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CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

First Quarter 2025 Report

To General Superintendent Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, President Marlon Everett and the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners,

Attached please find the First Quarter 2025 Report from the Office of Prevention and Accountability (OPA).

As detailed in this report, OPA began 2025 with a continued focus on providing training and guidance to Park District employees related to our shared mission of ensuring that the Chicago Park District remains an equitable, inclusive, safe, and respectful recreation and work environment.

The Q1 report also includes a summary of OPA's investigative work, which is designed to increase accountability for everyone who visits or works in our parks. As always, we remain focused on the goal of establishing clear standards and keeping the Park District free from discrimination, harassment, workplace violence, retaliation, and abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

The OPA team looks forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues going forward.

Sincerely,

Tamara B. Starks

Tamara B. Starks
Director
Office of Prevention and Accountability

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Mission

The Office of Prevention and Accountability (OPA) works to ensure that the Chicago Park District provides all employees, patrons and visitors with a recreation and work environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, workplace violence, abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults, and retaliation.

Information regarding OPA's mission and operations is available to Park District staff and patrons online at <https://ChicagoParkDistrict.com/OPA>. Complaints related to the concerns enumerated above can be submitted to OPA in the following ways:

- By phone: 312-742-5OPA (312-742-5672)
- By email: OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com
- Online: Via a form linked on www.ChicagoParkDistrict.com/OPA
- In writing: Chicago Park District
Office of Prevention and Accountability
4830 S. Western Avenue
Chicago, IL 60609

Personnel

Throughout the First Quarter of 2025, OPA remained staffed as follows: a Director, a Senior Investigator, three Investigators and a Case Intake Specialist. With those personnel, OPA was fully staffed in accordance with the Chicago Park District's 2025 Budget for this Office.

OPA is committed to conducting thorough, fair, impartial and independent investigations regarding any alleged violations of the Human Rights Ordinance. To accomplish that, OPA has assembled a team of individuals with experience in investigations, law, Title IX, Title VII, child protection and human rights issues. The OPA team works to ensure that its investigations are consistent with best practices and takes steps to refine and improve its procedures for handling complaints, inquiries and investigations.

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Focus on Training as a Prevention Tool

OPA went into its third year in operation with a continued focus on the training and policy creation that is a key part of the preventative work this Office is tasked with performing.

In January, OPA – in conjunction with Workforce Development – rolled out a renewal of the Mandated Reporter training that is required of all staff under the state of Illinois' Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA). ANCRA works to protect children by ensuring that reports of abuse or neglect are promptly made to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Training on how to properly report is required every three years, under ANCRA. In order to avoid a situation where employees have fallen out of compliance with this training requirement, the Park District has established a schedule of requiring the training of employees every two years. At the end of the First Quarter, the Park District had substantial compliance with this requirement with roughly 97 percent of employees completing the training.¹

Additionally, OPA worked with the Park District's vendor to create a customized training that will ensure that all employees comply with the state of Illinois and City of Chicago requirements for Harassment Prevention and Bystander² training. The Park District is required to provide one hour of Harassment Prevention and one hour of Bystander training to all employees. Anyone in a managerial or supervisory position is also required to complete a second hour of Harassment Prevention training.

This year, the Harassment Prevention training for year-round employees was assigned to all staff via the Success Center on February 20, 2025, with a completion deadline of April 30, 2025. At the end of the First Quarter, more than 1,200 individuals – or roughly 40 percent of employees – had already completed the training, with a month remaining before the deadline. This year's training again focused on providing employees with information on how to identify harassing behavior, how to address concerns before they escalate into harassment, and how to report those concerns. In addition to the online training, OPA presented two in-person training sessions on February 25-26, 2025, for more than 250 year-round employees in the Department of Cultural and Natural Resources during meetings held at Washington Park. These DCNR employees do not have easy access to computers, given the nature of their positions, so the in-person sessions were provided to ensure that they can timely complete the required trainings and have the ability to ask any related questions.

¹ Some employees are delayed in completing training requirements due to being on medical, parental or other leave. Supervisors have been directed to require those employees to complete the training upon their return to work.

² The Bystander training is scheduled to be released in Q2 2025.

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With the trainings of year-round employees underway, OPA turned its attention to scheduling trainings for the more than 2,000 seasonal employees slated to be hired for Summer 2025. As part of that, OPA has scheduled 12 in-person sessions to provide both Harassment Prevention and Bystander trainings to seasonal employees in DCNR, Aquatics, Gymnastics and Outdoor & Environmental Education. OPA also made plans to provide a recorded version of both trainings for use during the on-boarding events Community Recreation will be holding at 18 locations in June 2025.

As a supplement to the trainings that are mandated by Illinois law and City ordinance, OPA also continues to provide trainings and guidance documents to address areas of specific concern identified during OPA investigations or by leadership within the Park District.

On March 25, 2025, for example, OPA conducted a training specifically for supervisors, including year-round foremen and seasonal foremen, within DCNR. The training highlighted the duty established in Chapter IV of the Park District Code, which requires all supervisory personnel to submit a written report to OPA if they receive a complaint or become aware of harassment or discrimination. The presentation also offered guidance on how to receive a complaint, what information to gather and how best to communicate.

Additionally, OPA continues to support the Park District's Policy Director on trainings and guidance related to the Gender Diversity Policy, which was implemented in 2024. Trainings were held on March 19, 2025, for staff in Aquatics and on March 25, 2025, for Special Recreation employees. On March 10, 2025, based on an OPA recommendation in a 2024 investigation, Community Recreation also issued a document titled "Procedure for Grouping Participants in Programming" to provide guidance on options for designating groups within programming (not grouping by gender - girls vs. boys, etc.). This procedure provides additional direction for employees on how to best comply with the Gender Diversity Policy and provide a welcoming space for transgender, non-binary and gender nonconforming program participants.

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Q1 Complaints, Reports and Investigations

In the First Quarter 2025, OPA received 89 complaints/inquiries.³ In the First Quarter, OPA opened 10 investigations and closed 31 cases. At the conclusion of the First Quarter, OPA had a total of 149 open investigations.

Of the complaints/inquiries received in the First Quarter 2025, the most common complaints/inquiries received were: discrimination (16); sexual harassment/misconduct (6); harassment (3), concerning conduct by or involving minors (7), and workplace violence (3). The remaining complaints/inquiries were in less common categories, were determined to not fall under OPA's jurisdiction, or remain under investigation.

Of the 89 complaints/inquiries received in the First Quarter, OPA determined that 38 did not fall under OPA's jurisdiction or require investigation; they included: concerns about a large off-leash dog being aggressive on Park District property; a complaint about the rules regarding use of Park District basketball courts; questions about the protocol for approving time-off requests; complaints about snow removal on Park District paths; allegations of defamation by a Park District employee; a request for compensation for a vehicle accident involving a Park District truck; and complaints about youth riding e-bikes on Park District property. While these complaints were not determined to require investigation by OPA, many of the inquiries raised serious issues. OPA, therefore, worked to ensure that those issues were properly referred to Human Resources, the OIG, Community Recreation, Security/Chicago Police, or other appropriate Park District managers/partners. In several instances, OPA conducted intake interviews with the complainants to determine how their concerns should most appropriately be addressed and shared that information as part of OPA's referral process. In several cases, OPA's initial review of the complaints determined that an investigation was not feasible or required; those matters were administratively closed.

