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## CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

### OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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### Second Quarter 2025 Report

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

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

The Q2 Report summarizes OPA's work to provide training and guidance as part of our ongoing efforts to maintain a safe, inclusive, and respectful recreation and work environment at the Chicago Park District.

The Q2 Report also includes a summary of OPA's investigative work. Going into the second half of 2025, we remain focused on the goal of increasing accountability and working with the Park District's leadership to address any instances of discrimination, harassment, workplace violence, retaliation, and abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

As always, the OPA team looks forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues.

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](mailto:OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com)
- Online: Via a form linked on [www.ChicagoParkDistrict.com/OPA](http://www.ChicagoParkDistrict.com/OPA)
- In writing: Chicago Park District  
Office of Prevention and Accountability  
4830 S. Western Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60609

### Personnel

Throughout the Second 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. During the Second Quarter of 2025, OPA staff attended trainings hosted by the Illinois Chapter of the Association of Inspectors General on Utilizing Open-Source Techniques for Effective Investigations, Staying Grounded in High-Stress Times, and Legal Considerations in Administrative and Criminal Investigations. Additionally, OPA staff joined other Park District staff across the District for a Suicide Prevention certification facilitated by the Chicago Department of Public Health QPR Institute.

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### Continued Emphasis on Prevention and Training

During the Second Quarter 2025, OPA again focused on training for both year-round and seasonal staff to ensure that all employees are aware of the responsibilities and expectations related to their service as Park District personnel.

The 2025 Harassment Prevention training included guidance on how to identify sexual harassment and harassment/discrimination based on protected categories, such as age, race, national origin and religion. The training, which is mandated by both the state of Illinois and the City of Chicago, provided employees with descriptive scenarios showing how harassment can manifest itself in the workplace and strongly emphasized how Park District employees can report any issues to OPA.

The Harassment Prevention training for year-round employees was assigned to all staff via the Success Center<sup>1</sup> on February 20, 2025, with a completion deadline of April 30, 2025. By the end of the Second Quarter, 88.1% of employees (2,149 individuals) had completed the one-hour Harassment Training required of all staff, while 92.7% of supervisory/managerial employees (650 individuals) had completed the two-hour training required for supervisory/managerial employees.<sup>2</sup>

A second mandatory training, the 2025 Bystander Intervention training was rolled out for year-round employees on May 15, 2025, with a completion deadline of June 20, 2025. This year's Bystander Intervention training included a focus on enhancing workplace culture, supporting colleagues and de-escalation. It also included guidance on reporting concerns to OPA. By the end of the Second Quarter, 76.4% of employees (2,382 individuals) had completed the one-hour Bystander Intervention training.

For seasonal employees, OPA once again worked with our vendor and with the Park District's Workforce Development team to provide Harassment Prevention and Bystander Intervention trainings that could be presented to seasonal employees before they begin work for the summer.

During the Second Quarter, OPA presented 11 in-person Harassment Prevention and Bystander Intervention trainings to roughly 950 seasonal employees in the Department of Natural Resources

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<sup>1</sup> The Success Center is the Chicago Park District's online learning management system.

<sup>2</sup> 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. Additionally, mandatory trainings are assigned to new employees, who are given time to complete the trainings after they are onboarded.

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(DCNR), Aquatics, Gymnastics and Outdoor & Environmental Education.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, a recorded version of these OPA trainings was also provided to Community Recreation and used to train more than 1,600 seasonal employees at 18 orientation locations in June 2025.

Additionally, throughout the Second Quarter, OPA continued its outreach efforts to Park District employees with a goal to ensure that all staff are aware that OPA is available as a resource for guidance and to address any concerns that arise under the Human Rights Ordinance, Chapter IV of the Park District Code, as well as related policies. As part of those efforts, OPA gave presentations at three Regional Information Sessions in April 2025 and spoke to Special Recreation employees during a training in June 2025.

### **Policies and Best Practices**

As part of its ongoing efforts to ensure that the Park District's policies are updated, clear and aligned with best practices, OPA continues to work with both the Policy Director and the Law Department to review existing policies and procedures. This review also includes the creation of additional guidance documents and new policies as needed. Now that OPA has been in operation for more than two years, it has initiated a second review of the core policies under OPA's jurisdiction to ensure that they are complete and accurately reflect the work being done. This review is slated for completion later in 2025.

During the Second Quarter, OPA also introduced some proposed changes to the Park District Code. At the June 11, 2025, meeting of the Park District Board, those amendments to Chapter IV and Chapter VII of the Code were presented to the Board. The proposed changes to Chapter IV would update the Park District's Human Rights Ordinance to: clarify the definition of retaliation to include retaliation for reports made directly to a supervisor/manager; update the definition of "Vulnerable Adult" to make it consistent with the Adult Protective Services Policy; add interference with an investigation to the list of Prohibited Conduct; add the Gender Diversity Policy to the list of policies related to the Human Rights Ordinance; and insert language to specify that OPA files and reports are confidential. The proposed changes to Chapter VII would update that section on "Use of Restrooms, Comfort Stations, and Locker Rooms" to make it consistent with the Gender Diversity Policy and provide guidance on facility usage by young children and people with disabilities who require assistance. The amendments to both Code sections were submitted for a 45-day public comment period before being finalized and submitted for a Board vote expected in September 2025.

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<sup>3</sup> The 12th and final in-person training is scheduled for July 15 with seasonal employees for DCNR.

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### Q2 Complaints, Reports and Investigations

In the Second Quarter 2025, OPA received 123 complaints/inquiries.<sup>4</sup> In the Second Quarter, OPA opened 31 investigations and closed 131 cases. At the conclusion of the Second Quarter, OPA had a total of 146 open cases. The open cases include matters being actively investigated, matters under review to determine an appropriate course of action, and matters being held open for monitoring.

Of the complaints/inquiries received in the Second Quarter 2025, the most common complaints/inquiries received were: discrimination (20); harassment (13), sexual harassment/misconduct (10); concerning conduct by or involving minors (7), and workplace violence (6). The remaining complaints/inquiries were in less common categories, were determined to not fall under OPA's jurisdiction, or remain under investigation.

Of the 123 complaints/inquiries received in the Second Quarter, OPA determined that 71 did not fall under OPA's jurisdiction or require investigation; those matters included: allegations of unprofessional conduct, general rudeness and conflict between staff; a report of trespassing by individuals who cut across private property to access a park; complaints from Park patrons about enforcement of rules related to swim attire and conduct in the pools; a complaint about rule enforcement during a festival in a park; inquiries about job applications; concerns about graffiti along the lakefront; and complaints about a defective swing and a faulty slide at two different parks. 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, 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.

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<sup>4</sup> The Q2 2025 total compares to 89 complaints/inquiries received in Q1 2025. (In 2024, OPA received 87 complaints/inquiries in Q1, 98 in Q2, 127 in Q3, and 77 in Q4. In 2023, OPA received 17 in Q1, 41 in Q2, 121 in Q3, and 81 in Q4.)

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

#### **23-0108**

OPA received a report from a monthly natatorium instructor (Instructor) regarding a patron complaint that a minor seasonal lifeguard (Minor Subject) made an inappropriate comment of a sexual nature regarding genitalia to the patron's 14-year-old son. In consultation with OPA, Instructor reported the incident to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which declined to open an investigation.

OPA interviewed Instructor and reviewed the steps taken by Instructor and other Beaches and Pools employees. According to Instructor, the family did not return to the facility and therefore employees were unable to speak to or identify them. Instructor provided Minor Subject and other seasonal employees with on-going redirection and training regarding appropriate interactions with minor children and general professionalism. Instructor reported no further incidents or concerns with Minor Subject.

OPA requested and reviewed Subject's personnel and disciplinary records. At the time of the incident, Minor Subject was a seasonal lifeguard. On October 25, 2023, he was promoted to year-round hourly lifeguard. Minor Subject had no discipline records.

OPA found that Instructor and Park District employees immediately responded to the patron complaint, followed reporting procedure, and appropriately addressed the behavior directly with Minor Subject.

