



Fiscal Year 2017

Issued December 21, 2017

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Oregon Foster Care Ombudsman

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Introduction

In 2013, Oregon's foster youth worked collectively for the passage of Senate Bill 123 which resulted into Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 418.200. As part of this legislation, the creation of the Foster Children's Bill of Rights occurred and became effective January 1, 2014. Subsequently, the Department of Human Services (DHS) amended their Rights of Children and Young Adults rule under Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 413-010-0170 to reflect the Rights entitled to all Oregon foster children in the legal custody of DHS. In March of 2014 Oregon hired their first foster care ombudsman whom was embedded in the Governor's Advocacy Office and dedicated specifically for foster care matters. By May of 2014 the Youth Empowerment and Safety (Y.E.S.) line was activated in concert with Foster Care Awareness month.

The Ombudsman's authority to investigate matters is statutorily detailed in ORS 182.500. Similarly, this same statute details the prompt cooperation of all public bodies and those that contract with public bodies to provide all information requested by the ombudsman. Furthermore, the Governor's Advocacy Office is under the direction of the Children's Advocate as detailed in ORS 417.805 which provides the authority to receive and investigate constituent complaints.

In August of 2014, the foster care ombudsman hosted the first foster care ombudsman advisory group. The group is comprised of current and former foster youth, foster parents, CASA, Judicial, CW caseworkers, Certifiers, Oregon Foster Youth Connection, Central Office Program staff, HealthShare, 211 Info, Juvenile Dept., Kinship House, Lines for Life, HeadStart, Grand Ronde Tribe, and Legislative Staff. The group meets on a quarterly basis and is open to all. The group affords the Ombudsman an opportunity for review of outreach documents, reports, staffing difficult cases, and overall feedback. The support, guidance and passion of this group empowers the ombudsman through difficult terrain.

2017 Updates

This report contains information gleaned over the 2017 fiscal calendar year. As the role of the foster care ombudsman continues to evolve, so do the reporting metrics. The reader should note that some metrics have been added in recent quarters at the request of members of the Foster Care Ombudsman Advisory Group as well as the Governor's Advocacy Office. The comparison data should be viewed with caution as representation of data may reflect other dynamics such as promotional efforts by the foster care ombudsman as well as other community partners.

Please contact the Foster Care Ombudsman at 503-945-5897 if you have any questions or need clarification regarding this report.

Who reached out to the Foster Care Ombudsman?

When someone contacts the Foster Care Ombudsman, a “case” is opened. This number does not include cases that are re-opened. For example, if the Foster Care Ombudsman receives new concerns from the reporter or other party after a case has been closed, it will be re-opened if it is within 30 days of closure. After a case has been closed 30 days, it will be opened as a new case.

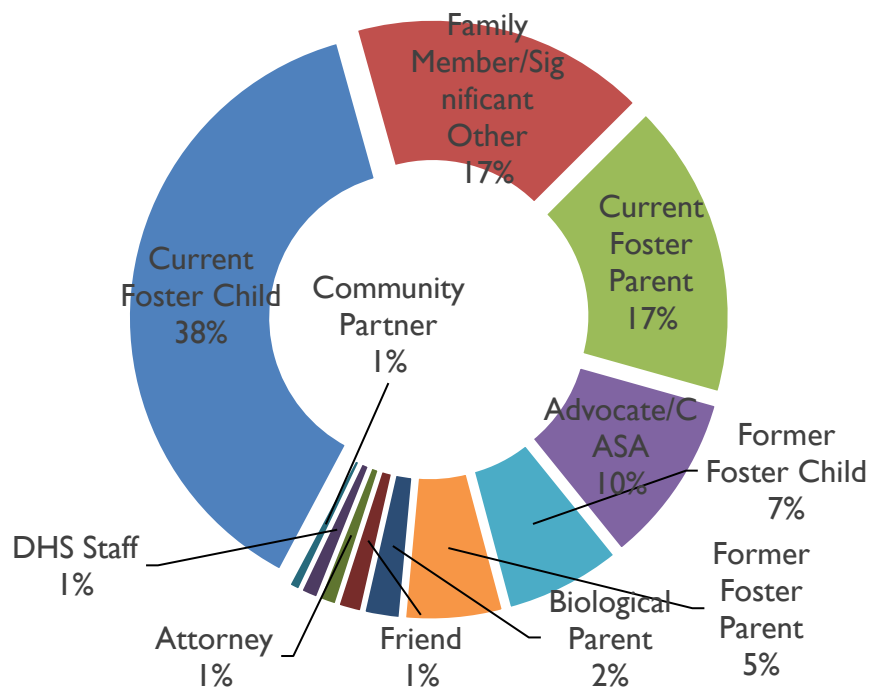
Overall Case Management	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Cases Opened	70	73	76	70	289
Closed Cases	81	54	86	68	289

The person that contacts the Foster Care Ombudsman is identified as the “reporter.” For FY 2017 the population with most contacts to the Foster Care Ombudsman was “Current Foster Child.”

