

NEWS FROM THE ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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Comptroller's Corporate Compliance Program Audit Finds Opportunities for Improvement

Kingston, NY (August 2, 2024) -- The Ulster County Comptroller's Office released an Audit of the Ulster County Corporate Compliance Program. Corporate Compliance, which is required for certain federal and state funds, refers to the commitment to adhere to all relevant laws and regulations. A sound corporate compliance plan uses a risk assessment to develop policies and procedures, and through training and education to effectively communicate leadership's commitment to oversight. Corporate Compliance is the cornerstone of establishing a culture that values integrity and ethical standards within an organization.

The Audit found that risks could be reduced through improved training and changes to the Corporate Compliance Committee structure, process, and communications. Historically, some staff, including senior management and executive positions, have not complied with training requirements, although compliance has improved under the new Administration. The Comptroller's Office is pleased that the Compliance Program has agreed to assign each complaint a unique tracking number to facilitate complaint tracking. The corporate compliance risk assessment is limited to the mandated programs of early childhood education and homecare but could be expanded to other risk areas. The Corporate Compliance Committee could be strengthened with representation from those charged with governance (the Legislature) as well as representation from internal audit (the Comptroller).

The audit also found that corporate compliance communications could be more targeted. Those matters that are personnel related or alleged Medicaid fraud should be reported to the Compliance Committee in summary form so they can review a broader set of risks. The County's Medicaid fraud hotline receives more calls than the corporate compliance hotline each year and still contains a message that it is an anti-fraud initiative of former County Executive Michael Hein.

"By setting tone from the top on training, streamlining communications to employees, tracking complaints with unique identifiers, and sending all complaints to an expanded Committee, the County's Corporate Compliance Program can better serve the taxpayers by identifying and addressing risks," said Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher.

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