#### **24-0108**

OPA received a report that a minor child was subjected to harassment based on the protected categories of sexual orientation and/or gender identity by a physical instructor.

This complaint alleged that a former Hourly Physical Instructor (Subject) bullied and harassed a child participant (Minor Child 1) by calling the child "gay" and questioning the child's sexual orientation. The complaint further alleged that Subject shouted at Minor Child 1 and their friends that they were trying to get Subject fired.

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Through its investigation, OPA learned of other concerning, unpredictable, and aggressive behavior by Subject with minor child participants, parents of participants, and other employees, and that supervisory employees failed to appropriately address Subject's conduct.

### INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW

#### REVIEW OF PARK DISTRICT RECORDS

OPA requested from Human Resources (HR) a copy of Subject's personnel and disciplinary records and copies of any and all background check records relating to Subject. OPA did not receive any disciplinary records related to Subject.

OPA reviewed Subject's personnel record and discovered it did not contain any information or documentation regarding Subject's time as a seasonal Park District employee. Subject's personnel file indicated that Subject began as an hourly physical instructor in August 2023 at one location (Park 1) and was transferred to another location (Park 2) in April 2024. Subject resigned effective May 2024.

#### INTERVIEWS AND STATEMENTS

##### *Interview of Complainant*

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

Complainant was not present during the alleged incident and their knowledge was second-hand. Complainant submitted a complaint along with three written narratives collected from Witness 1, Witness 2 and Witness 3.

Complainant had previously observed Subject to be aggressive and loud with an employee at Park 2. Due to Subject's overall inappropriate conduct, Complainant believed Subject should not work with minor children.

##### *Interviews and Written Statements*

OPA reviewed each narrative and interviewed Witness 1, Witness 2 and Witness 3. When compared, each written statement was factually consistent with statements made to OPA during the respective interviews.

Witness 1, Witness 2, and Witness 3 related the following, in summary:

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Witness 1, Witness 2, and Witness 3 were in the classroom with the minor participants when Subject came to the classroom. Each witness independently saw and heard Subject raise his voice toward four minor participants, including 14-year-old Minor Child 1, and Subject told them that they needed to come with him to meet with the supervisor in charge of Park 2. Witness 1 and Witness 3 heard Subject yell that Minor Child 1 and the other three minor participants had tried to get Subject fired.

Witness 1 and Witness 3 described Subject's demeanor as "angry," and Witness 2 described Subject as "agitated."

Witness 3 heard Subject yell at the four minor participants that it was their "fault" and he was just "playing." Subject asked how they could be mad when he had heard the minor participants use words like "booty." Subject continued to list off body parts, but Witness 3 could not recall specifically which parts.

Witness 1, Witness 2, and Witness 3 stated that Subject at one point sat at the same table as Minor Child 1 and their friends. Each witness observed Minor Child 1 to be upset; they appeared to be avoiding Subject. Witness 1 and Witness 3 noticed Minor Child 1 was crying and shaking, and Witness 2 saw Minor Child 1 lower their eyes and avoid eye contact with Subject.

According to Witness 2, while Subject was at the table, a seven-year-old male participant stood up, put his leg up on a chair, and looked as if he was going to "gyrate" or make a similar sexual motion. Witness 2 warned the child not to do it. Subject started yelling "why don't ya'll report [the seven-year-old child]" and "look what he's doing." Subject stood up and gyrated his hips in a sexual way, as if imitating the seven-year-old child's intent.

Witness 2 felt afraid of Subject and was worried what Subject might do.

Minor Child 1 told Witness 2 they wanted to call their mom, then left. Witness 1 and Witness 3 related that they followed Minor Child 1 out, and the three of them talked outside.

Both Witness 1 and Witness 3 related that Minor Child 1 said that while at the table, Subject said "derogatory things" toward him, but Minor Child 1 refused to say exactly what Subject said. Neither Witness 1 nor Witness 2 heard what Subject said to Minor Child 1.

According to Witness 1 and Witness 3, Minor Child 1 disclosed that Subject had been repeatedly asking Minor Child 1 about their personal life and if Minor Child 1 was "gay." Subject would tell

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Minor Child 1 that other minor participants told Subject that Minor Child 1 was “gay.” Minor Child 1 said they would not return to the program because of Subject.

Witness 1, Witness 2, and Witness 3 had each seen and heard Subject yell at and be combative with employees at Park 2. Witness 3 had previously seen and heard Subject shouting at another physical instructor (Witness 4). Witness 1, Witness 2, and Witness 3 each stated that minor participants were present on those occasions.

#### INTERVIEW OF PARK 2 SUPERVISOR

During an interview with OPA, the supervisor at Park 2 (Supervisor 2) related the following, in summary:

Supervisor 2 had known Subject prior to his employment with the Park District. Subject started at Park 2 as a seasonal recreation leader. After about three seasons, he asked for a location transfer.

As a seasonal employee, Subject would often “go off” on employees, patrons, and his family members who worked at or visited Park 2. Subject would use “foul language” at work and called people out of their names. Subject was often upset about something and acted as if everyone was against him. Supervisor 2 was usually able to de-escalate Subject, and he could exhibit “kindness and sensitivity.”

In 2024, when Supervisor 2 was informed that Subject was transferred to Park 2, she told a member of Community Recreation leadership (Manager) that she did not want Subject back at Park 2 due to his prior conduct.

On or about April 16, 2024, Minor Child 1 told Supervisor 2 that Subject had asked if Minor Child 1 was “gay.” Minor Child 1 also said that Subject encouraged other minor participants to tease Minor Child 1 and Subject did not intervene when minor participants bullied or harassed Minor Child 1.

Minor Child 1 related that there was an incident in the gym where other participants refused to get a bag of balls for an activity. The minor participants said that it was “gay” and “homo.” Subject then said he knew that Minor Child 1 was going to “pick up the bag of balls.” The way Subject made the comment, Minor Child 1 understood Subject was making a joke about Minor Child 1 being gay. Minor Child 1 said he left the gym and cried. Minor Child 1 was upset and kept asking Supervisor 2 why Subject did that to him.

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Five other minor children who were present in the gym that day corroborated to Supervisor 2 what Minor Child 1 said.

During a meeting with Subject, Subject said that Minor Child 1 was taking it “so seriously” and was “so sensitive.” Subject said he was a man and did not accept “that lifestyle.” Subject asked why Minor Child 1 had to be gay. Supervisor 2 warned Subject that his behavior would not be tolerated.

Subject’s behavior impacted staffing at Park 2. Supervisor 2 witnessed Subject get physically close to and yell at an attendant at Park 2. A female security guard had expressed fear of Subject due to an interaction where Subject became angry and yelled at her. Witness 4 requested a safety transfer due to verbal threats from Subject.

#### INTERVIEW OF PARK 1 SUPERVISOR

During an interview with OPA, Park 1 Supervisor (Supervisor 1) related the following, in summary:

Supervisor 1 previously supervised Subject at Park 1 and repeatedly issued Subject verbal warnings, reported Subject to Manager, and reported Subject to Risk Management.

Subject’s conduct was “unpredictable” and “aggressive,” as if he thought everyone was attacking him. Subject told Supervisor 1 he was struggling with his mental health, and Supervisor 1 provided Subject with contact information for the Employee Assistance Program.

In 2024, Subject was transferred from Park 1 to Park 2 following a physical altercation with a 12-year-old male participant. Subject told Supervisor 1 that he had put the minor participant on the ground in “self-defense.” The minor participant’s mother and uncle came to Park 1. Supervisor 1 was present and did not think that either the mother or uncle were confrontational. However, Subject escalated and called the police. When the police arrived, Supervisor 1 heard Subject yelling that he had told Supervisor 1 that he “needed help.” No police reports were filed. Supervisor 1 filed two Park District Incident Reports.