Role of Reporter	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Current Foster Child	44	25	28	11	108
Family Member/Significant Other	10	14	9	15	48
Current Foster Parent	5	19	12	12	48
Advocate/CASA	2	2	7	17	28
Former Foster Child	6	3	6	4	19
Former Foster Parent	2	4	7	3	16
Biological Parent	0	5	1	0	6
Friend	0	0	1	3	4
Attorney	1	0	1	1	3
DHS Staff	0	1	2	0	3

Community Partner	0	0	0	2	2
Contractor	0	0	0	1	1
Educational Personnel	0	1	0	0	1
Guardian	0	0	1	0	1
Neighbor	0	0	0	1	1
Therapist/Counselor	0	0	1	0	1
Anonymous	0	0	0	1	1
Medical Staff	0	0	0	0	0
Legislator	0	0	0	0	0
Total	70	74	76	71	291

Figure 1: Role of reporter, (roles with > 1 contact)



Demographic information

The Foster Care Ombudsman tracks certain demographic information in order to observe trends and understand the populations served. This information is taken directly from Child Welfare's case management system OR-Kids. When the case with the Foster Care Ombudsman is about more than one child, such as a sibling group, the information for the oldest child is reported.

Age of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
0 - 4	9	17	16	12	54
5 - 8	15	15	11	6	47
9 - 12	5	14	7	7	33
13 - 15	12	8	10	16	46
16 - 21	22	15	26	17	80
22 +	0	0	1	4	5
Unknown	2	1	3	8	14
Not applicable*	5	3	2	0	10
Total	70	73	76	70	289

**Not applicable might pertain to a case that does not involve a specific child or former foster child who contacted the FCO with historic or other concerns not specific to their age.*

Gender of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Female	42	46	47	38	173
Male	25	23	23	32	103
Unknown	1	3	4	0	8
Transgender	2	1	2	0	5
Total	70	73	76	70	289

Race of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
White	50	40	52	54	196
Unknown	10	19	7	7	33
American Indian	1	6	7	3	17
Black	3	3	3	4	13
Hispanic	2	4	4	1	11
Asian	0	1	2	0	3
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0	1	1	2
Total	66	73	76	70	275

**Unknown pertains to a case where the specific data is not listed in the Child Welfare case management system ORKIDS.*

How are complainants contacting the Foster Care Ombudsman?

Most complainants reach the Foster Care Ombudsman through the Youth, Empowerment and Safety (Y.E.S.) line, 1-855-840-6036. This line is published on the Foster Children's Bill of Rights poster that is available to all children in the state's care.

Method of Complaint	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
YES Line	53	56	55	46	210
Email	16	14	21	21	72
Mail/Fax	1	2	0	2	5
In Person	0	1	0	1	2
Total	70	73	76	70	289

What are contacts to the Foster Care Ombudsman about?

The Foster Care Ombudsman tracks the overall concerns reported by the reporter, which are divided into subcategories. Cases can have more than one concern.

Services	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Comprehensive	7	4	8	13	32
Self- Advocate	7	7	4	2	20
Involved	1	0	1	3	5
Transportation	0	0	1	0	1
Total	15	11	14	18	58

Separation/Unification	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Visitation	6	7	4	9	26
Transition	3	7	6	7	23
Continuation of Services	0	0	3	1	4
Separation/Unification	1	0	1	2	4
Adoption	0	0	0	0	0
Total	10	14	14	19	57

Abuse/Neglect	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Home Safety Concern	7	9	5	13	34
Emotional	2	2	4	0	8
Physical	0	0	3	3	6
Sexual	0	0	1	3	4

Neglect	1	0	0	1	2
Exploitation	0	0	0	0	0
Total	10	11	13	20	54

Child Welfare	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Caseworker	6	15	10	17	48
Certifier	0	1	2	0	3
Supervisor	1	0	0	0	1
ICWA	0	0	0	0	0
Total	7	16	12	17	52

Medical/Dental	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Medical Access	5	2	5	3	15
Dental Access	2	3	1	1	7
Medical Refusal	1	0	0	0	1
Dental Refusal	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	5	6	4	23