In the First Quarter 2025, 10 cases were closed after the completion of formal investigations and/or the issuance of an OPA Summary Report. Below are summaries of those matters:

OPA 23-0132

OPA received a referral from the Park District Office of the Inspector General (OIG) alleging that during Summer 2023 a supervisor of recreation watched "inappropriate" videos in the fieldhouse

³ The Q1 2025 total compares to: 87 received in Q1 2024, 98 received in Q2 2024, 127 received in Q3 2024, and 77 received in Q4 2024 (17 received in Q1 2023, 41 in Q2 2023, 121 in Q3 2023, and 81 in Q4 2023).

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office and the videos were visible to others. The complainant was a junior recreation leader who wished to remain anonymous. No further details regarding the video or the Complainant were available.

OPA obtained an employee roster for the relevant time period and location and attempted to contact seasonal and year-round employees who may have knowledge of the alleged behavior. Two such employees were interviewed; neither employee had any complaints regarding the supervisor of recreation nor had they any knowledge of any employees watching inappropriate videos while on duty. The contact numbers for two additional former employees were no longer in service.

Due to a lack of evidence and the inability to speak to the complainant, OPA closed the investigation without making a finding. Should additional information become available, OPA will assess whether the investigation should be reopened.

23-0140 (Reopened)

An OPA investigation established that a Chicago Park District attendant (Subject) violated the Park District's Sexual Harassment Policy and Chapter 4 of the Park District Code (Code) by sending sexually suggestive text messages to a co-worker (Complainant).

During Subject's voluntary interview with OPA, Subject also admitted to violating the Park District's Code of Conduct Section D.1, which states "An employee shall not engage in sexual conduct while on duty or on park property," by using their Park District keys and knowledge of the Park District facility's alarm code to improperly gain access to Park District property outside of their assigned work hours and engage in sexual conduct with Complainant on multiple occasions. Additionally, Subject admitted to giving Complainant massages "multiple times a week," for a time span of approximately eight months, while on paid Park District time during their assigned work shifts.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

On December 29, 2023, OPA issued an unsubstantiated report under OPA Case No. 23-0140 due to Complainant's lack of cooperation at the time. OPA re-opened this investigation after being contacted by Complainant on June 15, 2024.

During an interview with Complainant, Complainant stated that Subject made verbal comments that were sexual in nature and made sexually suggestive gestures as well. Subject made sexual

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and otherwise inappropriate comments in-person at work, as well as via text message. Complainant detailed interactions they had with Subject including receiving weekly massages during work and engaging in sexual activity on Park District property.

A. CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION

On June 18, 2024, OPA spoke with the Chicago Police Department (CPD) which confirmed it had an open and ongoing investigation related to allegations against Subject involving sexual assault.

B. EMERGENCY SUSPENSION

On June 18, 2024, Subject was placed on an emergency suspension at OPA's recommendation.

OPA'S INVESTIGATION

A. REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE RECORDS

During the course of its investigation, OPA reviewed the personnel and disciplinary files related to Subject. No prior disciplinary issues were documented in Subject's record.

Subject's training records indicate that he was assigned the 2024 Park District Bystander Training on March 6, 2024, but did not complete this training, which had a deadline of April 30, 2024. Subject completed the 2024 Preventing Workplace Harassment training on April 22, 2024. Subject completed the 2023 Bystander training on July 16, 2023. He was assigned the Preventing Workplace Harassment training on June 29, 2023, which had a deadline of July 31, 2023. Subject completed the training on January 4, 2024.

C. TEXT MESSAGES

During the course of the investigation, Complainant provided OPA with screenshots of text messages from various dates in 2018, which she represented were between her and Subject. The messages contained several sexual innuendos for sexual acts and genitalia sent from Subject to Complainant. There were also messages from Complainant to Subject informing Subject that they were "not funny" and saying "no."

D. INTERVIEW OF SUBJECT

On September 17, 2024, OPA conducted a voluntary interview of Subject with his union representative present during the interview.

Subject informed OPA that there was an incident in 2020 involving his then-"girlfriend," Complainant. Subject was unaware that she was married and explained that they were "always discreet" because they did not want to "jeopardize" their jobs. Subject would buy Complainant

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lunch and take her out on dates. Complainant helped Subject with his resume and getting through his divorce. Complainant and Subject were both single parents and bonded quickly when they met in 2018. They quickly became friends and then formed a "romantic relationship."

Subject described Complainant as a "movie star" and said "she was the one." When asked why Subject believed he was in a relationship with Complainant, he stated that they were having sex, he bought her gifts, and he gave her approximately \$3,500 total in cash.

Subject admitted that he gave Complainant frequent massages. When asked why Subject gave Complainant massages, he explained that she would request them and informed OPA "I am really good at that."

Subject explained "I was crazy in love with [Complainant]. No one knew about our relationship. I am old and wise. [I] kept quiet." Subject admitted to engaging in sexual activity with Complainant on Park District property. Subject informed OPA that he had keys to a Park District facility and, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the doors were locked to the public. Subject and Complainant spent time together in the lounge of the facility. At Complainant's request, Subject gave Complainant massages multiple times a week during their work shift. Subject and Complainant worked together approximately twice a week. Complainant undressed herself because she was "comfortable" during the massages. Subject informed OPA "it just became a routine once she got comfortable."

Subject learned how to give massages from his sister and by watching many online videos. He was "practicing to get [his] license." He had "top of the line" massage oil and kept a massager in his car to use on Complainant. Subject kept the massager in his car because he wanted to be "discreet" and "so no one knew [he] had it."

Subject informed OPA that he never did anything with Complainant that she did not want him to do. Complainant was "on top of" making sure the doors were locked and the room was "secure" so that they had privacy and did not get caught. Subject stated "We didn't want to be in trouble" and "wouldn't take a chance to jeopardize our jobs."

Subject admitted to engaging in sexual intercourse and receiving and performing oral sex with Complainant "a handful of times." The sexual activity Subject and Complainant engaged in with each other was always "consensual," and Subject and Complainant were always sober because neither of them drank alcohol or did drugs.

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ANALYSIS

E. FAILURE TO COMPLETE MANDATORY ANNUAL HARASSMENT AND BYSTANDER TRAININGS IN A TIMELY MANNER TWO YEARS IN A ROW

As a Park District employee, Subject is required to complete an hour of Workplace Harassment training as well as an hour of Bystander Intervention training annually. This requirement is not only a Park District policy, but a City of Chicago mandate. In 2023, despite several District-wide reminders, Subject completed the Park District's Workplace Harassment training more than five months after the mandatory deadline. In 2024, Subject failed to complete the Park District's Bystander training, which had a mandatory deadline of April 30, 2024.

F. INAPPROPRIATE TEXT MESSAGES

During Subject's voluntary interview with OPA, Subject was shown copies of the text messages provided to OPA by Complainant. Subject admitted to sending all of the sexually explicit text messages to Complainant and confirmed the meaning of those messages to OPA staff, acknowledging that several of the terms used in those messages were euphemisms for sexual activities. Subject stated that Complainant's responses were meant in a playful manner and did not really mean "no." Additionally, he alleged that Complainant also sent several messages that were sexually suggestive. OPA offered Subject an opportunity to provide additional text messages or any other supporting evidence he felt was relevant to the investigation. To date, Subject has not provided any additional documentation to OPA for consideration.

