



Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

The **Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO)** was created in 1993 as the the Ombuds office for the **Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS)**, and is also the **Office of Children's Advocate** (ORS 417.810). The role of an **Ombudsman** or **Ombuds** is an independent official who has been appointed to investigate complaints that people make against the government or public organizations. The **Foster Care Ombuds** role was created within the GAO in 2014 to fulfill a requirement of the **Foster Children's Bill of Rights**. The law that created the Bill of Rights required ODHS to "have a hotline phone number that is available to the foster child at all times for the purposes of enabling the foster child to make complaints and assert grievances regarding the foster child's care, safety or well-being" (ORS 418.201(7)).

FCO Cases Closed by ODHS Program

Case Program Type	2024
ODHS-Child Welfare	294
ODHS-Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	4
ODHS-OTIS/Licensing	1
Total	299

Total days from case open to close

Open Range	2024
02 days or less	10
03 to 10 Days	35
11 to 20 Days	27
21 to 30 Days	26
31 to 60 Days	107
61 to 90 Days	45
90+ Days	49
Total	299

How FCO heard about concerns

Case Intake SubType	2024
Y.E.S. line	123
Direct to Ombuds	71
FCO.info	64
GAO main line	23
GAO Info	6
ODHS/OHA Program	3
Other	3
Governor's Office	2
Community Partner/Program	1
GAO.CR	1
ODHS Director's Office	1
ODHS Info	1
Total	299



Foster Care Ombuds: 1-855-840-6036
fco.info@odhsoha.oregon.gov

GAO Administrator: 503-800-1277
gao.info@odhs.oregon.gov

For more questions about this report or for more information
about the GAO or FCO, please reach out to us!

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

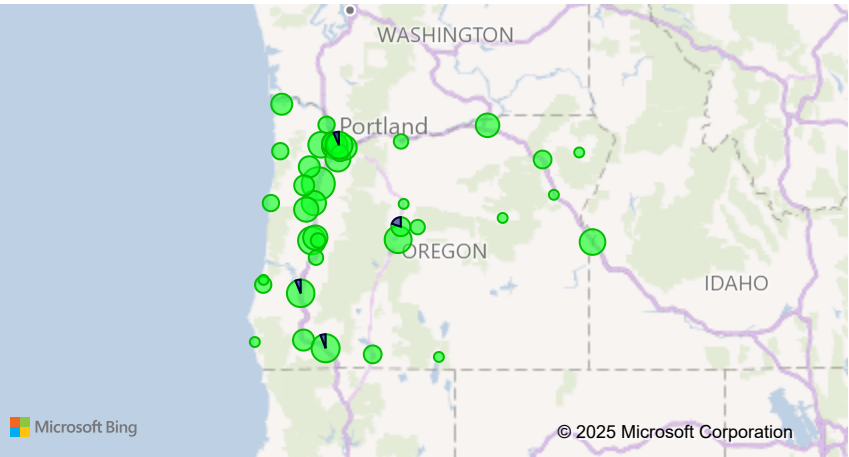
GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

The GAO tracks cases by branch location of the Foster Youth's case. This information is tracked periodically and annually to see how well it aligns with the number of Foster Youth in the community.

ODHS branch location (county)

County	2024
MULTNOMAH	47
LANE	31
MARION	31
DESCHUTES	20
JACKSON	17
DOUGLAS	16
CLACKAMAS	15
MALHUER	13
WASHINGTON	13
BENTON	11
LINN	11
UMATILLA	10
CLATSOP	7
JOSEPHINE	7
YAMHILL	7
POLK	6
COOS	4
KLAMATH	4
LINCOLN	4
UNION	4
COLUMBIA	3
TILLAMOOK	3
CROOK	2
WASCO	2
BAKER	1
CURRY	1
GRANT	1
JEFFERSON	1
LAKE	1
WALLOWA	1
Total	299

Child Welfare Branch by ZIP code



● ODHS-Child Welfare ● ODHS-Intellectual and Developmental Disa...

