



Youth



Empowerment and Safety

Office of the Foster Care Ombuds

Fiscal Year 2021

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Section 1: Introduction

The Role of an Ombuds and GAO

What is an Ombuds?

The Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO) is primarily staffed with Ombuds. The word Ombuds is derived from 'Ombudsman' a word of Swedish origin meaning, "an official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against maladministration, especially that of public authorities."



In October 2019 and 2020 the GAO, along with other state partners, asked Governor Brown to proclaim an "Ombuds Day".

Independence

The GAO is an Ombuds office to help affected parties work through questions, concerns, or complaints related to ODHS services or action. This GAO is organizationally independent of the programs under its review and reports regularly to the ODHS Director and Office of the Governor

on patterns and trends of complaints. The GAO includes the ODHS Ombuds program, the Foster Care Ombuds, Civil Rights and discrimination investigations and oversight the agency's formal complaint process.

The Foster Care Ombuds

In 2013 Oregon's foster youth and their allies worked collectively for the passage of Senate Bill 123, which amended Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 418.200. The result was the creation of the **Foster Children's Bill of Rights**, which became law effective January 1, 2014. Subsequently, the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) 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 youth in the legal custody of ODHS. In March 2014, ODHS created the position of Foster Care Ombuds as a part of the Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO), dedicated specifically for matters concerning foster youth. In May 2014, the **Youth, Empowerment, and Safety (Y.E.S.) line 1-855-840-6036** was activated to coincide with National Foster Care Month.

In August of 2014, the Foster Care Ombuds hosted the first Foster Care Ombuds Advisory Group. The group was comprised of current and former foster youth, foster parents, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), members the of judicial branch, Child Welfare caseworkers and certifiers, Oregon Foster Youth Connection, ODHS leadership, HealthShare, 211 Info, local juvenile departments, Kinship House, Lines for Life, HeadStart, the Grand Ronde Tribe, and legislative staff, among others. The group continues to meet quarterly and is open to all.



The group affords the Ombuds an opportunity to review outreach documents, reports, staffing difficult cases, and overall feedback. The support, guidance, and passion of this group empowers the Ombuds through difficult terrain. For more information on how to attend, please contact the Foster Care Ombuds or GAO.

How is 'foster care' defined and who can contact the Foster Care Ombuds?

Foster care is a temporary living arrangement for children who need a safe place to live when their parents or guardians cannot safely take care of them. According to the law establishing the Foster Children's Bill of Rights, a "foster child" means a child who is in the legal custody of ODHS pursuant to the provisions of ORS chapter 418, 419B or 419C and who is or was placed in substitute care with a foster parent, a child-caring agency or an independent residence facility established or certified under ORS 418.475.

What or who does the Foster Care Ombuds investigate?

The Foster Care Ombuds has the authority to investigate constituent complaints stemming from any public or contracted body, associated with a foster youth or the foster care system. This includes anything about the foster child's care, safety, or well-being. These complaints come from a variety of sources: foster youth, their friends, neighbors, biological families, guardians, foster families, mental health and medical staff, attorneys, ODHS staff, attorneys, community partners, legislators, Court-appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), educators, social services providers and others in some way associated with the foster care system.

If you are still not sure if any of this applies to you or someone you know, the GAO can assist any individual affected by ODHS. Call toll free at 1-800-442-5238.

OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS AS A CHILD OR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE. I HAVE THE RIGHT:

TO HAVE WHAT EVERY CHILD NEEDS:

- To be a permanent family
- To know about the people in the family and care around me
- To know that the people in the family and care around me are safe
- To have and appropriate clothes that fit me and are appropriate to the climate of my foster home
- To have housing
- To have access to food, clothes, toiletries and other hygiene items that are necessary for my health, safety, education and other needs
- To have and appropriate sleeping arrangements and adequate space for my personal belongings
- To have my belongings, including things I like and things I treasure, if I have any
- To have access to a working telephone