During Subject’s time at Park 1, Supervisor 1 received one phone call from a parent of a minor participant, who related to Supervisor 1 that when she picked her child up from Park 1, he said that Subject had made a “gay slur” about the child. The mother declined to give more details. Supervisor 1 met with Subject about the report. Subject told Supervisor 1 that he did not want the minor participant to be getting into any “funny business” at the park and that Subject did not like male participants touching each other in any way.

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Another time, a minor participant hit Subject in the face with a ball during an activity. Subject said he “knew” the minor participant had done it on purpose and demanded that the minor participant be removed. Subject yelled at Supervisor 1 in front of minor participants and other employees. According to the minor participant’s mother, the child participant refused to return to the program due to Subject.

A third parent reported to Supervisor 1 that the way Subject spoke to her child during a kickball game scared the minor participant and she felt “attacked” by Subject. Supervisor 1 once heard Subject tell his kickball team of minor participants that they “suck” and called the winning minor participants “the smart kids.”

### INTERVIEW OF MANAGER

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

Manager knew of Subject when Subject was a seasonal employee at Park 2 and Subject was from the community. Manager corroborated the general timeline and events that led to Subject being transferred from Park 2 to Park 1 and then from Park 1 back to Park 2.

Manager corroborated Supervisor 1’s narrative regarding the incident at Park 1 between a minor participant and the minor participant’s mother and uncle. The mother of the child reported that she had spoken to her son about physical play with adults and that her issue was how Subject responded, including yelling. Manager confirmed that an incident report was made and later emailed OPA a link to the incident report.

At Park 1, a parent complained that they did not want Subject using “street language” with her child. Subject was spoken to about it and told he needed to act professionally.

Subject’s interpersonal interactions changed following the loss of his parents. Prior to that time, Manager was not aware of any “blowups” between Subject and other employees and/or patrons or other concerns regarding Subject’s interactions with minor children. There had been no issues with Subject’s work performance. Subject was given “some grace” after the loss of his parents.

### REVIEW OF WITNESS 4’S WRITTEN STATEMENT

According to OPA’s review of the written statement that Witness 4 provided to Supervisor 2, on March 18, 2024, a minor child participant asked Witness 4 to open a door. Witness 4 did not open the door because he wanted to confirm it was okay to do so. When the participants told Subject, Subject began “yelling and cursing” at Witness 4. Subject became “very aggressive and loud.” Minor child participants were present.

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Witness 4 walked away, but Subject followed him, continuing to “verbally attack” Witness 4. Subject told Witness 4 that “this was [his] hood, you’re not from around here, I’ll make something happen to you.” Witness 4 believed Subject was threatening him with physical harm and threatening his employment.

Approximately one hour later, Subject approached Witness 4 and told him to go home because Subject did not want him there. Given Subject’s behavior, Witness 4 decided, after speaking to another employee, to leave the park. When Witness 4 got to his car, it was “ransacked” and one of Witness 4’s bags was missing.

#### INTERVIEW OF SUBJECT

During an interview with OPA in which Subject was offered, and declined, union representation, Subject related the following, in summary:

In 2017, Subject started at the Park District as a seasonal recreation leader. In 2023, Subject became a physical instructor at Park 2, where he returned after being transferred to Park 1 for a time. Subject did not receive any job training and there was not enough staff or resources at Park 2. Another issue was that child participants “put their hands” on Park District employees, including Subject. Subject was the “enforcer.”

#### *Park 1 – Minor Child Participants*

Subject was moved from Park 1 to Park 2 because the minor participants at Park 1 “were hands on.” On or about January 28, 2024, a 12-year-old male participant (Minor Child 2) was “beating up” other participants and Subject pulled Minor Child 2 off the other participants. Minor Child 2 then tried to “play with” Subject. Subject told Minor Child 2 to stop, but Minor Child 2 continued to try to wrestle Subject. Minor Child 2 put Subject in a headlock, and Subject could not breathe. Subject responded by picking up Minor Child 2 and putting him on the ground. Subject had a long red mark on the back of his neck from Minor Child 2.

Subject showed OPA investigators a picture on his phone and alleged it was his neck taken on the day of the interaction with Minor Child 2. The picture appeared to be the back side of Subject’s neck though no facial features were visible. Investigators saw a long, vertical red mark on the neck. Subject stated he would send investigators a copy of the picture but failed to do so.

Following the incident, Minor Child 2’s mother and uncle went to Park 2 to confront Subject. Subject related that Minor Child 2’s mother or uncle, it was unclear which, said to Subject, “You don’t put your hands on no one.” Subject stated that he called the police. When the police

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responded to Park 1, the officers told Subject that he did not do anything wrong. Subject did not have a police report or any documentation regarding the incident with Minor Child 2.

Not long after, in or around February 20, 2024, Subject went on leave. When he returned at the beginning of April 2024, Subject was placed back at Park 2.

### *Park 2 – Minor Child Participants*

Supervisor 2 discussed Minor Child 1’s report with Subject. Minor Child 1 told Supervisor 2 that Subject was “picking on” Minor Child 1. However, the child participants always talked about sexuality; female participants called Minor Child 1 “gay” and “fruity” while male participants referred to Minor Child 1 as “that homo.” By reporting Subject, Minor Child 1 put Subject in a “bad position on purpose.”

Subject tried to stop other participants from calling Minor Child 1 “fruity.” Subject was trying to “help” Minor Child 1 and was not trying to hurt him. Subject did not make Minor Child 1 do sports and let him be with the girls because Minor Child 1 wanted to be with the girls. Minor Child 1 “took it too far” and cried.

Subject apologized to Minor Child 1 and “even tried to give him a hug.”

Regarding the situation, Subject said, “I don’t like that ... very disrespectful. I’m hurt. I’m not wrong. These people attack us.” When asked who “these people” were, Subject said, “Homosexuals.” Subject continued, “If I act like I was gay you wouldn’t even be interviewing me right now,” and, “This is unfair as a Black man.” Subject’s best friend was gay. Subject understood that “we need to protect the gay man but we need to do the same ... look out for the regular man.”

### **ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### *Subject*

An OPA investigation found substantial, credible, and corroborated evidence that Subject violated the Park District’s policies on harassment and retaliation and created a hostile and intimidating recreational environment that prevented Minor Child 1 from full and equal enjoyment of the Park District’s programs.

Specifically, Subject violated Park District policy when he repeatedly called Minor Child 1 “gay” and openly speculated on Minor Child 1’s sexual orientation based on Minor Child 1’s gender expression. Supervisor 2, Witness 1, Witness 2, and Witness 3 credibly testified that Minor Child

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1 disclosed to them that Subject called him “gay,” encouraged other minor participants to bully him, and otherwise treated Minor Child 1 differently. By his own admissions, Subject felt that the minor participants were against him and that he had negative feelings about the LGBTQI+ community.

Additionally, based on credible and consistent witness testimony, Subject violated the Employee Code of Conduct through acts of insubordination, failure to follow directives and guidelines, and unprofessional conduct while on duty.

OPA’s investigation found sufficient evidence to support a recommendation that the Subject’s Park District employment be terminated. That recommendation was, however, unnecessary given Subject’s resignation from the Park District after his interview with OPA’s investigators. Based on this finding, OPA recommended that the Park District place an Ineligible for Rehire designation on Subject’s personnel file so that he is barred from further employment or volunteering.<sup>5</sup>

OPA closed this case as SUBSTANTIATED.

### *Additional Employees*

Subject’s history of repeated misconduct, aggression, and inappropriate conduct around minor children appeared troubling enough to have warranted intervention prior to April 2024. Less than three months prior, Subject was in a physical altercation with another minor child yet there was no record of an incident report filed regarding the details of Subject’s actions towards that child. Furthermore, there was no record of the incident ever being reported to OPA, as required by Chapter IV of the Park District Code.

Park District records showed no discipline of Subject, yet according to the testimony of Supervisor 2 and Supervisor 1, Subject had a pattern of aggressive and inappropriate conduct with minor children, including using gay slurs, physical touch, and demeaning comments. Multiple witnesses credibly testified that they observed Subject to be aggressive with other employees, and Supervisor 2 reported that Subject’s behavior negatively impacted staffing. Both Supervisor 2 and Supervisor 1 credibly testified that they were concerned about Subject’s conduct and reported their concerns to Manager.