**the county appearing blank represents a branch in Washington County. This is a known bug in our reporting system and we have requested a fix.*

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☒ Substitute care (FCO Only)	298
Non Relative Foster Care	142
Relative Foster Care	57
Not Applicable	26
In-Home Plan	25
BRS Residential	11
I/DD Foster Home	9
Treatment Foster Care	8
Detention/Hospital	6
Self-Selected Environment	6
Guardianship	4
Hotel/Office	2
Out of state	2
Total	298

The Foster Care Ombuds also tracks the placement setting of the foster youth at the time of the case. This may be "Not Applicable" when the case is not about a specific foster youth or when it is about a former foster youth who has not been in care for a number of years.

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Foster Youth Information and Demographics

The Foster Care Ombuds tracks demographic information about the Foster Youth who are the subject of our cases. At the recommendation of the Foster Care Ombuds advisory group, *this report now includes **all** foster children associated with the complaint.* This includes siblings or other foster children whom were a part of the specific complaint. This information is collected from the Child Welfare case management system OR-Kids so that the Foster Care Ombuds can track trends affecting Foster Youth overall and plan outreach efforts accordingly.

Race / Ethnicity

Foster Youth Race / Ethnicity	2024
American Indian/Alaska Native	24
Black or African American	33
Did Not Answer	10
Hispanic/Latino	57
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4
Unknown	27
White	285
Total	440

Gender

Foster Youth Gender	2024
Female	206
Male	172
Non-binary	1
Transgender	5
Unknown	2
Total	386

Age

Participant Age Group at Closure	2024
Group 0: Unknown	1
Group 1: 0-4	269
Group 2: 5-8	80
Group 3: 9-12	29
Group 4: 13-15	1
Group 5: 16-21	1
Group 6: 22-64	4
Group 7: 65+	1
Total	386

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Role of the 'Reporter'

The person that contacts the Foster Care Ombuds is identified as our **Reporter**. If a current or former foster youth is the Reporter, they will also be counted under total foster youth on the previous page. Some roles have been expanded to show more specific detail.

Role of the 'Reporter'

Role / Relationship to Foster Youth		2024
+	Advocate	25
+	Agency Business	1
+	Attorney	7
+	Community Partner	15
+	Counselor	1
+	Current Foster Child	21
-	Current Foster Parent	68
	Foster Parent	68
+	Educational Personnel	2
-	Family Member	101
	Adoptive Parent	4
	Biological Parent	46
	Grandparent	25
	Incarcerated Parent	3
	Other Family Member	20
	Self	1
	Sibling	1
	Step Parent	1
+	Former Foster Child	9
+	Former Foster Parent	26
+	Friend	5
+	Guardian	5
+	Legislator	2
-	Mandatory Reporter	1
	Medical Professional	1
+	Neighbor	1
+	Regulatory Agency	5
+	Unknown	4
	Total	299

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Case Concerns

The Foster Care Ombuds records the overall concern expressed by the case reporter or a concern identified during the case. The GAO case management system has a three-level concern tracking system with 11 overall categories. The overall categories will be the chart titles for pages 5-9. Each chart will show the subcategories and additional detail that was tracked. Cases will often have more than one concern recorded.

Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
[-] Allegation	
Emotional	1
Exploitation	1
Involuntary seclusion	1
Mental	1
Neglect	1
Physical	3
Sexual	1
Wrongful use of a physical or chemical restraint	1
[-] Disposition	
Founded	9
Unable to determine	1
Unfounded	2
[-] Hotline/Screening	
Outcome not shared with reporter	1
Screening decision	5
[-] Investigative practice	
Not enough collateral contacts	6
Outside of timelines	6
Protective Services response to assignment	12
Unwarranted/unreasonable investigation	4
[+] Mandatory reporting	1
Total	57