TO BE SAFE:

- To be treated with respect
- To be appropriately disciplined
- To be protected from physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse, including exploitation and trafficking
- To not be sexually abused or have my body parts touched without my consent or the consent of my guardian or the law
- To be protected without fear of retaliation
- To be safe from group punishment

TO SEE AND TALK TO PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT:

- To have and consistent contact with a parent or guardian, siblings, members of my family, and other significant people in my life. Knowing that reasonable limits may be set by ODHS and the law
- To visit and communicate with friends and other significant people except when ODHS or the law says otherwise
- To be treated with respect and not be sexually or emotionally harmed
- To be able to talk to my attorney and other people with my parents or guardian about my care
- To be able to talk to my attorney and other people with my parents or guardian about my care

TO BE HEALTHY:

- To have routine check-ups to keep me healthy
- To have access to a doctor if my health and safety are in danger
- To have the medical, dental, and mental health care I need when it is needed
- To have access to my health and any physical or mental health
- To have an active complaint filed, information about my care and family medical history as appropriate and authorized by law

TO LEARN:

- To be provided with age-appropriate educational opportunities and schooling to prepare me for adult life
- To have the opportunity to participate in activities that interest me, including sports, arts, music or work
- To receive extra help and training if I am struggling in my school or educational situation
- To make choices about my education, including whether to attend school and whether to go to college or work
- To receive age-appropriate information and assistance with reading, writing, math or vocational education

TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR MYSELF:

- To tell the court when I want to live and whether or not I want to be adopted
- To receive respect, be listened, and have my voice heard when making decisions about my religious beliefs, sex, and culture with an understanding of my culture, identity and values and higher standards for my health
- To determine and express my goals and needs directly for myself
- To make decisions that affect my life, in consultation with my lawyer, my age and ability

TO BE INFORMED:

- About financial support available to me, including allowances, allowances or funds
- Access and getting a job
- About services and programs within or outside of the Department of Human Services that can provide me with support
- About where I can go for help
- About how the child welfare system works
- About how to access my case records or my change
- About decisions I will be required to make during my care including my education, health and employment and my legal interests, social benefits and for custody, visitation or other forms of state placement

UNDERSTANDING THAT THE RIGHTS IN MY LIFE HAVE RULES AND SET LIMITS TO PROTECT ME AND MAKE SURE I CAN CONTACT MY ATTORNEY OR COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE TO TALK TO THEM ANYTIME, IF I WANT TO DO SO, I CAN CONTACT THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDS AT 1-800-442-5238 AND TALK TO THEM ABOUT MY PROGRAM.

TO BE IN A PLACE THAT MEETS MY NEEDS:

- To be in a foster care placement that is in my best interest and that I can feel safe and comfortable in
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TO HAVE MY RIGHTS PROTECTED:

- To have an attorney if I want one, and to request the judge appoint a CASA to my case
- To talk to my attorney in private
- To talk to my CASA in private
- To be notified of court hearings, reviews by the Children Review Board, and what is being decided about me and my family, taking into account my age and developmental stage
- To be invited for and provided transportation to court, taking into account my age and developmental stage
- To be able to talk to my attorney and other people with my parents or guardian about my care
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DHS
Oregon Department of Human Services
OREGON STATE

The Oregon Foster Children's Bill of Rights and the Oregon Foster Children's Sibling Bill of Rights were created by the Oregon Legislature after advocacy from current and former foster youth. The documents are maintained by the ODHS Child Welfare program and both provide the contact information for the Foster Care Ombuds.

OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S SIBLING BILL OF RIGHTS I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- To live in the same home as my siblings if possible
- To see and talk to my siblings in person, through letters, by phone, email or in other electronic ways
- To help make a plan that lists how my siblings and I will see and talk to each other
- To be able to talk and visit with my siblings in a natural setting with privacy
- To be told why I cannot live with, talk to or see my siblings if I am not able to
- To have help with transportation so that I can see and talk to my siblings
- To live with foster parents who are trained on the importance of sibling relationships
- To work with caseworkers who are trained on the importance of sibling relationships
- To have continued sibling contact and visits encouraged whenever my siblings or I are going to be in a guardianship or adoption
- To be told when my siblings who are in foster care experience emergencies or changes in their living situations
- To request that my attorney advocate for me and represent my wishes for seeing and talking with my siblings

THERE ARE ADULTS IN MY LIFE WHO MAKE RULES AND SET LIMITS TO MAKE SURE MY ACTIVITIES AND THE PEOPLE IN MY LIFE ARE SAFE AND APPROPRIATE.

IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP, I CAN ASK AN ADULT I TRUST OR CALL THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN AT YOUTH, EMPLOYMENT AND SAFETY (Y.E.S.), 1-800-442-5238 OR TOLLSFREE@DHS.OREGON.GOV

DHS
Oregon Department of Human Services
OREGON STATE



Section 2: The Numbers

Who reached out to the Foster Care Ombuds?

When someone contacts the Foster Care Ombuds, a **“case”** is opened. This number does not include cases that are re-opened. For example, if the Foster Care Ombuds 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.

Case Management	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	FY 21 Total
Cases Opened	83	99	104	100	386
Cases Closed	77	82	87	85	331

The person that contacts the Foster Care Ombuds is identified as the **“reporter.”** For FY 2021 the population with most contacts to the Foster Care Ombuds was Family Members (113), which includes parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. This category was followed closely by the combination of current and former Foster Parents (106).

Role of Reporter	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Advocate	1	3	3	4	11
Agency Business (i.e. ODHS staff)	1	3	5	0	9
Anonymous	0	0	0	0	0
Attorney	4	0	0	3	7
Community Partner	5	5	3	4	17
Client (other ODHS program)	1	0	0	0	1
Contractor	0	0	0	0	0
Counselor	0	0	3	1	4
Current Foster Child	7	11	6	6	30
Current Foster Parent	16	17	29	19	81
Educational Personnel	0	0	1	0	1
Family Member (bio parent, grandparent, others)	29	30	22	32	113
Former Foster Child	2	3	1	5	11



Role of Reporter	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Former Foster Parent	8	4	8	5	25
Former Significant Other	0	1	0	0	1
Friend	3	3	4	4	14
Guardian	0	2	1	0	3
Legislator	0	0	0	0	0
Neighbor	0	0	0	2	2
Regulatory Agency	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	1	0	1
Total	77	82	87	85	331

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Demographic Information

The Foster Care Ombuds tracks certain demographic information 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 Ombuds is about more than one child, such as a sibling group, the information for the oldest child is reported.

For demographic categories discussed below, "**not applicable**" typically pertains to cases that do not involve a specific child. An example of this could be school personnel expressing a concern with a caseworker's professionalism while in their school. "**Unknown**" pertains to cases where specific data is not recorded in the Child Welfare case management system OR-Kids.

"I just wanted to check-in with you and make sure that you knew that Child Welfare was going to cover the cost of the [medical device] for \$1700? ...I can't thank you enough for your help!"

-Foster parent

"I don't think this would have been the outcome without your intervention... I am in awe at the way things happen so fast with just the mention of your name."

-Foster Child's Biological Mother

Gender of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Female	40	35	51	48	174
Male	33	45	32	36	146
Transgender	1	2	2	1	6
Unknown	3	0	2	0	5
Total	77	82	87	85	331



Age of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total	%
0 - 4	19	28	40	22	109	39.9
5 - 8	11	8	18	16	53	16
9 - 12	13	14	18	13	58	17.5
13 - 15	14	10	5	13	42	12.7
16 - 21	16	18	0	16	50	15.1
22 +	1	2	1	3	7	2.1
Unknown	0	0	5	2	7	2.1
Not applicable	3	2	0	0	5	1.5
Total	77	82	87	85	331	-

The Foster Care Ombuds began tracking these age categories in our first reports, but in new reports the Child Welfare program has developed different age categories. The FCO and GAO will reconsider our categories in future reports.

