



The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District

**Anastasia Coleman
Commissioner**

Annual Report for Calendar Year 2024

Message from the Special Commissioner of Investigation

The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the School District of New York (“SCI”) is pleased to publish its annual report for Calendar Year 2024 (“CY 2024”). This document offers a portrait of the tireless efforts and dedication of SCI staff over the past year, which saw the receipt of a record number of complaints alleging fraud, sex abuse, corruption, and other crimes and wrongdoing that detract from students’ learning and security while hampering the mission of New York City public schools.

SCI is a vital watchdog in New York City, with a mission to protect children from harm and to ensure the efficient operation of the school district. It is an honor to be entrusted with this great responsibility.

I am proud of SCI’s work – especially the work and accomplishments of this past year – and I am confident that SCI’s efforts in 2024 contributed to improving the quality of life in the city.

—Anastasia Coleman, Special Commissioner of Investigation

Overview

SCI is entrusted with autonomy in investigating allegations of criminality, corruption, and wrongdoing concerning the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”), the largest school district in the nation. SCI has broad authority and discretion to conduct investigations to root out corruption, prevent waste and fraud, ensure safety, and to identify and eliminate the misuse of taxpayer resources.

The Special Commissioner also serves as the inspector general for the New York City Teachers’ Retirement System (“TRS”) and the Board of Education Retirement System (“BERS”), evaluates and investigates all whistleblower claims involving DOE employees and vendors under the New York City Administrative Code, and serves as the investigative arm of the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board (“COIB”) regarding alleged violations of Chapter 68 of the New York City Charter by DOE employees and others.

Budget and Staffing

In Fiscal Year 2024, SCI operated with a total annual budget of \$6,361,054, of which \$6,025,923 was allocated to Personal Service (“PS”) spending, and \$335,131 was designated Other Than Personal Service (“OTPS”). SCI has maintained, essentially, the same operating budget for the past roughly five fiscal years.¹ SCI’s annual budget is a pass-through line of the DOE’s overall annual budget of approximately \$40 billion.

SCI ended CY 2024 with a full-time staff of 55. This staff includes administrators, confidential investigators, and support staff. During CY 2024, SCI hired 16 new employees. Eleven SCI employees separated from the office during CY 2024.

Intake

In CY 2024, SCI received a record **11,874 complaints**. They alleged a wide-range of misconduct, waste, fraud, financial mismanagement, and criminal activity within the DOE, TRS, and BERS, by employees, vendors, contracted workers, or volunteers, and alleged violations of administrative and criminal codes, the [New York City Charter](#), and the [DOE Chancellor’s Regulations](#).

Investigations and Substantiated Cases

¹ In Fiscal Year 2025, SCI received a modest increase of \$275,000 to its OTPS budget in the City’s November Financial Plan.

In CY 2024, SCI initiated **484 investigations** and closed **387 investigations** that were initiated in CY 2024 or earlier.

The most frequent categories of investigations substantiated by SCI in CY 2024 were employee misconduct, theft of service, falsifying official documents, and inappropriate or sexual relationships. SCI conducted **154 investigations** involving allegations of inappropriate or sexual misconduct by DOE employees or vendors, and substantiated allegations against individuals in **36 such cases**.

SCI investigated several complaints concerning the retirement accounts. It also received **12 complaints**, specifically alleging violations of Chapter 68 of the New York City Charter as administered by COIB and identified potential conflicts of interest in an additional **14 cases**.

In **171 investigations**, SCI substantiated that 252 individuals or entities violated criminal statutes, the DOE Chancellor’s Regulations, or other administrative codes or regulations. SCI also referred findings in **70 substantiated investigations** to the New York State Education Department, which licenses teachers, principals, and other pedagogues.

SCI received **27 complaints** of retaliation for review under the New York City and DOE whistleblower statutes in CY 2024, and completed reviews of whistleblower claims in 24 cases received in 2024 or earlier.²

Outcomes

Recommendations

In CY 2024, SCI made **299 personnel recommendations**.³ The subjects investigated included teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other DOE personnel; volunteers, and contracted service providers. SCI recommended disciplinary action in **119 instances**, a majority of which included recommendations “up to and including termination” of their employment with DOE.

SCI also made recommendations of **151 problem codes** (as possible bars to future employment or contracts), **29 recommendations** for financial recovery actions, and **21 other actions** (including retraining, review of policy, review of vendor contracts).

As a result of SCI’s investigations, many employees were directed to receive special training (or retraining) related to their misconduct. In addition, many DOE employees and vendors who were the subjects of SCI complaints resigned or retired during the pendency of SCI’s investigations.

² A report of SCI’s annual Whistleblower statistics can be found on SCI’s website at nycsci.org.

³ SCI may make multiple personnel recommendations regarding any individual subject, and investigations frequently involve multiple parties.

In **34 cases** in 2024, SCI discovered that DOE personnel initiated and/or maintained a sexual or inappropriate relationship with a student or students via personal cellphones or personal social media accounts. In many of these cases, SCI made a Policy and Procedure Recommendation (“PPR”) advising that the DOE amend its current employee guidelines to prohibit DOE personnel, volunteers, or employees of its vendors from contacting students using personal cellphone numbers, personal social media accounts, or other non-DOE associated applications.⁴

Financial restitution

SCI substantiated 32 cases that identified to the DOE and the retirement systems precise amounts of loss, theft, or mismanagement of funds, totaling more than **one million dollars**. In addition, SCI was responsible for the continued collection and monitoring of restitution or fines in numerous cases.

Arrests and referrals

In CY 2024, SCI joined with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners on numerous investigations, resulting in substantiated wrongdoing, financial recovery, and numerous arrests.

In many cases, after an arrest occurs, SCI continues to monitor the criminal case to determine if the subject should face appropriate administrative action by the DOE at the conclusion of their criminal prosecution. This essential oversight function ensures that unfit or dangerous individuals do not return to employment within the school district at the conclusion of their criminal matter, ultimately putting children and taxpayers at risk.

Throughout the year, SCI also referred dozens of substantiated investigations to the appropriate state or local prosecutor, governmental agency, or the New York State Education Department.

SUBMIT A COMPLAINT

Every officer and employee of the DOE is obligated to immediately report to SCI any knowledge of wrongdoing in the school system. We urge parents, students, and other concerned members of the community to get involved and help our children.

If you suspect corruption, crime, or fraud at your child’s school, please call **212-510-1500**, or file a complaint [online](#).

PRESS INQUIRIES

pressoffice@nycsci.org

⁴ A complete list of SCI’s PPRs can be found on SCI’s website at nycsci.org.