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<sup>5</sup> On June 25, 2025, OPA received a response from HR confirming that the Ineligible for Rehire designation had been placed.

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However, Manager said he was not aware of any “outbursts” by Subject prior to the January 2024 incident. Furthermore, Manager stated that Subject was given “some grace.”

Due to management’s failure to discipline Subject for multiple violations of Park District policy, including the Employee Code of Conduct and failure to correctly report safety concerns Subject posed to minor children, OPA strongly recommended that Human Resources consider this report in full and determine whether additional action should be taken as to those employees.<sup>6</sup>

#### 24-0347

OPA received a complaint from a Physical Instructor (Complainant) who alleged harassment and bullying by a Park Supervisor of Recreation, an Area Manager and a Human Resources Manager (Subjects).

During an interview with OPA Complainant failed to articulate any complaints sufficient to find that Subjects violated Chapter 4 of the Park District Code or any related Park District policies. Additionally, Complainant acknowledged she had been disciplined just prior to making the complaint with OPA, and said she just wanted to move on and did not want to pursue her initial complaint.

OPA found insufficient evidence to merit a full investigation into the allegations made by Complainant. OPA has, therefore, closed this matter as unsubstantiated.

#### 24-0360

An OPA investigation found sufficient evidence to support allegations that a former Park District employee engaged in acts of harassment of a seasonal employee based on sexual orientation. The OPA investigation, however, found insufficient evidence to support allegations that the same employee engaged in acts of sexual harassment of former seasonal employees, some of whom were minors at the time.

OPA received two separate complaints from supervisory personnel (Supervisor 1 and Supervisor 2) on October 3, 2024. Both complaints reported that a former Hourly Physical Instructor (Subject) asked former seasonal employees about their dating and sex lives and later disclosed the sexual orientation of an employee. The complaints further alleged that Subject called a seasonal

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<sup>6</sup> In its June 25, 2025, response to OPA, HR noted that disciplinary actions were being taken.

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employee a “pussy” because of the employee’s medical condition and posted videos of employees on social media.

OPA’s investigation raised serious concerns about Subject’s judgment in working with minors, including employees and participants under the age of 18.

Additionally, OPA’s investigation revealed potential policy violations outside of OPA’s purview, including conduct that violated the Employee Code of Conduct, such as abuse of power, unprofessionalism, and insubordination. Additionally, Subject admitted to recording employees, including minor employees, with the employees’ Park District shirts visible and on Park District property during work hours, and then posted such videos on her personal TikTok account. Finally, it was reported that Subject allowed an unregistered minor child to participate in a toddler day camp.

### INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW

#### REVIEW OF RECORDS

According to Park District records, Subject started with the Park District as a seasonal employee in June 2019. In November 2023, Subject was hired as a year-round recreation leader and was subsequently promoted to hourly physical instructor in May 2024. Subject resigned at the end of 2024 for reasons unrelated to OPA’s investigation.

A review of Success Center records showed that Subject completed the harassment and bystander trainings required during her employment.

#### INTERVIEWS

##### **OPA interviewed Witness 1, who reported the following, in summary:**

During Summer Season 2024, Subject engaged in conversations with seasonal employees that made Witness 1 feel uncomfortable.

On one occasion, Subject approached Witness 2 while Witness 2 was with their group of day camp participants, who ranged in age from three to five years old. In a “whisper,” Subject said something to Witness 2 indicating oral sex between Subject and Subject’s boyfriend. Witness 2 could not recall for sure if Subject also made a sexual motion with her hands.

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Subject asked Witness 1 and other seasonal employees if they had ever “been with someone” sexually. Witness 1 did not respond and felt uncomfortable. Subject repeatedly asked Witness 1 and Witness 1 felt pressured to answer. Witness 1 eventually said that they were “gay.” Witness 1 did not want to disclose their sexual orientation but felt the need to respond because Subject was Witness 1’s superior.

A group of employees agreed to collectively order food and drinks. Witness 1 said they had food allergies and would not be ordering anything. Subject then called Witness 1 “a pussy.”

Subject asked Witness 1 and other employees who they were voting for in the 2024 Presidential Election. Witness 1 tried not to engage in the conversation. Subject continued to press employees and discussed her political views and endorsement of a candidate.

Witness 1 was afraid to report or confront Subject because she was Witness 1’s superior and on a prior occasion, she heard Subject tell a 16-year-old seasonal employee that she would “fire” them. Witness 1 believed that if they said anything, Subject would retaliate against Witness 1.

#### **OPA interviewed Witness 2, who related the following, in summary:**

Witness 2 corroborated that Subject would talk about her dating and sex life and would ask other employees about theirs. Subject would make sexual innuendos that made Witness 2 feel uncomfortable. Witness 2 felt uncomfortable repeating the specific comments that Subject made.

While at work, Subject asked Witness 2 if Witness 2 knew that Witness 1 was “a lesbian.” Witness 2 felt uncomfortable with Subject disclosing a colleague’s sexual orientation.

During a conversation, Witness 1 told Witness 2 that Witness 1 felt pressured by Subject to disclose their sexual orientation. Witness 2 told Witness 1 that Subject had told Witness 2 about Witness 1’s sexual orientation.

Witness 2 did not disclose Witness 1’s sexual orientation to their other colleagues.

Subject would video Witness 2 and other employees at work. Subject sent a TikTok link with a video of Witness 2 and other employees at work. The employees’ Park District shirts were visible.

Witness 2 did not give Subject consent to post the video on TikTok. Witness 2 no longer had the video or the TikTok link. Witness 2 was under the age of 18 during the Summer 2024 season.

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**OPA interviewed Witness 3, who related the following, in summary:**

Subject and Witness 3 would discuss their personal and dating lives at work, though Witness 3 did not recall specific conversations. According to Park District records, Witness 3 was under the age of 18 during Summer 2024 season.

**OPA interviewed Witness 4, who related the following, in summary:**

Subject would talk to Witness 4 about her boyfriend and their sex life, including “graphic” details that made Witness 4 feel uncomfortable. On more than one occasion, Witness 4 asked Subject to stop talking about sex and her boyfriend yet Subject continued to do so. Witness 4 could not recall details of what Subject said and had tried to “tune [Subject] out.”

Subject would approach Witness 4 and other employees and record them at work. Witness 4 told Subject that she (Subject) could lose her job if she posted the videos with employees in their Park District shirts on social media. Two such videos of Witness 4 and other employees were posted on Subject’s TikTok and their Park District T-Shirts were clearly visible.

Subject would make negative comments to Witness 4 about Witness 4’s physical appearance, such as Witness 4’s nose was too big.

**OPA interviewed Supervisor 1, who related the following, in summary:**

Supervisor 1 was not aware of Subject’s previously mentioned conduct until it was reported to her in October 2024.

One time when Supervisor 1 returned to the park, she observed Subject and seasonal employees sitting on a stoop outside of the building. Supervisor 1 overheard Subject talking about her ex-boyfriend. It was in between day camp sessions and Subject and employees were supposed to be preparing for the next session.

Although the toddler camp was full, Subject told a parent that her child could attend anyway. When Supervisor 1 learned that an unregistered child was attending, she explained to Subject why an unregistered child could not attend. In front of other employees, Subject argued with Supervisor 1 about the unregistered child attending. Subject received verbal discipline.

Subject would not follow Supervisor 1’s directives and would instead do something else. For example, Subject was directed to stay with a seasonal employee, who was under the age of 18 and

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who needed mentoring. Subject did not stay with or mentor the employee and instead talked negatively about the employee.

**OPA interviewed Subject, who related the following, in summary:**

During Subject's tenure with the Park District, Subject had never been disciplined and had never been told she had violated the Employee Code of Conduct or any other policies.