As a moment in time comparison, on 6/30/21 the age range of youth in care was: 0-2, 32.89% 3-5, 16.97% 6-9, 19.29% 10-12, 13.45% 13-17 17.4%.

Race of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total	% FCO cases	% youth in Foster Care*
American Indian / Alaska Native	6	6	3	7	22	6.6	4.9
Asian / Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	1	1	2	3	7	2.1	1.5
Black / African American	8	10	11	13	42	12.7	6.2
Hispanic / Latino	12	8	7	10	37	11.2	18.2
Not Applicable	0	1	0	0	1	.3	-
Unknown	5	5	6	9	25	7.6	3.9
White	45	51	58	43	197	59.5	65.3
Total	77	82	87	85	331	-	-

*Source: [2020 Child Welfare Data Book](#), page 2. This figure from Child Welfare represents the percentage of all children who spent at least one day in foster care.



How did the reporter contact the Foster Care Ombuds?

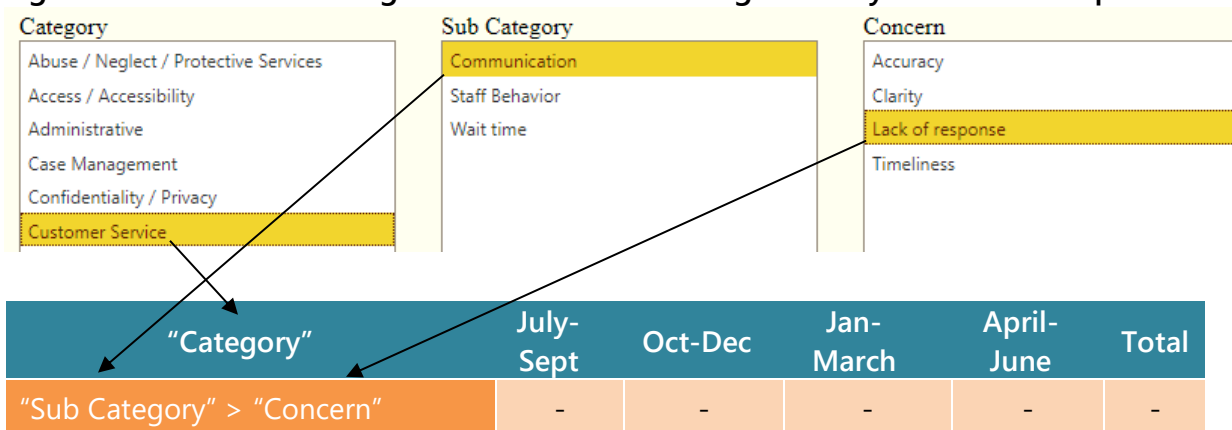
Most reporters reach the Foster Care Ombuds through the Y.E.S. line, which stands for Youth, Empowerment and Safety, a direct phone line to the Ombuds (1-855-840-6036). This line is published on the Foster Children's Bill of Rights poster that is provided to all ODHS foster youth.

Method of Initial Contact	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Y.E.S. Line / Telephone	48	59	58	50	215
Email	26	21	28	33	108
In Person	1	1	1	0	3
Fax	2	0	0	0	2
Postal Mail	0	1	0	2	3
Total	77	82	87	85	331

What were contacts to the Foster Care Ombuds about?

The Foster Care Ombuds tracks the overall concerns reported by the reporter or discovered by the Ombuds over the course of the case, which are divided into subcategories. Cases can have more than one concern. To more directly demonstrate how "Concerns" are recorded and reported, please see our example in Figure 1.