A review of the text messages provided to OPA by Complainant indicate that on multiple occasions Complainant conveyed that the conversations were unwelcome by telling Subject "no," "not funny" or sending angry emojis in response to his sexually suggestive messages. Despite this fact, Subject continued to send persistent and sexually suggestive messages to Complainant. Complainant reported to OPA that she found these messages to be inappropriate and stated that they made her feel very uncomfortable.

G. ADMITTED TO ENGAGING IN SEXUAL CONDUCT ON PARK DISTRICT PROPERTY.

During Subject's voluntary interview with OPA, Subject admitted to engaging in sexual activity on Park District property on multiple occasions. Additionally, Subject stated that for approximately eight months, from March until November of 2020, he gave Complainant massages multiple times a week during their work shift.

Furthermore, Subject admitted that on multiple occasions he improperly gained access to Park District property outside of his assigned work hours to engage in said sexual conduct by misusing

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his Park District keys and the alarm code, both of which were entrusted to him for necessary official use only.

Subject stated that he was aware that his conduct was inappropriate and could “jeopardize” his employment, so he purposely concealed his relationship with Complainant and took steps to ensure that they did not “get caught” engaging in sexual activity on Park District property because he “didn’t want to be in trouble.”

CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence detailed above, OPA determined that the allegation that Subject engaged in sexual misconduct is **SUBSTANTIATED**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of its investigation, OPA recommended termination of Subject’s Chicago Park District employment and placement of an Ineligible for Rehire designation in Subject’s personnel file.

OPA also recommends that, if Complainant applies for re-employment with the Park District at any time in the future, she must first participate in an interview with OPA regarding concerns related to her conduct.

RESPONSE FROM MANAGEMENT

Human Resources informed OPA that Subject resigned in lieu of discharge and has been designated as Ineligible for Rehire.

24-0136

An OPA investigation established that a Laborer (Subject) violated Chapter 4 of the Park District Code (Code) and the Park District’s Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy by making derogatory and sexual comments about two Park District employees.

BACKGROUND

A Park Operations Supervisor (Operations Supervisor) submitted a complaint to OPA after being informed by an Area Manager that Subject made derogatory comments about a Park Supervisor and refused to perform certain job duties at the Park Supervisor’s park. The detailed email submitted to OPA also included narratives from employees related to Subject’s comments.

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INVESTIGATION

OPA found the following evidence during its investigation:

OPA interviewed the Park Operations Supervisor, who recounted the following in part:

The Operations Supervisor received a telephone call and an email from the Area Manager to inform him about a complaint that Subject made derogatory statements about the Park Supervisor. The Area Manager also informed him that Subject failed to drag and mark baseball diamonds for ball play at the park. After he received the information from the Area Manager, he contacted Subject and asked him why he did not mark and drag the ball fields and Subject told him his duties were only to clear the grass out of the baseball fields and smooth them out.

The Operations Supervisor related Subject also expressed he was not happy about the fact that he was not selected to act up in the position of foreman during the previous summer. He related Subject made a comment that he was not a team player.

The Operations Supervisor said Subject also stated: "I guess it just takes a big butt and a smile to be promoted." The Operations Supervisor also said Subject commented that the Operations Supervisor promoted a female employee because she had a "nice body." He said Subject stated that - after the other individual was promoted to Labor Foreman instead of Subject - the only work the Operations Supervisor was getting from him was the work of a TR3 Operator and nothing else.

OPA interviewed a Seasonal Attendant (Witness 1), who recounted the following in part:

Witness 1 recalled an incident during the summer of 2023. Subject was lining the fields and Witness 1 went outside to assist Subject. At that time, Park Supervisor called out and Subject stated: "You know (Park Supervisor) is racist." Witness 1 told Subject that Park Supervisor was not a racist and that he has known her for many years. After he made the comment defending Park Supervisor, Subject accused him of having an intimate relationship with Park Supervisor or having sexual relations with her. Witness 1 denied Subject's allegations.

OPA interviewed the Area Manager, who recounted the following in part:

Park Supervisor called Area Manager and shared with her that Subject had made negative comments about her to her staff. Park Supervisor told Area Manager that the employees became

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upset about the comments Subject was making about Park Supervisor. Area Manager contacted the Operations Supervisor to inform him about the situation. She informed the Operations Supervisor so he could speak with Subject and correct his behavior.

OPA interviewed Park Supervisor, who recounted the following in part:

Park Supervisor only knows Subject for coming to drag and mark the fields at her. She has had limited interactions with him and normally speaks to Subject's supervisor to discuss what tasks need to be completed at the park.

She said that when Witness 1 saw that Subject had returned during the 2024 summer season, Witness 1 said: "Oh no, the guy who said stuff about you has returned." Witness 1 then told her that during last season Subject called her a racist and stated that Witness 1 and Park Supervisor were having inappropriate sexual relations. She then told Witness 1 not to go outside or address Subject anymore. She said Witness 1 felt uncomfortable interacting with Subject.

The Park Supervisor reported the situation to her supervisor and Subject's supervisor. She did not have any interactions with Subject 1 after that and stated that he never made inappropriate comments to her directly.

OPA conducted an interview with Subject, who recounted the following in part:

Subject was currently working as a Laborer. He was a TR3, which means he is charged with getting the grass out of the baseball diamonds and smoothing them out. He is familiar with Park Supervisor but has not had interactions with her. He said Park Supervisor tells the Labor Foreman what needs to be done and his supervisor relays that information to him. He said someone else is supposed to drag and mark the ball fields. He tried marking and dragging the fields last year, but it took a toll on him because it was a lot of work.

He said at one point Witness 1 came to the ball fields to assist Subject with marking the lines. He denied making a comment that Park Supervisor was racist. He denied making a comment that Witness 1 and Park Supervisor were having any inappropriate or sexual relationship.

Subject said the Operations Supervisor called him during the summer of 2024, to ask him to paint the lines at the park. The machine was "acting up" and he explained to the Operations Supervisor that he was doing double work. He said Operations Supervisor made a comment that the park's patrons take their ball play seriously. He told Operations Supervisor he was only a TR3 guy. He

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said the two of them discussed Park Supervisor. He denied he made a comment about not being a team player

He related he thought it was wrong to promote others over him because they liked certain people and that was not fair. He admitted he did make a comment to the Operations Supervisor that it just took “a big butt and a smile” to be promoted. He said he and the Operations Supervisor were discussing the promotion of a specific female employee. Subject said he was upset about that promotion, and he told the Operations Supervisor he was going to do what everyone else did who drove a tractor and just drag the field because they kept skipping over him.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

OPA found substantial, credible, and corroborated evidence that Subject engaged in behavior that violated the Park District Code and policies. Specifically, Subject made unfounded accusations alleging inappropriate sexual and racist conduct to Witness 1 about Park Supervisor. Subject’s comments created an offensive and uncomfortable work environment for Witness 1. Additionally, Subject admitted making negative, sexualized and discriminatory comments about a female employee’s promotion, alleging that she only received the promotion because of her physical attributes.