The first two weeks of Summer Day Camp 2024, Subject handled the park, including facilities, employees, and parents. The physical instructor was out the first two weeks of day camp. Subject did not receive any additional training about running a day camp or supervising staff.

Subject was the first line of supervision for the seasonal employees, all of whom were under the age of 18 except for one, who was approximately 20-years-old at the time. During Summer 2024, Subject was 22-years-old.

Subject "mentioned" her boyfriend and her ex-boyfriend at work. Subject denied that she talked about her sex life or anything sexual. For example, Subject would say that she and her boyfriend were going on a date after work. Subject never talked about dating or her personal life in front of minor participants.

Subject denied that she asked other employees about their personal dating or sex lives, and noted that "[her] staff" would talk about their boyfriends and girlfriends. Subject also denied ever talking about or making any innuendos about oral sex specifically or of a sexual nature generally.

Subject denied that she asked any employees if they had ever "been with" someone sexually and/or said it was "crazy" an employee had not had a boyfriend due to their age.

Subject and a seasonal employee who was over the age of 18 were talking about college and Subject asked the employee if they were seeing anyone at college. The employee said they did not like boys. Subject did not think anyone else was present during the conversation.

Subject did not tell any other employees that an employee was gay or a lesbian. Subject did not know how any other employees could have found out about the employee's sexual orientation.

Subject did not hear other employees talk about sex or make sexual innuendos. Subject was familiar with the Park District's policies on harassment and sexual harassment and would have addressed such behavior immediately.

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Subject took her job very seriously and, because the seasonal employees were in a similar age range, wanted them to feel comfortable talking to her.

Subject denied calling an employee “pussy” and said she was unaware that a seasonal employee had severe food allergies.

Subject never talked about politics or the 2024 election at work.

Subject took videos of employees on Park District property during work hours. Subject admitted that the employees’ Park District shirts were visible. Subject admitted that she posted the video to TikTok. Some of the employees in the video were under the age of 18. Subject asked each employee if it was okay to film them and if it was okay to post the video on TikTok; all employees said yes. No one ever told Subject it was not permissible to upload videos of Park District employees to social media.

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

OPA found sufficient, credible, and corroborated evidence to establish that Subject engaged in behavior that violated Chapter IV of the Park District Code.

Specifically, Subject created an intimidating and hostile environment by asking employees about their sexual preferences and outing an employee’s sexual orientation. Two witnesses corroborated that, in violation the Park District’s policy on harassment based on the protected category of sexual orientation, Subject asked about and then disclosed an employee’s sexual orientation to another employee. Additionally, that other employee – Witness 2 – was under the age of 18.

In contrast, OPA found that Subject’s testimony was not credible. Subject’s testimony that Witness 1 disclosed their sexual orientation during a casual conversation about a wholly unrelated topic was inconsistent with the testimony of three witnesses. The witnesses consistently testified that Subject repeatedly asked inappropriate and uncomfortable questions and would not let it go until Subject got an answer. Furthermore, the three witnesses were consistent in their statements that Subject would overshare and pressured employees to respond.

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Finally, Witness 1 denied disclosing their sexual orientation to Witness 2 or anyone at work except for Subject. It was only when Witness 1 learned that Subject had disclosed the information to Witness 2 that Witness 1 reported what had happened.

The Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy (Policy) specifically prohibits sexual jokes, stories, or innuendos as well as discussions or inquiries about sexual fantasy or history about self or about others. While the consistent testimony of four witnesses strongly supports a pattern of behavior that made at least three employees (one of whom was under the age of 18) feel uncomfortable at work, OPA found that there were insufficient details about the exact nature of Subject's comments to determine whether or not the comments and innuendos reported were of a sexual nature such that Subject violated the Policy.

Because Subject was in a position of authority and four of the seasonal employees were under the age of 18, Subject's conduct raises serious concerns about her judgment and ability to work with minor employees and minor child participants.

OPA is closing this case as SUBSTANTIATED as to harassment based on the protected category of sexual orientation and failure to maintain appropriate boundaries with minors, and UNSUBSTANTIATED as to sexual harassment and harassment based on a medical condition.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Based on these substantiated violations, OPA recommended that the Park District's Human Resources Department evaluate these findings, as well as this report as a whole, and take any disciplinary and/or hiring action it deems appropriate. In response, HR designated Subject as Ineligible for Rehire.

#### 25-0049

An OPA investigation established that an hourly natatorium instructor (Subject) violated the Park District's Violence in the Workplace Policy and Chapter 4, Section A(4) of the Park District Code, which defines Workplace Violence as a "threat of physical violence or any other threatening behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress."

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On April 11, 2025, 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.

Following the conclusion of OPA's investigation, multiple additional incidents involving Subject entering Park District property and inappropriately communicating with staff occurred. Park District security provided on-site coverage to the impacted locations and the Chicago Police Department was contacted.

On April 15, 2025, the Park District obtained an Emergency Workplace Protection Restraining Order against Subject. On May 6, 2025, a two-year Workplace Violence Protection Act Order banned him from Park District property as well as from OPA's office until May 6, 2027.

On April 21, 2025, following a corrective action meeting that was held as a result of OPA's findings, Park District Human Resources notified Subject that his Park District employment was terminated effective immediately. Additionally, Subject has been designated as Ineligible for Rehire.

### INVESTIGATION

#### COMPLAINT

On February 22, 2025, OPA received an emailed complaint alleging that a Park District employee (Employee Victim 1) felt unsafe because of an interaction that they experienced with Subject, as well as an interaction that they observed between Subject and a minor Park District participant (Minor Participant Victim 2) during a swim meet that was held off-site on February 22, 2025.

While Employee Victim 1 was writing down an event for Minor Participant Victim 2, Subject said "Make sure you're listening to [them] today. [They are] Head coach for today, okay? If you don't, I'm going to slit your throat." Employee Victim 1 then gave Subject a stern look and shook their head in disapproval. Subject replied saying "[O]h, sorry my bad. I didn't mean it. [Employee Victim 1] just doesn't know that I'm just dark like that."

Employee Victim 1 informed two of the Park District swim coaches, Witness 1 and Witness 2, to be alert of the statements he was making to the minor athletes.

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On the same date, later during the swim meet, Subject approached Employee Victim 1 and Witness 1. Subject asked to see the tattoo that Employee Victim 1 has on their upper arm. After Employee Victim 1 extended their arm to show Subject the tattoo, he began rubbing his finger “up and down” on the tattoo. He asked Employee Victim 1 why they chose to get a tattoo of a heart; before Employee Victim 1 could respond, Subject stated, “[O]h i [sic] know why [they] got that. Because when we cut [their] body up, that’s where [they will] bleed from.” Employee Victim 1 appeared uncomfortable, and Subject stated, “[M]y bad. those are my dark thoughts speaking.”

Throughout the meet, Subject also continued to display inappropriate behavior around the participants by using profanities and encouraging the participants to “lash out” and disrespect other participants and coaches.

### EMERGENCY SUSPENSION

On February 23, 2025, at OPA’s recommendation, Subject was placed on unpaid emergency suspension. The emergency suspension letter given to Subject informed Subject that he was prohibited from “having contact with current Park District employees, former Park District employees, or any Park District participants” and “from visiting any Chicago Park District facilities other than the Administrative Headquarters or Office of Prevention and Accountability, when notified.”

### REVIEW OF DISTRICT RECORDS

During the course of its investigation, OPA reviewed the personnel, disciplinary, and training records related to Subject.

#### *1. Chicago Park District OIG Matter*

On February 26, 2025, after OPA contacted the Chicago Park District Office of Inspector General (OIG) to inquire about any relevant information related to Subject, the OIG referred a prior OIG investigation to OPA. The OIG investigation included allegations that Subject made overtly sexual comments to Park District employees and engaged in physically harmful hazing behaviors.

On March 8, 2022, the OIG issued a report substantiating the allegation that Subject engaged in sexual harassment by making inappropriate sexual comments. The OIG recommended that “Management take whatever remedial action deemed appropriate.”