Case Management

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
[-] Ongoing case work	
Safety planning	23
Services	20
Visits	10
Permanency planning	6
Documentation	1
Protective action plan	1
[-] Permanency / Adoption	
Relative preference	2
Adoption committee review	1
Adoptions and Safe Families Act	1
Adoptive placement	1
Current caretaker preference	1
[-] Administrative coordination / communication	
Among ODHS programs	2
Between ODHS and other agencies / programs	2
[-] Payment or service denial	
Payment / benefit issue	3
[-] Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	
Timeliness	1
Total	75

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Case Concerns (continued)

Confidentiality / Privacy

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☐ Personal information	
Agency shared information inappropriately	2
Provider shared information inappropriately	1
Total	3

Discrimination

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☐ Age	0
☐ All Protected Classes	0
☐ Disability / Title I	0
☐ Disability / Title II	0
☐ Gender	0
☐ Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	0
☐ Marital Status	0
☐ Political Beliefs	0
☐ Protected Class Not Identified	0
☐ Race/Color or National Origin	0
☐ Reasonable Accommodation/Modification	0
☐ Religion	0
☐ Sexual Orientation	0
Total	0

Customer Service

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☐ Communication	
Lack of response	18
Clarity	7
Timeliness	4
Accuracy	1
☐ Staff Behavior	
Professionalism	12
Expertise / training	4
Conflict of interest	3
Unfair / Unequal treatment	3
Not helpful	2
Retaliation	2
Bias	1
Total	57

Eligibility

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☐ Delay of benefit	
Delay in issuance	1
Total	1

*Anywhere there is a zero there is no records - there was no records in that SubCategory Type

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Case Concerns (continued)

Foster Care

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☐ Certification / licensing	
Safety concerns	16
Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	15
Out-of-Home Care assessments	6
Emergency certification	2
Home study process	2
Revocation	2
Exceptions requests	1
Timeliness	1
☐ Separation/Reunification	
Visitation	23
Transition	13
Belongings	4
Continuation of svcs	1
In-home safety plan	1
☐ Placement	
Appropriateness of placement	26
Removal from current caretaker	6
☐ Medical/Dental	
Medical Access	12
Dental Access	4
☒ Personal needs	11
☐ Mental Health	
Access	4
CANS level	2
☒ Finances	5
☐ Education	
Support	3
Placement	1
☒ Recreation/Activities/Employment	1
Total	162

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Case Concerns (continued)

Legal / Due Process

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☐ Federal / state law or admin rule	5
Advocacy for change	4
Advocacy against	1
☐ Custody	3
Agency involvement	3
☐ Disposition or findings review	3
Central office review	1
Did not receive disposition letter	1
Not eligible for review-timelines	1
☐ Guardianship	3
CW involvement	3
☐ Release of records / records requests	2
Request not granted	1
Timeliness	1
☐ Termination of parental rights	2
Legal process	2
Total	18

Rights of... (items outlined in various Bills of Rights)

Concern SubCategory Type	2024
☐ Foster Parents ORS 418.648	7
Receive support services	1
Treated with dignity / respect	6
☐ Grandparents 419B.875 / Relatives	14
Consideration for placement / relative search	3
Notification of Court hearings	3
Relative contact	2
Relative visitation	6
☐ x-Foster Child / Children ORS	3
Notification of Court/CRB	1
Provided w/ BoR at statutory intervals	1
Transportation to Court/CRB	1
☐ x-Foster Children Siblings 418.608	9
Have a sibling contact plan	1
Maintain contact through visits and other comm	2
Placed together when safe and appropriate	5
Private, less restrictive contact as appropriate	1
Total	33

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Case Concerns (continued)

Finally, the FCO tracks the concerns brought to the GAO directly by current or former foster youth. The results are included in pages 5-8, but highlighted here.