Based on these substantiated violations, OPA recommended that Human Resources evaluate these findings and discipline Subject as appropriate given the serious nature of his misconduct and assign any additional measures, including training, as determined appropriate by Human Resources.

24-0146

An OPA investigation established that a Laborer (Subject, who was also the Subject in OPA Case 24-0136) violated Chapter 4 of the Park District Code (Code) and the Park District’s Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy by sexually harassing and touching a former coworker.

As detailed below, OPA’s investigation also resulted in substantiated findings against two other Park District employees for failure to report allegations of sexual harassment.

BACKGROUND

A Park Operations Supervisor (Operations Supervisor) reported that he received a text message from a former employee (Complainant), who alleged she had been sexually harassed by

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Subject. Operations Supervisor stated that he had no knowledge of the alleged sexual harassment. When Complainant presented him with the allegations, the Operations Supervisor did not ask her any questions and immediately reported the information to OPA.

INVESTIGATION

OPA found the following evidence during the course of its investigation:

OPA interviewed Complainant, who recounted the following in part:

During the summer of 2022, Complainant was a Seasonal Laborer when the incident involving Subject occurred.

Complainant knew Subject prior to the summer of 2022, from her previous Park District employment, but the two never worked together. Soon after she began working with Subject, she went into the garage where the machines and equipment were kept. Subject walked into the garage, and it was only the two of them present. While they were in the garage, Subject grabbed her buttocks. She turned around in shock because she could not believe what had just occurred.

She hesitated because she thought it was a mistake. Almost immediately after that, Subject grabbed her buttocks again and stated, "Damn, yo shit soft." She berated Subject for his actions and asked him how he would feel if someone touched him in such a manner. He responded by saying that he would probably like it.

Subject did not touch her again. She said she was not alone with him on any other occasions.

Complainant also stated that, during 2023, another Laborer (Witness) told her he heard about the incident involving Complainant and Subject. She asked Witness how he knew about the incident; Witness told her that was not the first time Subject had done something like that and that "people talk."

Complainant recorded an approximately 5-minute conversation she had with Witness in which he spoke about the incident involving Subject. Witness also talked about other incidents involving Subject and his inappropriate behavior.

Witness told her Subject had behaved in this manner for a long time and other female employees had similar experiences. Witness also stated that Subject has been known for sexually harassing women and nothing has been done about it.

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Complainant stated that she reported the incident with Subject to another Laborer (Witness 2), who was acting up as a Seasonal Foreman, on the same day the incident occurred. She, however, said she explicitly asked Witness 2 not to say anything to Operations Supervisor about the incident because she did not want to get anyone in trouble.

Complainant provided OPA with a copy of the recording she made of her conversation with Witness. OPA reviewed the recording and heard Witness speak of his knowledge of the incident, and he also talked about Subject's history of sexually harassing behavior and his knowledge of it.

OPA interviewed Witness, who recounted the following in part:

At the time of the interview, Witness was working as a Seasonal Foreman. He and Complainant did not work together and only shared brief conversations and texts.

He denied any knowledge of any incidents involving Complainant and Subject. He denied that he and Complainant had a conversation regarding Subject touching her. He denied he told Complainant that was not the first time Subject had done something like that. He stated he was shocked by the allegations because he had only heard Subject speak about his wife.

After receiving the recording from Complainant, OPA conducted a second interview with Witness in which he recounted the following in part:

At the time of the interview, Witness was working as a Laborer. Witness was familiar with Subject and worked with Subject in the past. He denied ever hearing anything related to Subject sexually harassing any female employees. He denied ever making any comments to anyone related to Subject sexually harassing any female employees.

The recording received from Complainant was then played for Witness.

Witness responded by asking why Complainant was recording him without his permission. Witness was then asked if it was him on the recording. He acknowledged that it was him. He stated he forgot all about his conversation with Complainant.

After his second interview with OPA, Witness made a subsequent call to the OPA investigator in which he apologized for being untruthful during the investigation.

OPA interviewed Subject, who recounted the following in part:

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Subject was familiar with Complainant who is a coworker's daughter. He has known Complainant for approximately 20 years and he has known her mother for more than 20 years.

During 2022, they were working together at the same location. At that time, he had not seen Complainant for seven years because she had not been working at the Park District.

He recalled an incident involving Complainant where he and Complainant were together and he had to release the alarm. He set the alarm and pushed Complainant in her back and told her to hurry up so they could get out of the door before the alarm activated.

Subject denied grabbing her buttocks and any sexual harassment. He said such allegations are not true. He also said Complainant has a foul mouth and he doubts anyone would grab her buttocks.

Subject stated he has never had any accusations of sexual harassment from any other Park District employee. He denied ever making any comments about the bodies of female employees or touching them. He stated that, when his male coworkers talk about women, he stays away from those conversations.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

OPA found there is substantial, credible, and corroborated evidence showing that Subject engaged in behavior that violated the Park District Code and the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy. The evidence supports a finding that Subject committed an unwelcome sexual advance against Complainant by touching her buttocks and making a sexual comment.

Additionally, OPA's investigation raised serious concerns about the conduct of two Park District employees - Witness and Witness 2 - who failed to properly report complaints of sexual harassment, as required by the Code and the related policy. This is especially concerning as these individuals have acted as Seasonal Foremen, which comes with an enhanced duty to report such allegations as they were serving in a supervisory position.

OPA found Witness acknowledged he understood that when an individual was working in the position of Seasonal Foreman, they have an obligation to report sexual harassment when it is brought to their attention. Despite this, Witness failed to report any allegations of sexual harassment that had been brought to his attention.

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OPA also found that, per Park District policy, Witness had a duty to be truthful and to disclose all information known to him. Because Witness failed to properly report sexual harassment despite having knowledge of the incident between Subject and Complainant, failed to be completely truthful and attempted to hinder OPA's investigation, OPA finds that he also violated the Code and the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.

Based on these substantiated violations, OPA recommends that Human Resources evaluate these findings and discipline Subject and Witness as appropriate given the serious nature of their misconduct and assign any additional measures, including training, as determined appropriate by Human Resources. Additionally, OPA recommends that Human Resources review the conduct of Witness 2 and take all appropriate steps, including discipline and training, to ensure that he understands his obligations under the Park District's Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.

RESPONSE FROM MANAGEMENT

Human Resources informed OPA that the Subject in Case Nos. 24-0136 and 24-0146 was terminated, effective April 14, 2025, and designated as Ineligible for Rehire. Witness and Witness 2 both received written reprimands and were assigned additional Sexual Harassment Prevention training.

24-0281

OPA received a complaint from a Laborer (Complainant) who alleged that a Laborer Foreman (Subject) harassed her in violation of Park District Policy. Complainant further alleged that Subject referred to Complainant as "pee-pee girl" and discussed her needing a "porta potty."

During an interview with OPA, Complainant failed to articulate any complaints about Subject that constituted harassment based on a protected category under Park District policies.

Because of this, OPA has closed this matter.

24-0327

OPA received information that a Park District patron alleged a Natatorium Instructor was sexually harassing male lifeguards. Specifically, the Complainant alleged that the Natatorium Instructor may have sexually abused a former Seasonal Lifeguard.

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OPA made several attempts to contact the former Seasonal Lifeguard, including leaving voicemail messages at the telephone number listed in his personnel records and sending a letter via US Mail to the address listed his records.