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In a response memo dated March 31, 2022, from the Park District's Human Resources Department to then Interim Inspector General Alison Persona, HR wrote "Considering that Subject's position was non-supervisory, and less indicative of an abuse of power, HR would pursue..." a three- to five-day suspension as well as requiring eight trainings related to sexual harassment, fostering a positive work environment and professionalism in the workplace following a corrective action meeting.

Subject's disciplinary file contains a corrective action meeting disposition dated May 3, 2022, indicating that Subject violated the Park District Sexual Harassment Policy for making "inappropriate comments that were sexual in nature or sexual innuendos." As a result, Subject was issued a five-day suspension and assigned the trainings outlined in HR's response memo.

### *2. Personnel and Disciplinary Records*

According to Park District records, Subject began seasonal employment with the Park District in 2013 and began year-round employment with the Park District on December 2015. Subject was promoted from lifeguard to an hourly natatorium instructor in September 2018.

### *3. Training Records*

Park District training records indicate that Subject completed his 2023 and 2024 Workplace Harassment Prevention and Bystander Intervention trainings as well as the required 2024 Keeping Children Safe training. Additionally, Subject has completed several trainings related to safety, crisis management, risk management and aquatics throughout his employment.

Subject's training transcript also indicates that Subject completed the eight trainings assigned to him as a result of the OIG investigation, prior to the required deadline.

### EMPLOYEE VICTIM 1 INTERVIEW

OPA conducted a telephone interview with Employee Victim 1, who reported that they were assigned to work at an off-site swim meet on February 22, 2025, in suburban Chicago. Employee Victim 1 was unaware that Subject was planning to attend the event. Victim 1 had not previously worked with Subject, so this interaction was the first time they had a verbal exchange.

During the meet, while Employee Victim 1 was writing down event information related to Minor Victim 2, Subject threatened to "slit [Minor Participant Victim 2's] throat" if he did not listen to Employee Victim 1. Minor Participant Victim 2 appeared uncomfortable but not surprised by the

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comment, which gave Employee Victim 1 the impression that Subject talks this way regularly with his participants.

Employee Victim 1 stated that Minor Participant Victim 2 is approximately 11 years old.

Subject also repeatedly told Employee Victim 1 that he was their “slave” for the day and stated “I’m your slave for today so you tell me what to do and I do it.”

Subject was also “instigating” situations by getting close to minors and other adults at the meet and saying “Are you going to fight me? Let’s go.”

Approximately one hour after Subject told Minor Participant Victim 2 that he was going to slit the child’s throat, Subject approached Employee Victim 1 and asked to see their tattoo. He began to physically touch them by rubbing his finger on their tattoo. Employee Victim 1 felt uncomfortable and pulled their arm away. Witness 1 observed the interaction and tried to intervene. When they noticed that Employee Victim 1 was uncomfortable Witness 1 said “oh yeah, I have the same tattoo as [Employee Victim 1]” and tried to change the conversation. Subject then asked Employee Victim 1 about the meaning of their heart tattoo and stated “When we cut [their] body up that’s where [they] will bleed from.” When Subject noticed that Witness 1 and Employee Victim 1 both appeared to be obviously uncomfortable, Subject stated, “Oh my bad. Those are my dark thoughts coming out.” Employee Victim 1 told Subject to keep his thoughts inside and tried to avoid him for the remainder of the day.

Witness 5, a Park District employee and union steward, encouraged Employee Victim 1 to report the interactions with Subject to OPA.

On February 23, 2025, Subject returned to the second day of the swim meet. Employee Victim 1 was present, as well as Witness 1 and Witness 2. Subject caused disturbances throughout the day and was asked by swim meet officials to stop his behavior. Subject brought a speaker and was playing loud music during the meet. Additionally, he went into unauthorized areas of the facility for extended periods of time throughout the meet. At one point, Subject emerged with water guns and handed them out to the participants. A swim official approached and informed Park District staff that the music needed to be turned off and the water guns needed to be taken away immediately.

When they were told to turn off the music, Subject made the situation worse by telling the participants that the official was “just trying to ruin their vibe and didn’t understand.” He

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continued to exhibit poor judgement and acted like he was friends with the participants, rather than a staff member.

At one point during the meet, Subject told Witness 2 that he “just has an I don’t care attitude” and that he “does what he wants.”

Subject disappeared several times throughout both days of the swim meet and at one point, he was gone for two to three hours.

Employee Victim 1 stated that Subject appeared to be sober, alert, and coherent, and did not smell of alcohol or marijuana at any point.

After the incidents occurred, Employee Victim 1 spoke with another Park District employee (Employee 1) about Subject. Employee 1 informed Employee Victim 1 that they used to work with Subject and Subject had previously made similar inappropriate and unprofessional jokes and comments.

#### INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM PARK DISTRICT STAFF

##### *Interviews with Park District Aquatics Supervisor*

On February 24, 2025, OPA spoke with a member of Aquatics Management (Park District Aquatics Supervisor) by phone. Park District Aquatics Supervisor was not aware of any complaints or prior issues related to Subject and described him as “one of the under the radar people who aren’t making noise.”

On April 4, 2025, OPA spoke with Park District Aquatics Supervisor by phone a second time. Park District Aquatics Supervisor stated that Subject had appeared on Park District property on two separate occasions while on emergency suspension; March 25, 2025 (Park District Location 1) and April 4, 2025 (Park District Location 2).

Park District Aquatics Supervisor was informed by Witness 4 that Subject went to Park District Location 1 on March 25, 2025, and took a team banner from the property. Park District Aquatics Supervisor believed that Subject mentioned OPA and his suspension to the employees who were present, but Park District Aquatics Supervisor did not know any further details related to the incident.

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Park District Aquatics Supervisor informed OPA that on April 4, 2025, Subject went to Park District Location 2 and attempted to speak with a Monthly Natatorium Instructor. The Monthly Natatorium Instructor was not present so Subject spoke with the lifeguards who were on duty and then went into the bathroom. When he was leaving, he told the lifeguards “You didn’t see me right?” implying that he knew he was not supposed to be there and that he wanted the lifeguards to cover for him.

#### *Email Narrative from Witness 2*

On February 25, 2025, Witness 2 emailed OPA and reported that they had experienced “a series of incidents that caused significant discomfort among myself and the other coaches, raising serious concerns about the safety and well-being of the swimmers [Subject] coaches at his local park.”

Witness 2 stated that Subject made a “‘dark humor’ joke, which alluded to a violent crime” when speaking with Employee Victim 1 about their tattoo. Witness 2 reported that this comment was made in front of Witness 1 “as well as the swimmers, further exacerbating the inappropriateness of the remark.” Subject also “made a violent and inappropriate comment toward one of the swimmers, stating that he would ‘slit the kid’s throat’ if they did not listen.” Throughout the event, Subject also used profanities in front of minor participants.

Witness 2 wrote, “These behaviors are deeply concerning and entirely inappropriate in any coaching environment, particularly at a USA Swimming-sanctioned meet. The language, threats, and disregard for professional conduct not only create an unsafe atmosphere but also risk serious repercussions for both the individuals involved and the integrity of the program.”

Witness 2 reported that they directly observed Subject disappear for 20-to-30-minute intervals throughout the event and eventually discovered that Subject had been spending time in a restricted room within the facility that coaches were not permitted to enter.

#### *Email Narrative from Witness 1*

On February 26, 2025, Witness 1 emailed OPA to report that several Park District staff members informed them that Subject made “very explicit and vulgar comments around the kids” on February 22, 2025. Subject used profanities in front of minor participants and “made a harmful comment about inducing injury.”

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Witness 1 also reported that they were speaking with Employee Victim 1 and Subject walked into their conversation. Subject complimented Employee Victim 1's tattoo, which was a heart on their bicep. After he had asked her why they had gotten that tattoo, he then stated that the reason for them to get that tattoo was because "that's where someone would be cutting [them] up." Subject then apologized and said something along the lines of, "Sorry, that's just my inside thoughts coming out". Employee Victim 1 told Subject to "keep those inner thoughts inside and to not let them out." Witness 1 described Employee Victim 1 as "visibly shaken."

