

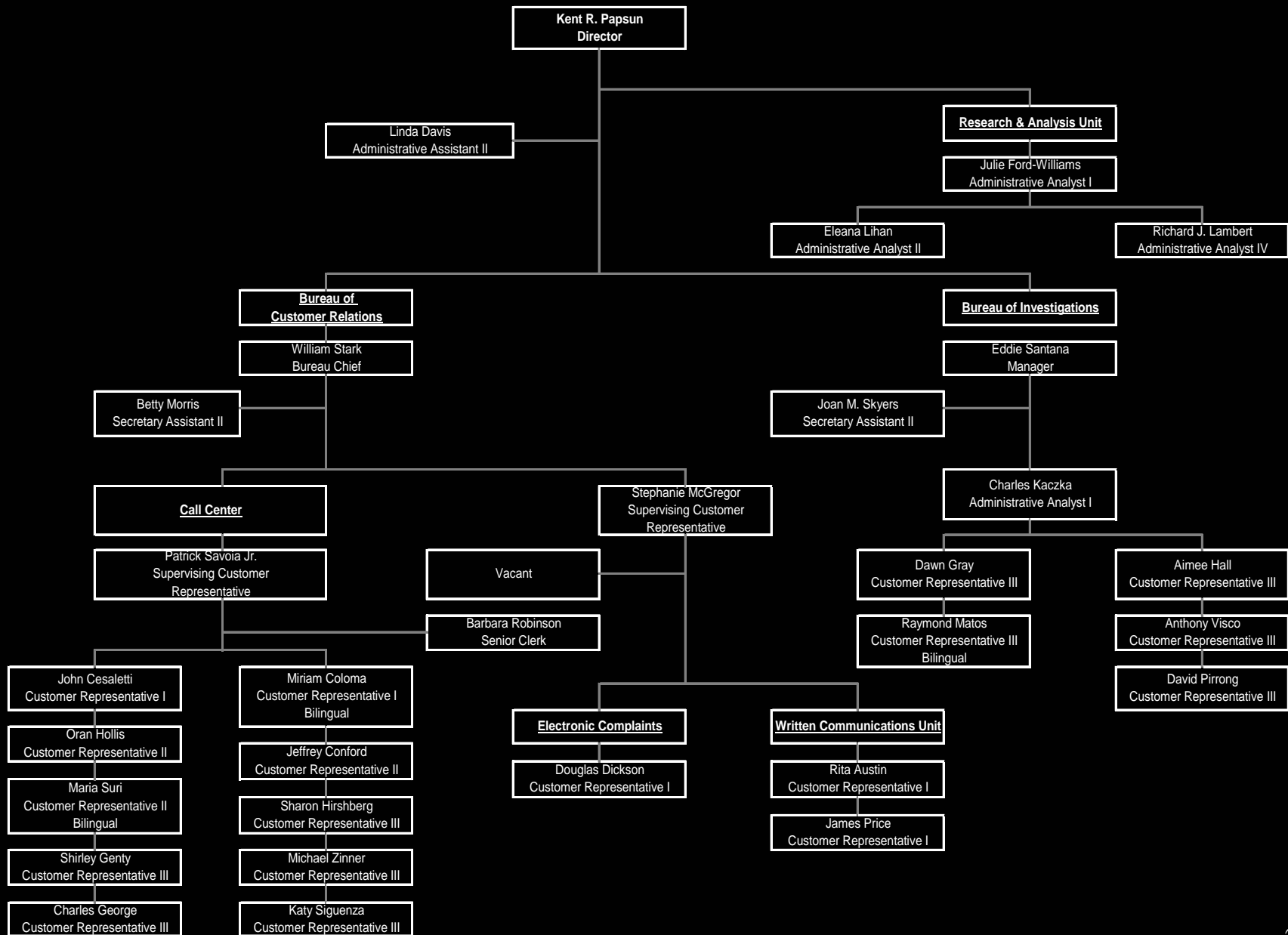
Division of Customer Assistance

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DIVISION OF CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE

The Division consists of three areas: the Bureau of Customer Relations, the Research & Analysis Unit, and the Bureau of Investigations and Enforcement. The Division of Customer Assistance adjudicates verbal, written and e-mail customer complaints, as well as conducts special surveys and studies, analyzes and trends utility customer service and performance, processes formal petitions, participates in new rulemakings and various working groups, provides assistance and consultation on customer processes functions to other divisions of the Board and reviews tariff revisions and mergers.

The Division is involved in the day-to-day management of customer complaints regarding the services provided by and the related activities of all the utilities regulated by the BPU, as well as licensed third party energy suppliers and facility based resellers of telephone service.