Figure 1: How "Concerns" go from GAO case management system to this report





Concerns reported

Abuse/Neglect/Protective Services	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Allegation > Emotional		1		1	2
Allegation > Failure to protect	1				1
Allegation > Financial exploitation	1				1
Allegation > Neglect	1	1			2
Allegation > Physical	1	1	1		3
Allegation > Sexual	3	1	2		6
Allegation > Threat of Harm	1				1
Disposition > Founded	2				2
Hotline / Screening > Outcome not shared with reporter				2	2
Hotline / Screening > Screening decision				2	2
Investigative practice > Appropriate person was not interviewed			2		2
Investigative practice > Inappropriate interview of child				3	3
Investigative practice > Inappropriate lines of inquiry	1				1
Investigative practice > Not enough collateral contacts		1	1		2
Investigative practice > Protective Services response to assignment	3	2			5
Investigative practice > Unwarranted / unreasonable investigation	1	1			2
Total	15	8	6	8	37



Top 10 Concerns reported to the FCO for FY 2021 (total for each out of 527)

1. Appropriateness of placement (49)
2. Visitation (40)
3. Customer Service - Lack of response (38)
4. Transition (23)
5. Safety concerns (17)
6. Foster placement concerns (not related to safety, 16)
7. Customer Service - Professionalism (15)
8. Customer Service - Timeliness (14)
9. Foster Sibling Bill of Rights – Maintain contact through visits and other communication (12)
10. Services (11)

For several years, the FCO has reported the top ten concerns raised by reporters. For FY 2021, customer service concerns have been overtaken as the top concern by concerns related to the appropriateness of placement of the foster youth and concerns about visitation.

Administrative	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Payments > Direct Pay Unit				1	1
Total	0	0	0	1	1

Case Management	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Coordination between states		1			1
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Other state issues		1	1	1	3
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Timeliness		1	1	1	3
Notification > Notification unclear / inaccurate		1			1
Ongoing case work > Documentation				1	1



Ongoing case work > Face to face contact				1	1
Ongoing case work > Permanency planning	4		3	1	8
Ongoing case work > Protective action plan				3	3
Ongoing case work > Safety planning		1	2	2	5
Ongoing case work > Services	3	1	5	2	11
Ongoing case work > Visits	1	1	1		3
Payment of service denial > Payment / benefit issue			1		1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoption assistance	1				1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA)			1		1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoption committee review		1			1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoptive placement	1				1
Permanency / Adoption > Disruption	1				1
Permanency / Adoption > Current caretaker preference	1	1			2
Permanency / Adoption > Relative preference	1	2			3
Permanency / Adoption > Sibling planning	1				1
Total	14	11	15	12	52

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Confidentiality / Privacy	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Health information > Agency shared inappropriately			1		1
Personal information > Agency shared inappropriately		4		1	5
Total	0	4	1	1	6

Customer Service	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Communication > Accuracy	1	2	2	3	8
Communication > Clarity	3	1	2	1	7
Communication > Lack of response	6	9	7	16	38
Communication > Timeliness	1	1	4	3	9
Staff Behavior > Bias	2		1		3
Staff Behavior > Conflict of interest			1	3	4
Staff Behavior > Expertise/training	1	1	2		4
Staff Behavior > Not helpful	1				1
Staff Behavior > Professionalism	3	3	4	5	15
Staff Behavior > Retaliation	2	1	3	4	10
Staff Behavior > Unfair / unequal treatment	1				1
Total	21	18	26	35	100

Discrimination	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Age > Bias			1		1
Religion > Bias	1				1
Sexual Orientation > Unfair / unequal treatment	1				1



Reasonable Accommodation / Modification	1				1
Total	3	0	1	0	4

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Eligibility	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Calculation > SNAP allotment		1			1
Total	0	1	0	0	1