### EXTERNAL INCIDENTS

#### *Suburban High School*

##### a. Interview with Witness 6

On April 9, 2025, OPA conducted a telephone interview of a Park District employee (Witness 6). During the conversation, Witness 6 explained that they have secondary employment at a High School in suburban Chicago (Suburban High School) as a water polo coach. Witness 6 was informed that there had been an incident at Suburban High School involving Subject. Witness 6 was not present for the incident but was informed of what happened by several Suburban High school staff members. Witness 6 reported the information to Park District Human Resources due to Subject being a Park District employee. Witness 6 provided OPA with the names and contact information Suburban High School employees who may have information related to Subject.

##### b. Interview with Suburban High School Security Officer

On April 10, 2025, OPA spoke with the Suburban High School Security Officer (Security Officer) who is also a retired Police Detective.

Security Officer explained that they were not present at the water polo meet until the local police department was called to the school on March 31, 2025. When Security Officer arrived, they spoke with one of the police officers and was informed that, in the officers' opinions, Subject was "under the influence of something other than alcohol." They described him as "very jittery, very difficult to control, and speaking gibberish."

Security Officer was informed that Subject was causing multiple disturbances and acting belligerent with parents, staff, and minor participants during the water polo game. Subject physically bumped into people, ignored personal space, and appeared to "flex" at people in an

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attempt to start a fight. Subject also attempted to take phones and wallets out of patrons' hands and out of their pockets. It did not appear that he was trying to steal the items but rather was attempting to "taunt" people.

When the police attempted to speak with Subject, he fled through the school which led to a school lock-down. Due to trespassing only resulting in a ticket, the officers did not arrest Subject. Subject was, however, taken by ambulance to a hospital.

The next morning, on April 1, 2025, Security Officer arrived to school at approximately 6:30am. Security Officer noticed a vehicle in the school parking lot that was unlocked and discovered a loaded handgun inside. Security Officer called the police, and officers confirmed it was Subject's vehicle. The vehicle was towed, and police took possession of the loaded gun.

At approximately 8:30am, Subject arrived at Suburban High School to retrieve his vehicle. Security Officer informed Subject that his car had been towed and that his gun was at the police station. Subject seemed particularly concerned about his gun. Subject left the school in an unknown vehicle that came to pick him up.

Security Officer informed OPA that when Subject left Suburban High School, he went to the police station and attempted to retrieve his gun; however, the police did not return Subject's gun to him. Security Officer explained that Subject had a valid concealed carry license and Firearm Owners Identification (FOID) card; having a loaded gun on school property without it being properly secured is, however, a violation.

#### c. Interview with Suburban High School Aquatics Director

On April 10, 2025, OPA spoke with Suburban High School Aquatics Director; a former Park District employee. Suburban High School Aquatics Director stated that Subject did not appear to be "high or drunk or even coked out." But Suburban High School Aquatics Director described Subject as giving "the thousand-yard stare because [Subject] looked right through me." At one point before the police arrived, Subject grabbed Suburban High School Aquatics Director in a "bear hug" and would not let go.

On April 1, 2025, Suburban High School Aquatics Director was informed by a student that Subject had sent the student a text message that said "Today is going to be a day to remember" and insinuated that Subject had a gun. The student showed Suburban High School Aquatics Director the text message, and the student and Suburban High School Aquatics Director alerted the

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Suburban High School security team. Suburban High School Aquatics Director believed that Subject knew the student from the student formerly participating in Park District aquatics programming.

Suburban High School Aquatics Director informed OPA that they had known Subject in the past, while working together at the Park District, and that Subject had clearly changed. Suburban High School Aquatics Director stated: "From my perspective with all my years at the parks, there is no way I would have him around athletes."

### INTERVIEW OF SUBJECT

On April 1, 2025<sup>7</sup>, OPA conducted a compelled subject interview with Subject. A Union Steward was present as Subject's representative for the interview.

Subject denied that he has ever made anyone feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Subject also initially denied ever being investigated for making inappropriate comments or engaging in inappropriate conduct during his Park District employment. OPA then provided Subject with a copy of a Corrective Action Meeting Determination dated May 3, 2022. Subject reviewed the document and then admitted that he had received a suspension and was required to complete several trainings due to a violation of the Park District's Sexual Harassment Policy. Subject informed OPA that he completed all of his trainings in a timely manner.

When asked if he had used any inappropriate language or otherwise acted inappropriately since completing the required trainings, Subject said "every now and then." Subject explained that he jokes around with Park District employees who are his "personal friends" by calling them "baby girl," hugging them, or giving them a kiss on the cheek. He also acts and talks "zesty" by flipping his hair and speaking in a feminine voice when speaking with female staff and participants. Subject was aware that Witness 3 did not appreciate when he did that.

Subject admitted to discussing his "dark thoughts" with several Park District employees as well as several minor Park District participants over the duration of his employment at the Park District.

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<sup>7</sup> Note: OPA interviewed Subject on April 1, 2025, as part of its investigation into the complaint received in February 2025, and prior to becoming aware of the March 25 incident at Park District Location 1 and the March 31 incident at Suburban High School. The April 4 incident at Park District Location 2 occurred after Subject's interview with OPA.

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When first asked, Subject denied engaging in any inappropriate or unprofessional conduct during the February 2025 aquatics meet.

When asked, Subject admitted to using the term “slave” when speaking with Employee Victim 1. He informed OPA “I should have said solider. I meant it as a sign of respect.”

Additionally, Subject admitted to discussing Employee Victim 1’s tattoo with them and stating that he knew Employee Victim 1 got it because that is where they bleed from. Subject denied that his comment was intended as a threat. Instead, he was trying to say that “the heart bleeds” because it was a heart tattoo. Subject first denied telling Employee Victim 1 that they would be “chopped up.” He later stated that he did not recall making that comment.

Subject denied telling Minor Participant Victim 2 that he was going to “slit [their] throat” if he did not listen. Subject stated that he may have made the comment, but it would have been referring to slitting his own (Subject’s) throat.

Subject admitted to using profanities in front of minor participants at the February 22 and 23, 2025 aquatics events as well as various other times throughout his Park District employment.

When asked if Subject was under the influence of any drugs, alcohol, or any other substance during the February 2025 aquatics meet, Subject said “maybe coffee, but that’s it.”

Subject stated that he shared personal information about his private life with minor participants including detailed discussions of childhood trauma.

During the interview, OPA noticed that Subject was wearing a hospital bracelet after he pointed it out and quietly informed the union steward that he had just gotten out of the hospital. At that time, OPA immediately asked Subject if he had any physical or mental condition that would inhibit his ability to fully answer or understand questions, to which he said “no.” Additionally, OPA asked if Subject was under the influence of any substance that might inhibit his ability to fully answer or understand questions, to which Subject also said “no.”

Subject asked if he could reach out to families of participants so that they can give a character reference to OPA for him. Subject also asked if he was still on emergency suspension following OPA’s interview. OPA informed Subject that he remained on emergency suspension until informed otherwise and that the prohibitions detailed in Subject’s emergency suspension letter all remained in effect. OPA informed Subject that he was prohibited from contacting Park District

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employees, participants and their families, and from all Park District property; therefore, attempting to contact participants, their families, or Park District employees or entering Park District property would be considered a violation of his emergency suspension requirements. OPA also informed Subject that attempting to contact individuals regarding OPA's ongoing investigation would be an interference with the investigation and considered a separate violation. OPA asked Subject if there were any staff, participants, or patrons who had information relevant to OPA's investigation that Subject wanted interviewed as part of the investigation; Subject said no.

Initially, Subject stated that he only joked around inappropriately with his "personal friends" and that the conduct is "welcome" and "mutual." When asked if Employee Victim 1 was Subject's personal friend, Subject said no. When asked if his comments were mutual or welcome with Employee Victim 1, Subject said no. When asked if Witness 1 was Subject's personal friend, Subject said no. When asked if his comments were mutual or welcome with Witness 1, Subject said no. When asked if Witness 2 was Subject's personal friend, Subject said no. When asked if his comments were mutual or welcome with Witness 2, Subject said no. When asked if Witness 3 was Subject's personal friend, Subject said no. When asked if his comments were mutual or welcome with Witness 3, Subject said no.