Because the former Seasonal Lifeguard has not responded to OPA's numerous attempts to schedule an interview and gather additional information, OPA closed this case. If additional information becomes available in the future, OPA will reopen its investigation.

24-0381

An OPA investigation found insufficient evidence to support allegations that an Hourly Attendant (Subject) violated Chapter IV, Section A(4)(a) of the Park District Code by engaging in violence against a former seasonal employee, who was a patron at the time of the alleged incident.

During the course of OPA's investigation, however, serious concerns were raised as to the conduct of the former Seasonal Recreation Leader (Complainant) and the veracity of her complaint. OPA's investigation established sufficient, credible, and corroborated evidence that Complainant violated Chapter IV of the Park District Code when she verbally threatened a Park District employee with physical harm, asked others to commit violence against a Park District Employee, and failed to provide truthful information to OPA.

Violence in the Workplace Policy

The Violence in the Workplace Policy (Policy) states that the Park District does not tolerate any type of workplace violence "committed by or against employees." The Policy specifically prohibits "making direct or implied threats either verbally, electronically, or in writing that create a reasonable fear of harm to a person or the person's property." Employees found to be in violation of the Policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Investigation Overview and Background

A. Complaint

During an intake interview with OPA, Complainant related the following, in summary:

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On October 31, 2024, Complainant and her sons attended a Halloween event. On their way out of the fieldhouse, Complainant's youngest son (Minor Child) reached for a bowl of candy sitting on the lobby desk. Subject was sitting nearby on a bench. When Minor Child reached for the candy, Subject physically jumped at Minor Child and told Minor Child not to touch the candy while using profanity. Complainant told Subject not to talk to her child like that, to which Subject responded that it was not Minor Child's "damn candy. He just got some." Complainant then walked over to the desk and reached for candy. The Subject stood up, "hit" Complainant on her arm to "slap" the candy out of her hand, and "pushed" her shoulder so hard that some of her press on nails came off. When Complainant asked Subject why he had hit her, Subject said, "Touch it again and see if I don't bounce yo ass around this room."

Complainant picked her nails up off of the floor and told Subject that he had "touched" a woman and "now you're going to get touched." Complainant went outside of the fieldhouse where she called the police, the father of her children, and her two brothers.

After leaving the Park, Complainant called an employee and told that employee that she wanted to "hit" Subject with an object, that she wanted to hurt Subject for hurting her, and that Subject should be fired. Complainant also called the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and made a report.

Complainant provided OPA with two photographs and a redacted CPD Original Case Incident Report (CPD Report 1). OPA reviewed the photos of a left hand with missing press on nails and noted that there were no time stamps for either photo. The CPD Report named Complainant as the victim, who had no visible injuries.

B. Investigation Summary

OPA took the following investigative steps: OPA reviewed Park District records; reviewed employee written narratives; reviewed Park District security records; requested incident reports; reviewed police reports⁴; and conducted interviews.

⁴ Upon receipt of CPD Report 1, OPA compared it to the redacted copy provided by Complainant. OPA also reviewed a second Chicago Police Original Case Incident Report (CPD Report 2) in which Subject was named as the reporting victim and the offender was "UNKNOWN 1." According to the narrative in CPD Report 2, after a "verbal altercation," the offender said to Subject, "I will send my boyfriend and my brother to jump on you."

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C. Written Narratives

OPA received and reviewed written narratives requested by Park District Human Resources. Due to a lack of sufficient information, OPA conducted full interviews of each witness, as summarized in the following sections.

D. Interview of Volunteer

On October 31, 2024, Volunteer arrived on to assist with the Halloween event (the event). Upon arrival, Volunteer saw Complainant and Employee 1 in the fieldhouse lobby. The event was in the gym; employees, patrons and participants were in and out of the lobby throughout the event.

Volunteer overheard Complainant repeatedly say that the Park District employees were “motherfuckers” and she did not care if they knew she did not like them.

Volunteer saw Complainant try to enter the employee kitchen. On one of those occasions, Volunteer heard Complainant tell a group of child participants that she would make them nachos. When Complainant returned, Volunteer heard her say she did not “give a fuck.”

Towards the end of the event, Volunteer was in an office. Volunteer heard Subject, who was in the lobby, say “no” and something about candy. Volunteer heard someone cursing and getting louder, so Volunteer went back to the lobby, where she saw Complainant, Subject, Employee 1, and Employee 2.

Volunteer heard Complainant tell Subject she was going to “get some guys [to] come up here to get [Subject].” Volunteer saw Complainant on her cell phone and heard Complainant physically describe Subject to whoever Complainant was speaking with on the phone. Complainant physically approached Subject while waving her hands and Volunteer heard her say “they” would come for Subject.

Volunteer did not see any physical contact between Subject and Complainant nor did she see Subject and Minor Child interact that evening.

E. Interview of Employee 1

Employee 1 was in the lobby handing out bags of candy when he saw Complainant go to the front desk and reach for candy from the bowl on the desk. Subject was sitting on a bench and he

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stood up when Complainant reached for the candy. Employee 1 heard Subject say that he would “beat the b-” out of Complainant.

Employee 1 saw Subject put out his arm to move or cover the bowl. Subject did not physically touch Complainant nor did Subject hit her; there was no physical contact of any kind between Subject and Complainant.

Employee 1 heard Complainant tell Subject that he was going to “get touched.”

Employee 1 did not see Subject do anything to Minor Child nor did Employee 1 hear Subject curse at Minor Child.

F. Interview of Employee 2

During the event, Employee 2 was in and out of the lobby. At one point, Employee 2 saw Subject, Complainant, and Minor Child and heard Subject say, “No, if you’ve already got candy,” and “need to save it for other kids.” Employee 2 then heard Complainant say that she would get Minor Child candy. Subject told Complainant that she could not get candy.

Employee 2 was in the kitchen during the time of the alleged physical assault. When Employee 2 returned, they heard Complainant say to Subject, “Oh, you want to touch someone? I’ll have someone come touch you.” Complainant was pacing back and forth, took out her phone, and said that she was calling someone. Employee 2 heard Complainant say, “You wanna put your hands on me [I’ll] get someone [to] put hands on you.”

Employee 2 did not hear Subject curse at or threaten Complainant or Minor Child.

Employee 2 was not aware of Complainant entering the employee kitchen that evening and noted that in the past, Complainant tried to enter employee areas when she was not an employee or a volunteer. When employees told Complainant that she could not go somewhere or do something, Complainant would become argumentative.

G. Interview of Employee 3

During the event, Employee 3 was in the office when he heard a female-sounding voice from the lobby say something about candy. Employee 3 heard the same voice say, “Oh, you hit me, you touched me, you’re going to get touched.” The person speaking became louder, which triggered Employee 3 to go to the lobby.

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Complainant was on her phone and told Subject he was going to “get touched.” Employee 3 saw Subject move behind the desk. Complainant walked in and out of the fieldhouse while on her phone and continued to make similar threats to Subject.

At no point that evening did Employee 3 see or hear Subject say or do anything threatening to either Complainant or Minor Child. To Employee 3’s knowledge, no employees, patrons or participants ever had any concerns or complaints about Subject.

