respect**

Demonstrate due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions of others when engaging with the community and workforce.

**02**

## **Collaboration**

Cultivate authentic engagement opportunities within the workforce and community to define, co-create and implement solutions that address historical challenges.

**05**

## **Responsiveness**

Make genuine efforts to acknowledge and identify reasonable solutions to individual and community needs.

**03**

## **Local Context**

Honor the inherent value in the history, backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and norms of all Anne Arundel County community members and use this information to inform their approaches.

**06**

## **Sustainability**

Build sound infrastructure and adopt norms that will increase the longevity of our progress, create space for innovation, and meet the needs of the workforce and community.



# OUR TEAM



**Asha Smith, Esq.,**  
Director



**Amber Barnett**  
Assistant Director



**Richard Allen,**  
Civil Rights Investigator



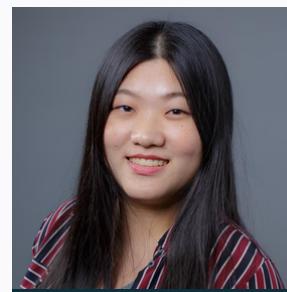
**Chanell Clemons**  
Executive Administrative  
Assistant/Outreach  
Coordinator



**Dr. Nicola Smith-Kea**  
Senior Project Manager  
(Shepard-Byrd Grant)



**Tiffany Frazier-  
Akinbulomo**  
Outreach Specialist  
(Shepard-Byrd Grant)



**Ziyue Gu**  
Data Analyst  
(Shepard-Byrd Grant)

Notable accomplishments of the OEHR team between 2021-2024 are as follows:



- Language Access Law
- Civil Rights Law
- Shepherd-Byrd Grant
- Strategic Partner Network
- Housing Resource Portal
- Engagement on Boards, Commissions, & Work Groups
- Fair Housing Testing Program
- Countywide Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Assessment
- Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO) Audit
- Workforce Diversity Dashboard Update
- Training for nearly 1,000 employees and nonprofit collaborators
- Special emphasis observances and programming

*The Best Place - For All*



# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Compliance & Enforcement

Since its inception in 2021, OEHR has worked to increase the County's enforcement capacity for local discrimination and harassment complaints. After an assessment of the County's civil rights landscape, OEHR successfully advocated for the introduction and passage of the County's first comprehensive civil rights bill.

The law went into effect in July 2024, and authorized the County to accept complaints against private employers, and providers of public accommodation (in addition to complaints against County employees and housing providers).

While developing case management protocols, OEHR launched a database that allows for case tracking and trend analysis. We continue to refine the database's capabilities to enhance reporting.

Between January and December of 2025, **OEHR received 57 documented complaints**. Of these: **24 were employment cases**; **22 were fair housing cases**; and **11 fell into other categories (including Title VI, religious institutions, etc.)**.

The following trends were noted:

- The overwhelming majority of employment cases involved County employment.\*
- Several housing complaints pertained to landlord-tenant issues, including maintenance and health and safety issues.
- Several documented complaints and undocumented inquiries to OEHR pertained to subsidized housing eligibility and waiting lists.

\*OEHR has referred most private employment cases to the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights while developing internal resources to competently resolve complaints newly authorized by the County civil rights law. However, when appropriate, OEHR has intervened in complaints to provide notice of rights and responsibilities and offer mediation through the County Conflict Resolution Center.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Compliance & Enforcement (Cont'd)

In keeping with best practices for incident reporting and accountability:

- OEHR collaborated with the Office of Personnel to revise countywide reporting requirements for internal complaints filed under the County's anti-discrimination and non-harassment policy.
- In 2025, a new administrative procedure was issued; training on the requirements will be introduced in 2026.

In response to internal discrimination, harassment, and bullying complaint trends:

- OEHR partnered with the Office of Personnel to offer a suite of four professional development courses to all staff between October and December 2025. The courses were selected to address common workplace issues that result in disputes and to empower staff to manage them. The subjects and attendance are outlined in the Training & Outreach section below.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Data, Resources, and Tools

### **Departmental Assessment**

In response to lessons learned about disparities in service delivery during the COVID pandemic, the County commissioned an assessment to evaluate equity and inclusivity efforts within our departments and identify opportunities for improvement. Departments utilized the assessment findings and recommendations from designated staff teams to develop plans tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.

### **Housing Resource Portal**

In 2024, OEHR worked with Arundel Community Development Services to launch the County's online [Housing Resource Portal](#). The portal is a self-service housing hub where users can find information about: financial assistance, legal resources, temporary, permanent, and supportive housing, and much more.