Concerns from Current or Former Foster Youth as 'Reporter'

Concern Category Type	2024
☐ Foster Care	15
☐ Certification / licensing	3
Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	2
Safety concerns	1
☐ Finances	3
Support/Bank	2
Maintain	1
☐ Medical/Dental	3
☐ Placement	3
Appropriateness of placement	3
☐ Personal needs	2
☐ Recreation/Activities/Employment	1
☐ Customer Service	8
☐ Staff Behavior	5
Professionalism	2
Bias	1
Expertise / training	1
Not helpful	1
☐ Communication	3
Lack of Response	3
☐ Case Management	6
☐ Ongoing case work	6
Permanency planning	2
Services	2
Visits	2
☐ Legal / due process	2
☐ Federal / state law or admin rule	1
☐ Release of records / records requests	1
☐ Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services	1
☐ Disposition	1
☐ Eligibility	1
☐ Delay of benefit	1
☐ Rights of...	1
☐ x-Foster Children Siblings 418.608	1
Total	34

Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO Activity - Foster Care Ombuds Cases Closed Comparison 2024

Case Resolutions

At the conclusion of a case, the Foster Care Ombuds must record a **Finding**, which documents the result of their review of each concern in pages 5-9. Ombuds may also develop **Recommendations** to the local office or ODHS leadership. Per ORS 182.500, significant recommendations of global importance will be shared with the Governor's Office. **Ombuds or GAO Action** is the way this office documents mandatory reports and other actions outside of normal case management.

FCO Findings

Case Unit	2024
Foster Care Ombuds	411
Not Valid	151
Consultation	124
Valid/Resolved	84
Valid/Not Resolved	49
Unable to contact complainant	2
Complaint Withdrawn	1
Total	411

Ombuds Action

Concern Category Type	2024
GAO action	8
Mandatory reporting	6
Child abuse report made	4
Child Caring Agency report (ORS 418.260)	2
Other agency referrals	2
Human Resources	1
Office of Public Defense Services (OPDS)	1
Total	8

Recommendations

Case Program Type	2024
ODHS-Child Welfare	12
Total	12

Glossary of frequently used terms

Branch - ODHS office most closely associated with the case primary participants. Cases may have more than one associated branch.

Case - GAO's complete record of working with individuals through their ODHS concerns. Cases are finite and concern-specific.

Concern - GAO's system for categorizing and tracking common ODHS concerns.

Finding - the specific outcome of GAO's resolution. These are fully defined on the right of this page.

Information Only - a type of GAO case where GAO recognizes the concerns as outside of ODHS' jurisdiction or it is a concern previously reviewed by GAO. Typically no concerns or findings will be recorded for 'Information Only' cases.

Primary participant - the main individual alleged to have been affected by ODHS action or inaction. GAO tracks all other relevant participants but will designate one as primary.

Program - the ODHS division most associated with the primary participant's concerns.

Recommendation - GAO shares case recommendations with the most appropriate level of management for resolution. Recommendations are often not formal.

Reporter - the individual who brought the concern to GAO's attention.

Resolution - overall outcome of GAO's involvement in assisting a reporter or primary participant.

GAO Findings Defined

Findings may fit in two categories, educating the public or resolutions that follow an investigation:

Educating the Public Findings

The outcome of case concerns that did not result in an investigation.

Inquiries- Not about an ODHS program, non-jurisdiction issues and child custody matters.

Consultation- Provide policy education, assist the individual in problem solving solutions to their concerns.

Case Resolution Findings

The outcome of case concerns that GAO performed further research and review.

Valid/Resolved—complaints are those that the Ombuds has determined have merit, and changes have been or are being made by ODHS.

Valid/Not Resolved—complaints that the Ombuds have determined have merit, but have not been resolved for the following reasons: 1. *Action cannot be undone*—the issue could not be resolved because it involved an event that had already occurred. 2. *Dept. disagrees with Ombuds*—the Department disagreed with the Ombuds’ recommendation and would not make changes. 3. *Change not in the client’s best interest*—making a change to correct a policy or practice violation is not in the client’s best interest. 4. *Lack of Resources*—the Department agreed with the Ombuds’ recommendation but could not make a change because no resource was available.

Not Valid—complaints are those that the Ombuds has reviewed and has determined that the Department was or is following policies and procedures.