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CPS Inspector General Releases 2022 Annual Report:

Sexual Allegations Unit closed more than 600 cases in 2022, over 300 more than it closed in 2021; unit remains the only independent investigative body in the U.S. handling a broad range of Title IX and other sexual misconduct allegations involving K-12 school-based staff and students

Chicago — The Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Chicago Board of Education released its 2022 Annual Report today. Among its significant findings and results, the OIG's Sexual Allegations Unit (SAU) closed 602 cases in Calendar year 2022, over 300 more than it closed in calendar year 2021. The Annual Report summarizes 71 SAU investigations that substantiated violations of Chicago Public Schools policies, ranging from unprofessional conduct and sexual harassment to criminal sexual assault. More details on specific investigations are available in the Annual Report at cpsoig.org/reports.

The OIG assumed responsibility for all adult-on-student sexual misconduct allegations within CPS in October 2018, and the SAU remains the only independent investigative body in the nation with jurisdiction over a broad range of Title IX and other sexual misconduct complaints and related allegations involving K-12 school-based staff and students. The District simultaneously created the Office of Student Protections and Title IX, overhauled existing policies and issued the Guidelines Regarding Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries, broadening the types of conduct reported to, and investigated by, the SAU.

Over this four-year period, the SAU has opened 1,735 cases based on allegations reported by students, alumni, parents, staff, and others. Of those, it has closed a total of 1,384 cases, 302 of which have led to investigations substantiating a CPS policy violation, and 18 of which involved criminal charges filed by prosecuting agencies.

The SAU started implementing strategic changes to its procedures in 2021 to manage its extraordinarily high case volume, composed of serious misconduct allegations as well as allegations of relatively lower-level code of conduct violations. Unlike the traditional model in which an office of inspector general selects which allegations within its jurisdiction to

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investigate, the SAU opens a case for every allegation it receives, many of which escalate into a formal investigation. The scale of an investigation matches the complexity of the allegations; many involve dozens of interviews, numerous subpoenas, and extensive records and other materials to analyze. The OIG remains committed to conducting fair and thorough investigations in a timely manner that prioritize student safety while respecting the rights of victims and subjects alike.

Changes implemented by the SAU in the past year to streamline its review process and prioritize investigations of adult-on-student sexual misconduct include:

- Creating a team of Investigative Specialists to conduct an initial assessment on allegations that do not clearly articulate adult-on-student sexual misconduct, to determine whether these cases require a full SAU investigation or if the complaint can be appropriately addressed in another manner after initial interview(s) and review of available evidence.
- Creating specialized teams of experienced investigators to handle Title IX investigations and those involving teachers who have been suspended pending investigation. These allegations are often serious and require an extensive investigation. The senior investigators handling these cases have smaller caseloads, enabling them to work faster towards a resolution.
- Increasing referrals when the evidence indicates that there is no allegation of sexual misconduct and the case would be better handled by another CPS department. This allows the SAU's highly trained investigators and attorneys to focus their efforts on potential adult-on-student sexual misconduct.

While the volume of allegations the SAU receives annually and the number of substantiated cases of serious sexual misconduct understandably cause concern within CPS and impacted school communities, there is no indication that the frequency of these occurrences is higher in CPS than in other districts across the country. Instead, it is because of the commitment made by CPS and the work of the OIG's SAU that the District has become increasingly able to identify, investigate, and eliminate misconduct occurring within its schools. The volume of complaints indicates that stakeholders within CPS are paying better attention to, and reporting, potential sexual misconduct.

The SAU's unique role as a centralized investigative body for sexual misconduct allegations has also enabled it to spot ongoing issues and trends within CPS, such as underreporting of allegations at specific schools, staff positions that require additional training, and inconsistencies in criminal background check procedures for school employees. The SAU meets regularly with the Office of Student Protections and Title IX to review these and related systemic issues. The District has been responsive to the issues raised to date, and has encouraged further analysis of SAU insights and data to identify potential systemic concerns towards the goal of ensuring a safe and harassment-free school environment for all CPS students.

Freshman JROTC Enrollments Fall Dramatically After OIG Calls for Halt to Automatic Ninth-Grade JROTC Enrollment

The percentage of CPS freshmen enrolled in Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) classes fell dramatically this school year after the CPS OIG recommended a halt to the practice of automatically enrolling ninth graders in JROTC — a course that's supposed to be voluntary, a recent CPS OIG analysis showed.

In the eight CPS high schools where automatic JROTC enrollment had appeared most widespread, the number of freshmen in JROTC this school year tumbled 67 percent compared with two years ago. This followed CPS action on a series of reforms recommended by the OIG earlier this year.

Changes this year included special training of school principals on a new CPS policy that requires every CPS high school to offer all students Physical Education. Previously, some schools with JROTC programs had been automatically placing freshmen in JROTC to satisfy the PE credit required for graduation, an OIG performance review found. In some cases, this allowed schools to save the cost of a PE teacher and to use instead a JROTC instructor. Unlike CPS teachers, JROTC instructors are “free” to schools in that they are not paid out of school budgets. Their salaries are covered by CPS Central Office and the military.

OIG Review Identifies Five-Year High, Inadequate Safeguards in Extra Pay Spending

The CPS OIG has recommended that CPS step up its safeguards involving Overtime and other forms of Extra Pay, given that such compensation has jumped 74 percent in the last five years and increases in Extra Pay are likely to continue.

The OIG is concerned that Overtime, Stipends, and another form of Extra Pay called “Extended Day” have reached their highest point in five years, hitting nearly \$74 million in the 2021 calendar year. Stipend spending alone over that time skyrocketed fourteenfold, a CPS OIG performance review found.

This increase occurred amid what an OIG performance review determined was insufficient monitoring, incomplete written guidelines for obtaining and documenting Extra Pay, poor training, no warnings of penalties for guideline violations, repeated documentation errors and inadequate technological safeguards.

Additionally, CPS has already spent millions of its Covid-19 relief money on Extra Pay. With more than \$1.5 billion more of such relief money expected over the next three school years, CPS needs to take better precautions in how it distributes Extra Pay.

Investigation Finds Persistent School Misuse of Student Transfer and Lost Child Codes; Reliability of Districtwide Truancy Data Questioned

CPS has long had problems ensuring that schools accurately report student transfers and lost students, and, in this investigation, the OIG found that this problem persists across the district.

The OIG's investigation initially focused on one elementary school where the OIG found that school administrators deliberately recorded students who were truant as either transfers or lost children in order to improve the school's attendance rate. The OIG found that, in addition to this school, dozens of other schools were falsely reporting to CPS that they had followed the district's procedures for verifying that transfers to other schools had actually occurred and had taken all of the required steps to confirm that the students who were coded as lost were, in fact, missing.

Proper classification of transfers and lost students is essential to ensure that vulnerable students receive critical reengagement services. The OIG recommended that CPS reform its process for collecting and auditing school transfer and lost child data, and CPS has informed the OIG that this work has begun.

Other Investigations

As always, the Annual Report covers investigations into a wide range of misconduct, including employees who falsified their time or abused benefits, vendors who violated procurement rules, and employees and students who were living in the suburbs in violation of CPS's residency policy. More details on specific investigations are available in the Annual Report at cpsoig.org/reports.

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