Resources and information are provided by government sources, local partners, and private community-based organizations. Targeted outreach was conducted in English, Spanish, and Korean.

In 2025, the portal received over 30,000 views. The 10 most viewed subjects, in order of frequency, were:

- Eviction prevention
- Find housing
- Public/Subsidized housing
- Buying a home
- Rapid relocation
- Homeless shelter
- Accessible housing
- Utilities
- Mortgage Assistance Program
- Emergency financial assistance

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Data, Resources, and Tools (Cont'd)

### Community Wellbeing Index

In July 2025, Anne Arundel County launched its [Community Wellbeing Index](#). ArundelStat developed the Index in partnership with OEHR as a public data source that reflects key indicators of safety, health, prosperity, and access at the census tract level. The Index allows users to determine how their communities perform in these areas, and to identify disparities and gaps.

County leaders - across disciplines - use this data to evaluate and develop policies, practices, programs, and strategies that meet the needs of all residents. The Index allows for more targeted, efficient, and effective work.

From July to December, the Index received **1,737 views**.

### Community & Conversations

OEHR conducted **8 community listening sessions** in which residents shared their impressions of access, health, prosperity, and safety in Anne Arundel County. The qualitative data gathered from these sessions have been analyzed and will be shared in 2026.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Training & Outreach

In 2025, OEHR conducted training and outreach as follows:

### **Fair Housing Webinar Series:**

OEHR partnered with the Equal Rights Center and Arundel Community Development Services to host a 6-part fair housing webinar series. The series launched in November 2024 and concluded in April 2025. Recordings are publicly available on the OEHR website. Certificates of completion were made available upon request from industry professionals. Covered topics and participation were as follows:

#### **Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications**

Rights, responsibilities, and best practices for reasonable accommodations and modifications for persons with disabilities.

#### **Tenant Screening and Barriers to Housing**

Best practices for compliant, non-discriminatory tenant screening processes.

#### **Source of Income Protections**

Housing voucher holders' rights and housing providers' obligations regarding screening and renting to tenants with vouchers.

#### **Lending & Appraisal Bias**

Exploration of discriminatory patterns in mortgage lending and home appraisals.

#### **Harassment in Housing**

Exploration of unlawful harassment with examples of illegal conduct.

#### **Know Your Fair Housing Rights**

A special Fair Housing Month overview of local, state, and federal fair housing protections.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance Training**

OEHR conducted fundamental compliance training for **135 County staff** and **40 agency partners**.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Training & Outreach (Cont'd)

### Professional Development Series

In partnership with the Office of Personnel, OEHR offered four live webinars which addressed:

- Building a Respectful Workplace
- Providing Excellent Customer Service
- Managing Conflict in the Workplace
- Basic De-Escalation

### Boards, Commissions, and Community Organizations

OEHR is represented on several County workgroups and committees.

In addition, staff serve the following boards, commissions, and organizations.

*Arundel Community Development Services*

*Baltimore Regional Council Regional Fair Housing Group*

*Anne Arundel County Community Reinvestment and Repair Commission*

*Anne Arundel County Food Council*

*Anne Arundel County Joint Commission on the Opportunity Gap*

*Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies*

*Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities*



### Day of Acknowledgment

On November 22, 2025, County Executive Pittman hosted "A Day of Acknowledgement: Confronting the Legacy of Slavery." OEHR collaborated with state and local stakeholders, community leaders, and County residents to develop a locally-focused day of events filled with history, art, conversation and community resources.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Shepard-Byrd Grant Hate Crime Prevention Program

In partnership with the Anne Arundel County Police Department, OEHR administers a **\$1.2 million grant** award from the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. This four-year grant provides funding to: conduct outreach, educate practitioners and the public, enhance victim reporting tools, and investigate and prosecute hate crimes committed against victims because of their protected class.

In 2025, the grant management team, led by Dr. Nicola Smith-Kea, executed several initiatives consistent with departmental goals. Highlights of their accomplishments are as follows.

- Developed the County's Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, consisting of 26 stakeholders.
- Facilitated purchase of enhanced police surveillance equipment.
- Developed and launched a multimedia public awareness campaign in English, Spanish, and Korean.
- Collected and analyzed hate crime awareness data.
- Enhanced the County's hate-bias reporting dashboard.
- Developed an incident reporting portal.
- Partnered with federal, state and local enforcement agencies, non-profits, and community based organizations to sponsor seven types of training, including Protecting Houses of Worship, Active Bystandership, Defending the Faith, Anne Arundel County Hate Bias Forum, and more.
- Hosted a community webinar series.



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