When asked if Subject is familiar with the Park District's Violence in the Workplace Policy, Subject said yes. When asked if his comments to Employee Victim 1 and to or in front of Minor Participant Victim 2 are violations of the Violence in the Workplace Policy, Subject said yes. Subject acknowledged that his "dark thoughts" and "dark humor," such as the comments made to Employee Victim 1, are not appropriate at work. Subject explained that some people enjoy his jokes and comments; if he realizes that someone does not, he does not interact with them in that way again.

Throughout the interview Subject made several statements about the "dark thoughts" that he has including thoughts related to "death." At one point during the interview, Subject asked the OPA investigator if they ever have dark thoughts and if so, what those dark thoughts are. OPA redirected Subject and provided Subject with a physical brochure regarding the Workforce Solutions Employee Assistance Program. OPA circled the EAP phone number and explained that the toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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# CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

## OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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### ANALYSIS

Subject was employed by the Park District for more than nine years and served as a Natatorium Instructor since 2018. His role as a supervisory employee gave him authority over both adult and minor Park District employees, as well as the minor participants entrusted to the Park District's care. For these reasons, the threatening and erratic behavior he exhibited was especially concerning and should not be allowed to continue.

During Subject's interview with OPA, Subject admitted that despite being suspended after the OIG investigation in 2022 and completing remedial trainings related to professionalism in the workplace, Subject continued to make inappropriate jokes and comments "every now and then."

While Subject partially denied the allegations against him, he admitted to discussing his "dark thoughts" with and in front of Park District employees as well as Park District minor participants on multiple occasions.

Additionally, he admitted to referring to himself as a "slave," telling Employee Victim 1 that he knew the reason they got their tattoo was because they were going to bleed, and at a minimum stating that he was going to slit a throat in front of Minor Participant Victim 2. Furthermore, Subject initially stated that he only used "dark humor" or inappropriate and unprofessional language with his close personal friends and in situations where the conduct was "mutual" and "welcome." Subject, however, later repeatedly and directly admitted that he engaged in unwelcome and unwanted conduct with and in front of Employee Victim 1, Minor Participant Victim 2, Witness 1, Witness 2, and Witness 3.

Subject also exhibited a continued lack of judgement when he attempted to initiate an inappropriate line of questioning with an OPA investigator during his compelled subject interview with OPA. During the interview, Subject asked the investigator if they have dark thoughts and without receiving a response, Subject proceeded to ask the investigator what types of dark thoughts they have. OPA redirected Subject but found this conduct to be alarming.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Note: Subject was provided with information about the Park District's EAP resources due to his concerning behavior during his OPA interview. While one witness later indicated to OPA that Subject stated he suffers from a mental health condition, Subject denied having any physical or mental condition that would inhibit his ability to fully answer or understand the questions posed by the OPA investigator during his April 1, 2025, interview.

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During OPA's interview with Subject on April 1, 2025, OPA reiterated that Subject was prohibited from Park District property and was also prohibited from communicating with current or former Park District staff or Park District participants. Unbeknownst to OPA, Subject had already violated the direct orders detailed in the emergency suspension letter he received by showing up to Park District Location 1 on March 25, 2025. Subject not only failed to inform OPA that he had visited Park District Location 1 on March 25, 2025, but even after being informed that he was prohibited from being on Park District property a second time during his OPA interview, Subject once again visited Park District property on April 5, 2025, when he went to Park District Location 2.

On April 10, 2025, after learning of the incident at Suburban High School OPA interviewed the school security officer as well as the school aquatics director. Both explained that Subject attended water polo events on March 29, 2025, and March 31, 2025. On March 29, 2025, Subject interacted unremarkably. On March 31, 2025, Subject exhibited extremely erratic behavior that was threatening in nature and aligned with the type of conduct reported by Park District staff in multiple instances.

OPA learned that Subject was taken from Suburban High School by ambulance and released on April 1, 2025, the day of Subject's interview with OPA. According to the timeline of events, in the morning of Subject's interview with OPA, he first stopped at Suburban High School in an attempt to retrieve his vehicle and subsequently went to the police department in an attempt to retrieve his loaded gun just a short time before arriving to OPA's office. While it is unclear whether Subject planned to bring his weapon to his interview with OPA, the chronology of events cannot be ignored and is extremely disturbing.

Subject continues to exhibit extremely poor judgement around minor participants, patrons, and employees alike. Based on the testimony of numerous witnesses and Subject's own admissions, Subject clearly violated the Violence in the Workplace Policy's prohibition on conduct that constitutes a "threat of physical violence or any other threatening behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress." Additionally, despite being directed both in writing and verbally, he repeatedly violated the terms of his emergency suspension in a continued pattern of disregard of the type of appropriate behavior expected from a supervisory employee.

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Subject also violated Chapter 4, Section A.4.g of the Park District Code, by not providing truthful information in an OPA investigation when he denied having previously been investigated for making inappropriate comments or engaging in inappropriate conduct during his Park District employment. It was only when presented with evidence related to the 2022 OIG investigation that he admitted he had previously been investigated and disciplined.

It should be noted that a review of the interview reports from the OIG's investigation indicate clear, consistent, and credible evidence that Subject made inappropriate sexual comments while holding a supervisory position. The OIG report included Subject's supervisory position title and stated that the victim in the OIG investigation "related that she purposely scheduled her days off to coincide with the days [Subject] was the only supervisor on duty so she would not have to work with him." Despite this, Human Resources indicated in their response memorandum that the disciplinary decision was based on Subject being in a non-supervisory position "less indicative of an abuse of power." Subject served a five-day suspension and was required to complete eight trainings related to sexual harassment and workplace culture, as a result of the investigative findings. It is clear, however, that those disciplinary measures failed to correct Subject's behavior or deter him from additional and repeated offenses as evidenced by the incidents enumerated in this report.

#### 25-0062

During the course of an unrelated investigation, OPA received a complaint from a seasonal employee (Employee 1) alleging that a former minor seasonal day camp recreation leader (Minor Subject) would give minor child participants hugs and have them sit on or near him. Minor Subject was 16 years old, and the child participants were between three and five years old.

During interviews with OPA, multiple employees reported witnessing Minor Subject demonstrate a lack of professional boundaries by hugging participants and indicating that they could sit on or near Minor Subject.

During an interview with OPA, Minor Subject's supervisor (Park Supervisor) reported that Minor Subject engaged in conduct that demonstrated poor judgement and created safety concerns. This conduct included Minor Subject using their phone rather than supervising the participants and disappearing for extended periods of time. Although Park Supervisor worked with and coached

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Minor Subject, ultimately, Minor Subject was unable to satisfactorily conduct the job duties and was marked as Do Not Hire.

Park District records reviewed by OPA indicated that due to his work performance, Minor Subject was marked as Do No Hire Permanent.

Based on sufficient evidence that while he was an employee, Minor Subject crossed professional boundaries of appropriate interactions with minor children, OPA recommends that should Minor Subject be considered for any further employment or volunteer opportunities with the Park District, that the Park District immediately contact OPA.

#### **25-0063**

OPA received a complaint from an employee at Park District headquarters (Complainant) who alleged discrimination based on her race by two managerial employees (Subjects). Complainant indicated Subjects were targeting her by setting unrealistic job expectations in an effort to fire her or force her to quit.

In an effort to gather specific details related to the allegations, OPA interviewed Complainant. Complainant indicated she had reached out to upper management within her department and Human Resources and was hoping her issues could be handled internally, rather than through an investigation.

OPA advised Complainant to contact OPA if she wanted to move forward with her complaint. As it has been more than 60 days and Complainant has not contacted OPA with additional information, OPA has closed this matter as unsubstantiated.