Bureau of Customer Relations

The Bureau of Customer Relations provides the most visible direct communications link between the BPU and the customers of the utilities it regulates as well as licensed third party energy suppliers and resellers of telephone service. Customers contact the Bureau of Customer Relations verbal, e-mail, and letter-writing units with complaints regarding: service related matters, appliance repairs, discontinuance of service, payment arrangements, high bills, deposit requests and high rates. Emergency assistance is available for gas leaks, fallen wires and water main breaks. In addition to maintaining statewide (973-648-2350) and toll free (800-624-0241) telephone numbers, the Division utilizes an Electronic Data Interchange System, which enables major utilities to receive and answer complaints instantaneously over high-speed data lines.

The Bureau also conducts office interviews with customers who prefer to deal face-to-face with a Customer Representative. Customers may also obtain information or file a complaint on the Customer Assistance webpage of the Board's website. The Division maintains the BPU's complaint call center, handling utility inquiry and/or complaint matters in verbal, written, or internet format. This complaint information is gathered and analyzed to identify customer-oriented trends as they develop. The Division also plays an active role in providing customers with consumer protection safeguards in the competitive energy and telephone industries.

In the year 2005:

- The Bureau received 4,950 e-mails from customers requesting assistance or general information.
- The Bureau assisted customers with 17,456 verbal and 2,427 written complaints.
- The Bureau received 122,738 telephone inquiries.
- With the implementation of competition in the energy and telephone industry, other BPU Divisions, governmental agencies, State Public Utility Commissions and customers rely on the Bureau to provide information as to how well these companies are serving its customers.

As of September 1, 2006:

- The Bureau received 3,518 e-mails from customers requesting assistance or general information.
- The Bureau assisted customers with 11,456 verbal and 1,603 written complaints.
- The Bureau received 75,301 telephone inquiries.

Research & Analysis Unit

The Research & Analysis Unit is responsible for the research and planning functions in the Division, providing support to the Director in conducting special projects, surveys and studies. The Unit is also responsible for analysis of call center activity, Division complaint data and trends in utility customer service and performance. Additionally, the Unit is responsible for: processing formal case matters, preparation of special Board Orders, participation in new rule making and amendments, participation on various working groups and review of rate case issues, tariff revisions and mergers; processing office closings and relocations, as well as providing assistance and consultation to other divisions of the Board concerning customer processes functions.

- The Research and Analysis Unit is responsible for:
- Review of rate cases , tariff revisions and mergers.
- Analysis of complaint information to identify customer-oriented trends as they develop.
- Analyses of reports and findings related to customer service issues, rulemaking, rule re-adoptions, and submission of special projects.
- Development and efficiency of our Division's computerized complaint tracking data system for upgrading and expanding existing functions.
- Preparing special Board Orders which set forth various measures, such as In The Matter of Provision of Assistance to the Families of Victims of the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks and Activated Military Personnel.
- Participating in the development of utility social service programs which assist New Jersey customers, assessing program goals and financial summaries for proper disbursement of funds. This includes programs such as the Universal Service Fund and New Jersey Statewide Heating Assistance and Referral for Energy Services, NJ SHARES, the Universal Service Fund, and the Fresh Start Program (arrearage forgiveness)

Bureau of Investigations

The Bureau was created as a result of State legislation directing the Board to opt-in to the FCC proposal, for State Commissions to have primary responsibility in investigating telephone slamming complaints.

On January 1, 2003, the Bureau was officially established. Although established for the investigation of telephone slamming complaints, the Bureau also conducts investigations concerning utilities, Third Party Energy Suppliers, and other matters which might be in violation of the Electric Discount Energy Competition Act (EDECA) or BPU Regulations.

In 2005, the Bureau processed approximately 477 allegations of slamming against various telephone companies. Customers contact the Bureau of Investigations and Enforcement with complaints regarding telephone and energy slamming, cramming and energy contracts.

Complaints are received from the FCC, Dept. of Law & Public Safety, Division of Community Affairs, Telephone Companies and Consumers. As a result of the Bureau's slamming investigations we have collected \$544,525.00 in fines and we have obtained \$151,176.43 in customer savings. The biggest fine collected was \$265,525.00 from Sprint.

Top Ten Constituent Concerns of 2005

- 1) Quality of Service
- 2) Collections
- 3) Billing Problems
- 4) Rates
- 5) Third Party Energy Suppliers
- 6) Slamming (Unauthorized switching of the preferred carrier)
- 7) Service Outages
- 8) Meter Readings
- 9) Marketing and Advertising
- 10) Reseller (Telephone Service)