Foster Care	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Certification / licensing > Applicant counseled to withdraw		1	1		2
Certification / licensing > Denial	1				1
Certification / licensing > Exceptions requests	1				1
Certification / licensing > Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	5	2	6	3	16
Certification / licensing > Foster provider has not received training	1		1		2
Certification / licensing > Home study process	1	3	2	1	7
Certification / licensing > Out-of-home care assessments	2		2		4
Certification / licensing > Revocation	1				1
Certification / licensing > Safety concerns	4	2	3	8	17
Certification / licensing > Timeliness			1	1	2
Education > Information				2	2
Education > Placement	1		2	1	4
Education > Support		4			4



Medical/Dental > Dental Access	3	1		2	6
Medical/Dental > Medical Access	2		2	3	7
Mental Health > Access	3	1	2		6
Mental Health > CANS level			1	1	2
Personal needs > Access to hygiene products	2	2	2		6
Personal needs > Clothing needs		1		1	2
Personal needs > Dietary needs		1	1		2
Placement > Appropriateness of placement	9	16	13	11	49
Placement > Removal from current caretaker			2	1	3
Recreation/Activities/Employment > Access	1		1	1	3
Recreation/Activities/Employment > Support		1	1	1	3
Residential care > Rules	1	2			3
Residential care > Staff	3		1	1	5
Separation/Reunification > Belongings	1		2	2	5
Separation/Reunification > Continuation of services	1				1
Separation/Reunification > In-home safety plan				1	1
Separation/Reunification > Protective Action Plan				2	2
Separation/Reunification > Transition	7	2	5	9	23
Separation/Reunification > Visitation	9	10	12	9	40
Total	59	49	63	61	232

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Legal / Due process	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Custody > Agency involvement			1		1
Disposition or findings review > Did not receive disposition letter	1	1			2
Federal /state law or admin rule > Advocacy against			1		1
Federal /state law or admin rule > Advocacy for change		2	4		6
Federal /state law or admin rule > Advocacy for new law / rule			1		1
Guardianship > CW involvement		1		2	3
Guardianship > Guardianship assistance			1		1
Release of records / records requests > Records incomplete	1	1			2
Termination of parental rights / Legal process		1		2	3
Termination of parental rights / Comm/understanding of parents ahead of TPR	1				1
Total	3	6	8	4	21

Rights of...	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Ability to file complaints without retaliation			1		1
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided w/ BoR at statutory intervals		1	1	1	3



Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided with current, important contacts	2	2	1	1	6
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided with "How do I..." information	1				1
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Have a sibling contact plan	1			1	2
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Maintain contact through visits and other comm	4	2	3	3	12
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Placed together when safe and appropriate	2	3	4	1	10
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Private, less restrictive contact as possible			2		2
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Sibling contact encouraged in guardianships and adoptions				1	1
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Have input into a permanency plan	1				1
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Included as a valued member of a team		2	2	2	6
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Informed of any condition...that affects FP			1		1
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Receive support services			1	1	2

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Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Treated with dignity / respect	3		3	2	8
Grandparents / Relatives > Consideration for placement / relative search			1		1
Grandparents / Relatives > Notification of Court hearings	1	1			2
Grandparents / Relatives > Relative visitation	3	1			4
Total	18	12	20	13	63

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"I feel very grateful that my client was taken seriously and that had those reports been substantiated it would have been a real concern."

-Foster Child's Attorney



Concerns Expressed by Current or Former Foster Youth as Reporter

Beginning in FY 2019, the Foster Care Ombuds began reporting out the concerns recorded in cases where the current or former foster youth was “reporter,” or the individual that reached out to and worked with the Ombuds. For FY 2021, 41 current (30) and former (11) foster youth were the reporter out of 331 cases and their concerns are in the following table.

