



Press Release: January 31st, 2024

The Office of the Inspector General of the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General of the Office (OIG) of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County (Clerk's Office) is to detect, deter, and prevent corruption, fraud, waste, mismanagement, and misconduct in the operation of the Clerk's Office with integrity, independence, and professionalism. The OIG conducts investigations and issues findings and recommendations to the Clerk's Office Court Operations, Labor Relations, and Human Resources departments. The OIG also investigates potential criminal violations involving the conduct of Clerk's Office employees acting in their official capacities and refers such matters for prosecution. The OIG is a fact-finding office and cannot dictate a legal or an administrative outcome.

In January 2023, the Honorable Iris Y. Martinez named Anthony Linh Nguyen as the Inspector General of the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

History of the OIG (December 2020-January 2023)

The OIG was established by former Clerk Dorothy Brown. When Clerk Iris Y. Martinez came into office in December 2020, she named James Murphy-Aguilu as the Inspector General to review and update the OIG's operations. Murphy-Aguilu's goal was to have the OIG function and uphold the standards of OIGs in other government agencies. Murphy-Aguilu implemented several improvements in order to obtain his goal:

- Moved the OIG's location from the 25th floor in 69 W. Washington St. – where other Clerk's Office employees work (including some executive clerks) – to a separate floor, allowing complainants (including employees) to safely and confidentially visit the OIG.
- Required all OIG investigators to become Certified Inspector General Investigators through the Association of Inspectors General, which requires the investigators to attend a week-long training course and maintain their certification through continuing education courses.
- Updated the OIG and Clerk's Office website to streamline and simplify the complaint submission process to the OIG. Complaints can now be submitted through the OIG's website, email, phone, in person (with appointment), fax, mail, and a QR code found at Clerk's Office locations.
- Established a digital case management system to track and follow the progress of complaints.
- Moved the investigation workflow primarily to digital documentation and tracking.
- Began generating quarterly reports to summarize the progress and work of the OIG.

2023: New Inspector General

In January 2023, Anthony Linh Nguyen replaced Murphy-Aguilu as Inspector General when Murphy-Aguilu was appointed Chief of Staff to the Clerk. Nguyen was an attorney at the law firm Jenner & Block for eight years working on government and internal investigations. Nguyen immediately oversaw 55 investigations related to fraud of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) by Clerk's Office employees, completing 53 of them in just a few months (all were completed by early summer). Nguyen continues to improve on the OIG's progress, including:

- Prioritizing thoroughness and quality of OIG reports while maintaining timeliness of its investigations by improving investigation processes, introducing report writing guidelines, and developing proper evidence management habits.
- Increasing the awareness and accessibility of the OIG to Clerk's Office employees by scheduling visits to Clerk's Office locations and presenting at New Employee Orientation to remind employees of the complaint submission process.
- Expanding the scope of work of the OIG beyond responding to complaints to pro-active investigations and audits.
- Digitizing former Clerk Dorothy Brown-era physical files.
- Starting in January 2024, the OIG will post its quarterly reports onto its updated website.

OIG Independence

Like other OIGs in other government agencies, the OIG maintains a physical and operational distance from the Clerk and her executive staff. The OIG does not report any details of ongoing investigations to the Clerk nor to anyone else outside of the OIG. The OIG has full access to Clerk's Office records and resources and has power to conduct its investigations independently, confidentially, and thoroughly, which includes the Clerk's explicit order for her executive staff and their employees to fully cooperate with any OIG request.

The OIG plans to continue to evolve and improve its efficacy in achieving its mission of detecting, deterring, and preventing corruption, fraud, waste, mismanagement, and misconduct in the operation of the Clerk's Office.

2023 4th Quarter Report

In January 2024, the OIG issued its 2023Q4 Quarterly Report and is now available for public viewing on its website. The OIG began Q4 with 155 pending cases and received 123 complaints within the quarter, a total of 278 active cases in Q4. 62 cases remained pending at the end of Q4.

The OIG will post future quarterly reports on its updated website. Additionally, the OIG intends to redact past reports of personal identifiable information prior to making them available for public viewing on its updated website soon. The OIG believes that publishing its reports will continue to increase the integrity and trust in the OIG by the Clerk's Office employees as well as the public.

Contact

Anthony Linh Nguyen, Inspector General

(312) 603-3424

oig@cookcountycourt.com