Rights	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Access to	7	4	4	1	16
Receipt of	0	1	2	0	3
Notice of Court/CRB	0	0	0	0	0
Retaliation for issuing	0	0	0	0	0
Total	7	5	6	1	19

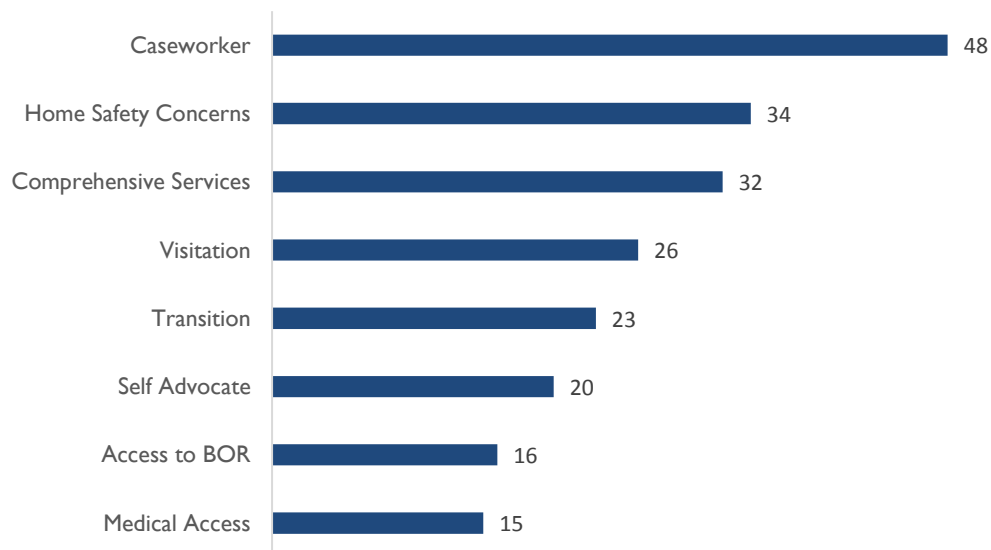
Education	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Placement	1	2	1	0	4
Support	1	0	2	0	3
Information	0	1	1	0	2
Total	2	3	4	0	9

Mental Health	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Access	0	2	1	0	3
Other	0	0	1	1	2
Crisis	0	1	0	0	1
Self- Harm	1	0	0	0	1
Alcohol/Drug	0	0	0	0	0
Suicidal	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	3	2	1	7

Finance	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Maintain	0	0	1	1	2
Credit	0	0	0	0	0
Opportunities	0	0	0	0	0
Support/Bank	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1	1	2

Rec./Activities/Employment	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Access	0	0	1	0	1
Support	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1	0	1

Figure 2: Frequency of top concerns, FY 2017



Where are contacts to the Foster Care Ombudsman originating?

Current Placement Status	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Non-Relative Foster Care	33	42	39	33	147
Relative Foster Care	11	16	11	9	47
Not Applicable	11	6	13	11	41
Behavioral Rehabilitative Services	9	5	7	11	32
Treatment Foster Care	5	2	1	1	9
Detention/Hospital*			3	2	5
IDD Foster Care	1	0	1	2	4
Hotel/Office*			1	1	2
Guardianship	0	1	0	0	1
Homeless	0	1	0	0	1
Total	70	73	76	70	289