H. Interview of Employee 4

During the event, Employee 4 was in an office near the lobby. At an unknown time, Employee 4 heard Subject repeatedly say, “this [candy] is for the kids” and “you already had some.” Employee 4 did not notice anything unusual about Subject’s voice or tone; Subject sounded “proper.” Not long after, Employee 4 heard a female-sounding voice say something about bringing people up to the Park District facility. Employee 4 went to the lobby and saw Complainant and Subject. Employee 4 heard Complainant say that she would have someone come to the park to hurt Subject and other similar verbal threats. Employee 4 heard Complainant curse repeatedly and saw her on her phone. Subject’s demeanor was calm and he did not say anything.

Employee 4 had known Subject since he started working at the Park District facility and had never seen or heard Subject curse around anyone nor had he ever seen or heard Subject threaten anyone. Employee 4 was familiar with Complainant from football. Employee 4 worked with the football team and knew that Complainant’s son had stopped participating.

I. Interview of Employee 5

During the event, Employee 5 was in the staff kitchen most of the evening. At an unknown time, a woman entered the kitchen. Employee 5 asked the woman to leave because the area was only for employees. Employee 5 did not recognize the woman. Employee 5 did not see anyone else enter or try to enter the kitchen that evening.

J. Interview of Employee 6

During the event, Employee 6 saw Complainant sitting on a bench in the lobby and they talked. Employee 6 did not notice anything unusual about the conversation. After, Employee 6 went to a back room to do paperwork and did not see or hear the incident between Subject and Complainant.

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Employee 6 had known Subject for approximately two years and in that time, they were not aware of any complaints about Subject. Employee 6 had observed Subject interact with children and adults and had never heard Subject curse or say anything inappropriate. Employee 6 had never seen Subject physically intimidate anyone.

Employee 6 had known Complainant for approximately three years and there had been issues with Complainant since she began work at the park. For example, while she was a seasonal recreation leader, Complainant became involved in “drama” amongst some of the child participants, triggering complaints from the participants’ parents about Complainant.

Prior to October 31, 2024, Employee 6 had witnessed Complainant try to enter the kitchen multiple times when she was not a volunteer or an employee. There had been similar instances where Complainant acted as if she was able to do what she wanted at Jackson.

K. Interview of Subject

During the OPA interview, Subject was provided with his rights verbally and in writing. Subject was offered and declined the opportunity to reschedule the interview to obtain representation. Subject related the following, in summary:

During the event, Subject repeatedly told Minor Child and Complainant they could not have more candy because it was for the other children or “stragglers” and Minor Child had already received a bag of candy. Subject denied that he jumped at or otherwise physically threatened Minor Child nor did he curse at Minor Child.

Subject was sitting on a lobby bench when Complainant “ran” from the lobby doors to the desk and grabbed “handfuls” of candy from the bowl. Subject went to the counter and used his arm to push the bowl to the other side, away from Complainant. When Subject pushed the bowl, candy fell onto the floor and Subject saw Complainant bend down and grab the candy off the floor.

Subject denied that he hit, smacked, or pushed the Complainant on any part of her body. When asked if he could have accidentally touched Complainant, Subject stated that he did not recall physically touching Complainant but it was possible he did when he pushed the bowl away.

Subject denied that he told Complainant he would “bounce [her] ass” around or “beat the b[itch]” out of her.

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After grabbing the candy, Complainant told Subject that she was going to get someone to “touch” Subject and that she was calling her brother and her “baby daddy.” Subject believed Complainant was threatening him with physical harm and she had called men to come to the park to “jump” him. Employee 2 told Subject to move away from Complainant, and he did.

During the event, Subject also saw Complainant try to enter the staff kitchen. After, Subject heard Complainant say that the park or the food was “nasty.”

L. Interview of Complainant

During a follow up interview with OPA, Complainant also related the following:

At the beginning of the event, the “atmosphere didn’t feel right, like, claustrophobic.” No one said or did anything to trigger this feeling.

Who owned the bowl of candy was “undisclosed.” There was always a bowl of candy on the lobby desk for everyone, so Complainant and Minor Child were “confused.” Subject told Complainant he would “bounce” her if she touched the candy. Later, Complainant said that Subject did not say anything to her and “just hit” her. Complainant also said Subject did not tell her not to touch the candy. When she was asked why multiple witnesses heard Subject repeatedly say no more candy, Complainant said all of the witnesses were lying.

Complainant did not make any calls while inside the fieldhouse. Complainant called the father of her children to come to the park and a male friend called her while outside of the fieldhouse. Complainant said she did not have a brother or male cousins.

Complainant admitted that while on the phone, she described Subject’s physical features to both her male friend and the father of her children. Additionally, Complainant admitted that she told Subject he was going to get “touched” and she verbally threatened Subject. Employee 5 was sitting on the same bench as Subject during the altercation.

When Complainant was presented with a Policy acknowledgement from 2024, she verified receiving the Policy and being familiar with it. When asked what someone could and could not do under the Policy, Complainant said, “Things I did ... spew threats and retaliate.” Complainant acknowledged her awareness of the Employee Code of Conduct, the Facilities Users Code of Conduct, and the rules of the kitchen and culinary sanitation.

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Analysis

A. Subject

OPA determined that there was insufficient evidence that Subject physically touched Complainant, threatened Complainant, and/or threatened Minor Child, and closed the allegations against Subject as UNSUBSTANTIATED.

Six witnesses provided credible, consistent testimony that they did not see any physical contact between Subject and Complainant nor did anyone see Complainant missing nails. The witness present during the alleged assault not only provided credible testimony that they never saw Subject physically touch Subject, but they also corroborated Subject's statement that he moved the bowl away from Complainant. The same witness denied that they saw or heard Subject physically or verbally threaten Minor Child and, consistent with the other witness statements, had never seen or heard Subject physically or verbally act in such a way.

While one witness heard Subject say something to Complainant, it was inconsistent with Complainant's allegations and was uncorroborated by multiple witnesses.

In contrast to the credible information provided by numerous witnesses as well as Subject, OPA found Complainant's statements, as examined below, not credible.

B. Complainant

OPA determined there was sufficient, credible, and corroborated evidence that Complainant violated the Park District Human Rights Ordinance and the Violence in the Workplace Policy. OPA closed this case as SUBSTANTIATED as to Complainant.

Complainant's statements were often inconsistent, contradictory, nonsensical, and at times, appeared to be fabricated. For example, in her own complaint, Complainant reported to OPA that she called her two brothers and the father of her children to come to the park. During a subsequent interview, Complainant said she did not have a brother. It was only when OPA referred to Complainant's prior statements that Complainant said she had a brother but "not really."

Complainant repeatedly denied that she made phone calls while inside of the fieldhouse, yet multiple witnesses credibly testified that they saw Complainant in the lobby on her cell phone and heard Complainant say she was calling her brother and the father of her children. Not only

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did multiple witnesses state that they heard Complainant describe Subject to someone on the phone, Complainant herself admitted she called the father of her children to back her up and described Subject's physical features to him.

Complainant also insisted that Employee 5 was sitting next to Subject when the altercation started. However, Employee 5 credibly stated that she was in the kitchen and multiple witnesses testified that they did not see Employee 5 in the lobby. Employee 5 also testified that an unknown woman entered the kitchen and Employee 5 told her she could not be there. Based on context, it is likely that woman was Complainant, who denied being told she could not be in the kitchen. Employee 5's testimony corroborated Volunteer and Subject's statements that they saw Complainant enter the kitchen.