“Category > Subcategory > Concern” reported by Current or Former Foster Youth	Total	% of current of former foster youth concerns
Customer Service > Communication > Lack of response	8	12.5
Foster Care > Placement > Appropriateness of placement	8	12.5
Foster Care > Medical/Dental > Dental Access	3	4.6875
Rights of... > Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided with current, important contacts	3	4.6875
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services > Allegation > Sexual	2	3.125
Customer Service > Communication > Timeliness	2	3.125
Customer Service > Staff Behavior > Professionalism	2	3.125
Foster Care > Certification / licensing > Safety concerns	2	3.125
Foster Care > Education > Information	2	3.125
Foster Care > Personal needs > Access to hygiene products	2	3.125
Foster Care > Residential care > Rules	2	3.125
Rights of... > Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided w/ BoR at statutory intervals	2	3.125
Rights of... > Foster Children Siblings 418.608 > Private, less restrictive contact as appropriate	2	3.125
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services > Allegation > Physical	1	1.5625
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services > Allegation > Threat of Harm	1	1.5625
Case Management > Ongoing case work > Services	1	1.5625



Confidentiality / Privacy > Personal information > Agency shared information inappropriately	1	1.5625
Customer Service > Communication > Accuracy	1	1.5625
Customer Service > Communication > Clarity	1	1.5625
Customer Service > Staff Behavior > Not helpful	1	1.5625
Customer Service > Staff Behavior > Retaliation	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Education > Placement	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Medical/Dental > Medical Access	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Personal needs > Clothing needs	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Personal needs > Dietary needs	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Residential care > Staff	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Separation/Reunification > Belongings	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Separation/Reunification > Continuation of svcs	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Separation/Reunification > Transition	1	1.5625
Foster Care > Separation/Reunification > Visitation	1	1.5625
GAO action > Mandatory reporting > Adult abuse report made	1	1.5625
GAO action > Mandatory reporting > Child abuse report made	1	1.5625
GAO action > Mandatory reporting > Child Caring Agency report (ORS 418.260)	1	1.5625
Legal / due process > Release of records / records requests > Records incomplete	1	1.5625
Rights of... > Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided with 'How Do I...' information	1	1.5625
Rights of... > Foster Children Siblings 418.608 > Have a sibling contact plan	1	1.5625
Rights of... > Foster Children Siblings 418.608 > Maintain contact through visits and other comm	1	1.5625

table continued from previous page



In what kind of setting was the foster child residing?

Current Placement Status	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Behavioral Rehabilitative Services (BRS)	5	10	9	8	32
Detention/Hospital	1	1	3	3	8
Guardianship	3	4	1	0	8
Homeless	0	0	0	0	0
Hotel/Office	1	0	0	0	1
IDD Foster Care	4	2	3	6	15
Non-Relative Foster Care	42	40	44	37	163
Not Applicable	6	11	6	18	41
Out of state BRS	0	0	0	0	0
Relative Foster Care	9	13	19	11	52
Treatment Foster Care	6	1	2	2	11
Total	77	82	87	85	331

ODHS Child Welfare Branch Location

ODHS District / Counties	FCO Cases	District % of Total FCO Cases closed FY 2021	Children in Foster Care on 6/30/2021*	District % of Children in Care on 6/30/2021
1 Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook	10	3.0	188	3.3
2 Multnomah	56	16.9	1136	19.8
3 Marion, Polk, Yamhill	51	15.4	626	10.9
4 Linn, Benton, Lincoln	24	7.3	322	5.6
5 Lane	24	7.3	674	11.8
6 Douglas	21	6.3	324	5.7
7 Coos, Curry	15	4.5	160	2.8
8 Jackson, Josephine	27	8.2	567	9.9
9 Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler	3	0.9	65	1.1
10 Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson	21	6.3	278	4.8
11 Klamath, Lake	5	1.5	157	2.7
12 Morrow, Umatilla	9	2.7	232	4.0
13 Baker, Union, Wallowa	2	0.6	60	1.0
14 Grant, Harney, Malheur	10	3.0	255	4.4