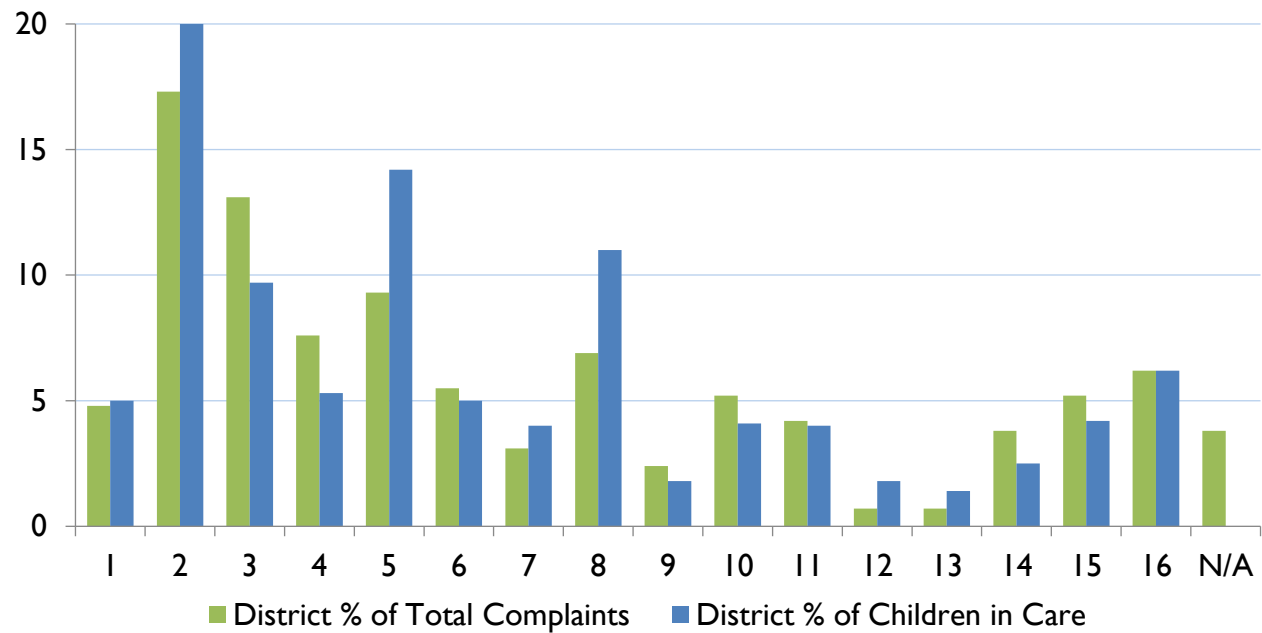
*Placements added to case management system beginning January 2017

DHS District / Counties	Complaints	District % of Total Complaints	Children in Care on 9/30/16*	District % of Children in Care
1 Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook	14	4.8	379	5
2 Multnomah	50	17.3	1527	20
3 Marion, Polk, Yamhill	38	13.1	743	9.7
4 Linn, Benton, Lincoln	22	7.6	405	5.3
5 Lane	27	9.3	1083	14.2
6 Douglas	16	5.5	386	5
7 Coos, Curry	9	3.1	306	4

8 Jackson, Josephine	20	6.9	842	11
9 Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler	7	2.4	137	1.8
10 Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson	15	5.2	313	4.1
11 Klamath, Lake	12	4.2	306	4
12 Morrow, Umatilla	2	0.7	137	1.8
13 Baker, Union, Wallowa	2	0.7	105	1.4
14 Grant, Harney, Malheur	11	3.8	190	2.5
15 Clackamas	15	5.2	323	4.2
16 Washington	18	6.2	471	6.2
N/A	11	3.8	-	-
Total	289		7653	

Data courtesy the [Child Welfare Data Book](#).

Figure 3: Comparison of % of complaints per district to % of children in care



What happened next?

Once the Foster Care Ombudsman opens a case, there are many different courses of action taken, which reflects the unique nature of each concern. Generally speaking, the ombudsman will listen, educate, research and review concerns shared with this office.

When the Foster Care Ombudsman closes a case, the ombudsman writes up a findings narrative and chooses a closing resolution.

Resolution	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Consultation	27	28	32	30	117
Not Valid	25	12	20	18	75
Valid/Resolved	23	10	23	17	73
Valid/Not Resolved	4	3	5	2	14
Unable to Contact	2	1	3	1	7
Inquiry	0	0	3	0	3
Total	81	54	86	68	289

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

Educating the Public Findings

Categories that do not result in an investigation.

- *Inquiries*- Not about a DHS program, non-jurisdiction issues and child custody matters.
- *Consultation*- Provide policy education, assist complainant in problem solving solutions to their concerns.

Case Resolution Findings

- *Valid/Resolved*- complaints are those that the Ombudsman has determined have merit, and changes have been or are being made by the Department.

- *Valid/Not Resolved*- complaints that the Ombudsman has determined have merit, but have not been resolved for the following reasons:
 - Action cannot be undone-The issue could not be resolved because it involved an event that had already occurred.
 - Dept. disagrees with Ombudsman-The Department disagreed with the Ombudsman's recommendation and would not make changes.
 - 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.
 - Lack of Resources- the Department agreed with the Ombudsman's recommendation but could not make a change because no resource was available.
 - *Not Valid*-Complaints are those that the Ombudsman has reviewed and has determined that the Department was or is following policies and procedures.
 - *Ongoing*- Investigation and resolution is pending at the time of data collection.
- There can be more than one resolution. This generally happens if a case has been reopened.

Recommendations

The Foster Care Ombudsman may also make recommendations to agency administration or staff based on the findings of the office. Though this is already happening on an informal basis, the Foster Care Ombudsman and Governor's Advocacy Office are working to improve our methodology for recommendations and will publish recommendations in future reports.