Initially, Complainant denied that she told Employee 7 that she wanted to hurt Subject with an object. When confronted with her prior statements to OPA, Complainant's statement that she wanted to "throw eggs" at Subject but did not tell Employee 7 this - she only thought it - contradicted Complainant's own prior statements.

Furthermore, the witness present during the alleged physical interaction credibly stated they did not see any physical contact between Subject and Complainant nor did they see that Complainant was missing any nails. Complainant does her own press on nails and her allegations that Subject hit her so hard that her nail came off strained credulity.

Finally, Complainant's descriptions of Subject's conduct were wholly inconsistent with witness and employee descriptions. Complainant's descriptions and admissions, however, corroborated witness testimony of Complainant's own conduct and language prior to and during the event. Overall, Complainant's statements tended to corroborate witness testimony while contradicting her own.

Recommendations

OPA recommended no disciplinary or personnel action for Subject. While the evidence was insufficient to find that Subject violated Park District policy, OPA recommended that the Park District evaluate whether de-escalation or similar training would be beneficial for Subject. Finally, OPA recommended that the Park District provide Subject with information regarding the Employee Assistance Program.

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Given Complainant's status as a patron, volunteer, and former employee, as well as the serious nature of her conduct, OPA recommended the Park District take any disciplinary, employment, and/or other actions it deems appropriate.

Response from Management

Human Resources informed OPA that, effective April 22, 2025, Complainant was designated as Ineligible for Rehire.

24-0404

OPA received information from a Park Supervisor which alleged an Attendant (Subject) sexually harassed a Physical Instructor (Complainant) in violation of the Park District Code.

An OPA investigation found insufficient evidence to support the allegation that Subject violated District policy.

1. Investigation

OPA interviewed Complainant. The following is a summary:

Complainant met Subject when she started working at the park in May 2024. Until recently, she did not have any issues with Subject, adding he is very nice.

There have been three encounters that have made Complainant feel uncomfortable. One day she was coming down the stairs to leave for the day, and Subject was in the lobby. He said to come and give him a hug, which she did. Complainant thought it would be "sort of a side hug thing but it was a full-on front hug." Subject then said something like be careful going home.

There was another encounter, again when Complainant was leaving for the day. Subject asked for a hug and before she could respond he hugged her. This time it was a little more intimate, as he pushed his head against her cheek.

On the third occasion, again when she was leaving for the day, Subject asked for a hug and although she felt uncomfortable, she quickly hugged him. Subject hugged her, and then she felt what she believed to be a kiss on her neck, which left her feeling extremely uncomfortable.

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Complainant would not categorize Subject as creepy, adding that he is overly friendly and might not sense what is appropriate. Complainant did not tell Subject not to hug her on any of the three occasions she described.

They have had discussions about their personal lives, Subject said he had been married before and asked her if she was married, had children and if she lived alone. Complainant did not feel uncomfortable by these discussions. Adding, maybe Subject sees her as a niece or something like that, saying that Subject is in his sixties and she is in her thirties.

Complainant does not want Subject to get in trouble, she just does not want to work alone with him. The progressively increased closeness has her on edge, saying she has experienced harassment in the past and does not want this situation to escalate.

She feels uncomfortable when only she and Subject are working at the park. Recently she spoke with her Park Supervisor, who was working on adjusting work schedules.

OPA spoke with the Park Supervisor. The following is a summary:

When Complainant reached out to the Park Supervisor with concerns involving Subject, the Park Supervisor immediately notified OPA making sure she followed District policy.

Subject has worked at the park for approximately five years. The Park Supervisor has never received any complaints or had any concerns related to Subject. She described Subject as a harmless caring person, saying everyone likes him.

The Park Supervisor said Subject was being overly friendly. She explained that he may not understand boundaries and personal space. Never would she think Subject had ill intent when he hugged Complainant. The Park Supervisor believed that Subject would have stopped if Complainant would have told Subject that she did not want to be hugged.

The Park Supervisor made adjustments to schedules, so there are never times when the only employees at the park would be Complainant and Subject.

OPA interviewed Subject. The following is a summary:

Subject has worked for the District for 23 years. As an Attendant his primary job is to clean every room in the park; he also signs-up/registers patrons for the pool and issues them a pass card.

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Subject said he has never been disciplined or had any issues with his coworkers. Currently, he works with several women; he is the only male. Subject said they all get along well, adding that his wife passed away a couple years ago and everyone was supportive and nice.

Subject is familiar with the District's Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, saying he remembers he needed help with getting on the computer to take the training. When asked what his understanding of sexual harassment was, Subject explained it would be if you like a girl and start coming on to her and she's not "vibing" you, you would need to leave her alone. When asked if sexual harassment can happen at work, Subject said it can.

Subject said none of his coworkers have told him to leave them alone or indicated that he was in their personal space. When asked if he has hugged a coworker, Subject said he did when his wife passed away, saying that a couple of the ladies gave him a hug.

Subject said he has a nice relationship with Complainant, adding she is quiet. Subject said he has hugged Complainant, describing a day when she seemed sad and upset at work. Subject told her not to let other people make her sad. He just felt she was feeling some type of way, so he asked if she needed a hug, then hugged her. Complainant didn't tell him that she did not want him to hug her. Subject added he recalls giving Complainant a hug on a couple occasions; she never told him she did not want him to hug her.

During the interview, the OPA investigator explained that people may view receiving an unwanted hug from a coworker as harassment and that an employee cannot invade another employee's personal space. Subject said he didn't know he was doing anything wrong and would never want to hurt anyone. Subject said he understood and will never hug a coworker again. He thanked the investigator for explaining things to him and said he takes heed in what he learned.

Conclusion

After having interviewed Subject, OPA believes he understands personal boundaries, and what may be viewed as harassment. OPA closed this case and did not recommend any disciplinary or personnel action for Subject.

24-0416

An OPA investigation established that a minor Park District swim team participant (Subject) violated Chapter 4, Section A(4) of the Park District Code by engaging in sexual misconduct with another minor Park District swim team participant (Victim).

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1. Steps taken

The following steps were taken in response to this matter:

1. To eliminate ambiguity regarding locker room supervision, the Park District placed laminated signs displaying “Chicago Park District Lifeguards do not monitor locker rooms” in Park District facilities with pools.
2. On January 8, 2025, OPA notified Subject’s guardians that Subject was suspended from enrolling in Park District programming or utilizing Park District property until January 1, 2026. The letter, which was sent to the guardians via email, also provided details regarding the appeals process.

2. Investigation

A. Chicago Public Schools

On December 12, 2024, after the end of the Park District’s Fall Program session, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) notified the Park District that it had received a complaint of sexual misconduct involving two minor participants in the Park District Team Sports aquatics program.

B. Chicago Police Department Investigation

A Chicago Police Department Detective (Detective) was assigned to the case against Subject. OPA communicated with the Detective throughout the duration of the active investigation.

The Detective informed OPA that a forensic interview was conducted with Victim. During the forensic interview, Victim made a disclosure of sexual assault, consistent with the original complaint.

Additionally, the Detective informed OPA that the Chicago Police substantiated the allegations against Subject, but due to Subject’s age an arrest would not be made.

C. Community Letter

On January 6, 2025, at the start of the Park District’s Winter Program session and after consulting with the Chicago Police, the Park District sent a community letter to the parents and guardians of the participants enrolled in the same aquatics program as Subject. The letter stated, in part,

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“[T]he Park District has become aware of allegations concerning inappropriate conduct between minor participants during Park District programming. You are receiving this letter because your child was enrolled in a program at [location] where this conduct is alleged to have occurred.” Additionally, the letter provided notification of the Chicago Police and DCFS investigations and provided contact information for OPA.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence detailed above, OPA determined that the allegation that a minor Park District swim team participant (Subject) violated the Park District’s Human Rights Ordinance is SUBSTANTIATED.

OPA recommended that Community Recreation and Beaches & Pools continue their work to ensure that procedures related to locker room usage are consistent and that those procedures are clearly communicated to parents of minor participants.

Because of the steps already taken during the course of the investigation, no further response from Park District management was required.

25-0006

The Chicago Park District (Park District) Office of Prevention and Accountability (OPA) received a complaint alleging that an Activities Instructor (Subject) discriminated against a hearing-impaired minor participant in violation of Chapter IV of the Chicago Park District Code (Code).

OPA’s investigation found insufficient evidence to support the allegation that Subject engaged in discriminatory behavior in violation of the Code.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because there are no actionable findings, OPA recommends no disciplinary or personnel action for Subject.

OPA supports the Park District’s decision to provide additional training for staff on how to communicate with participants/family members about possible restrictions due to impairments or disabilities. De-escalation training would also be helpful guidance for staff in the future.

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OPA recommends the Park District consider adding language to program descriptions related to impairments or disabilities which could hinder full participation.

INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Below are summaries of the information provided to OPA by the Complainant, witnesses and involved Park District personnel:

Narrative from Complainant – Parent of Park Participant

Complainant described the experience her husband and son had at the Park District with Subject as an extremely disheartening and traumatic experience. Complainant was not present for the incident but reported the following in her written complaint.

Complainant complained that her son was not provided equal opportunity in the boxing program because of his disability. She stated that her son's hearing aids/disability caused Subject to discriminate against him by denying him admission to the boxing program and activities.

Complainant stated that Subject, in front of other parents in the boxing area and in front of her son, asked what was in her son's ears and why does he have them, referring to her son's hearing aids. Complainant's husband, who accompanied their son to the park, was taken back by the comment and told Subject their son wears hearing aids. She stated that Subject replied, "He can use the jump rope but he will never spar in my ring and never hit my bags." Complainant's husband then asked, "Are you really not going to teach him because he wears hearing aids?" Subject replied, "I'm not teaching him here. I'm not going to. He will never spar in my ring and never hit my bags. I teach fighters here."

Complainant said her son was crying and did not understand why he was unable to stay and learn how to box and why Subject would not teach him because of his hearing aids. Complainant feels no child with a disability should be called out in front of a group of adults and other children in such a manner as what happened to her family.

Parent of Park Participant (Witness) Interview

On January 6, 2025, Witness was at the park with her daughter who was playing indoor soccer. She was sitting in the bleachers on the upper level of the gym when she heard a man yelling loudly at the boxing coach. The man was yelling about his son not being able to be on the boxing

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team. He was calling the coach a “motherfucker” and a “fucking asshole,” and telling him “fuck you.”

Witness said the coach was trying to de-escalate the situation, but the man was a big guy and was outraged. The coach never raised his voice or shouted back. Witness added, the man was out of line and the obvious aggressor.

Physical Instructor Interview

A Physical Instructor at the park shared that, on Monday January 6, 2025, he was teaching a soccer class in the gym when his class was interrupted by a man shouting profanities in the boxing area.

The shouting and profanities continued as the man threatened physical harm to Subject. After a few minutes the man left the building.

Subject Interview

Subject shared that, on January 6, 2025, while signing children in for the youth boxing class, he noticed a participant had something in both of his ears. He asked the adult male who was with the participant if the child was listening to music; the male responded that his son was wearing hearing aids and was hearing impaired. Subject asked if boxing was the best thing for him, and the adult responded that his son wanted to box. Subject explained that the participant would be allowed to skip rope, do sit-ups, push-ups, arm circles and shadow box, but he would not be allowed to box or spar in the ring for safety reasons.

Before Subject could explain further, the male said Subject was discriminating against his son. He then called Subject a “dumb motherfucker” and said he was going to sue him.

Subject tried to interject about the language the male was using around the children. The male said he did not “give a fuck” about Subject or his boxing. He continued using offensive language calling Subject an “asshole,” “dumb bastard” and a “stupid son of a bitch.” This continued for a few minutes.

Subject asked the man if his son was going to stay for the class. He said no, since his son cannot box, and then started walking towards the door. Before exiting, the male said if Subject wasn’t 80 years old, he would have kicked the living daylight out of him.

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Subject explained he has been with the Park District as a boxing coach for more than 40 years, and his main concern is for the children's safety. If given the opportunity, he would have explained that hearing aids would need to be removed to enter the ring, so the headgear would fit properly. And, if hearing aids are removed, the child would not be able to hear commands or instructions from coaches or referees.

Subject said he was not trying to discriminate against the child. Instead, he was trying to explain that the child would be allowed to participate in the class but could not spar with another boxer.

Interview with Park Supervisor of Recreation

The Park Supervisor talked with Subject regarding the incident and how he could have handled the situation better. He told Subject that, if he had concerns, he should have first informed his supervisor so they could discuss possible solutions and reasonable accommodations.

The Park Supervisor shared that Disability Policy Officer Larry Labiak was setting up a staff training to discuss ways to address these types of situations if they arise in the future.

Interview with Area Manager

The Area Manager reached out to Complainant to offer her son a spot in another nearby boxing program.

In a January 10, 2025, email, Complainant stated that she did not want to participate in Chicago Park District programming at that time and requested a refund.

The Area Manager issued a full refund.

Information from Larry Labiak, Disability Policy Officer

On January 28, 2025, Labiak conducted a one-hour Disability Awareness & Etiquette Training, which was attended by Subject. Labiak added that the entire Park District staff at the park attended the training, per standard complaint response protocol established by his office several years ago.

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CONCLUSION

OPA's investigation found that Park District personnel handled the situation in a timely manner by reaching out to the Complainant, offering options for Complainant's son to participate in Park District programming and ultimately providing the requested refund. Additionally, Disability Policy Officer Larry Labiak promptly completed a training program with personnel at the park to ensure that all staff understand proper Park District procedures for handling situations involving participants with disabilities and how best to accommodate them.

OPA's investigation found insufficient evidence to support the allegation that Subject engaged in discriminatory behavior and closed this case as unsubstantiated.

Based on the description provided by Subject and two additional witnesses to the January incident, the conduct of Complainant's husband escalated the situation and impeded Subject's efforts to discuss options and accommodations for Complainant's son.

For this reason, OPA recommends that de-escalation training would also be helpful to provide staff with guidance on how to deal with such difficult situations. OPA also recommended that the Park District consider adding language to program descriptions related to impairments or disabilities which could hinder full participation to encourage parents to discuss such situations in advance.