15 Clackamas	18	5.4	304	5.3
16 Washington	21	6.3	371	6.5
N/A	14	4.2	15	0.3
Total	331	100.0	5734	100.0

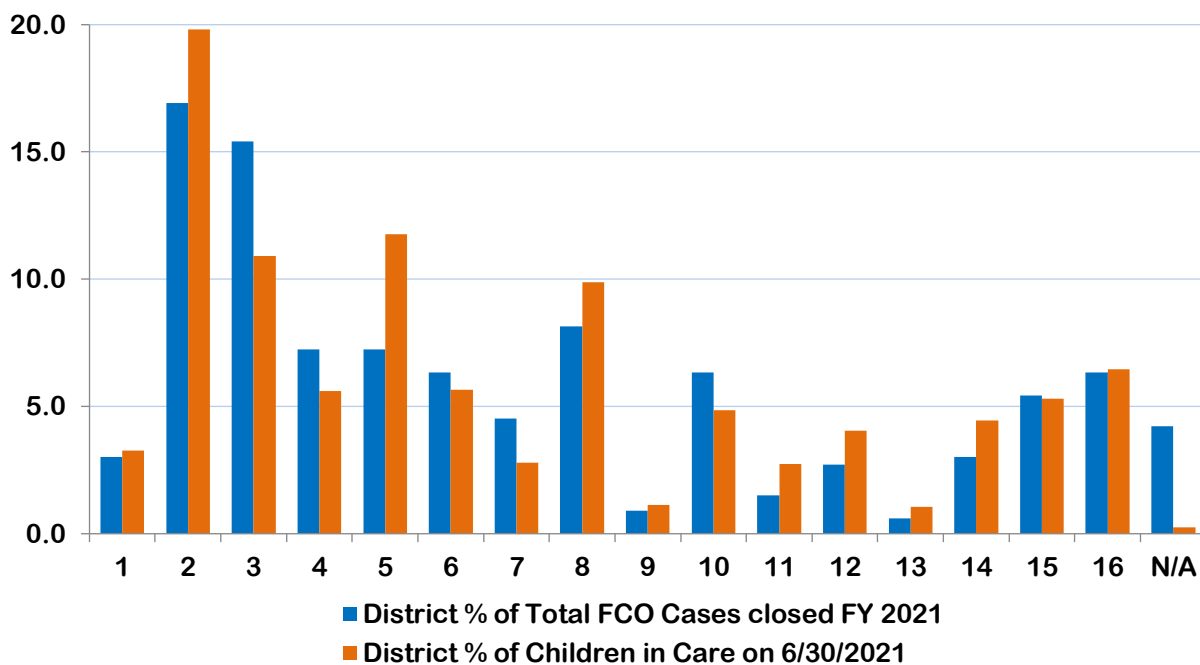
*Source: data captured 6/30/2021 from Child Welfare Data Dashboard.

"I just spoke with my auntie she said they are letting L. stay with her Christmas Eve and Christmas night and then she has to go back to foster care December 26. I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with them because I know that had a big part to play and I appreciate that more than you know!! Thank you again!"

The Sibling Bill of Rights is a great foundation that helps FCO / GAO advocate for siblings in many ways.

Figure 2 (below) compares the number of Foster Care Ombuds cases for FY 2021 to the number of foster youth in care as of June 30, 2021. While this is not an exact comparison, we use this data to assess the representation of the foster youth population in the Foster Care Ombuds' work. As you can see, the number of cases has a close relationship to the number of Foster Youth in each ODHS district.

Figure 2: Foster Care Ombuds cases relative to ODHS district % of children in care, FY 2021





What happened next?

Once the Foster Care Ombuds opens a case, there are many different courses of action taken, which will reflect the unique nature of each concern. Generally, the Ombuds will listen, educate, research and review concerns shared with this office. Once this review has concluded, the Ombuds will follow up with appropriate agency staff and management to better understand and resolve specific and global concerns.

"Thank you so much for looking into that. Definitely not the news I wanted but I guess we'll just have to accept it. Thank you for your time I really do appreciate it. Thank you again for everything, even knowing I have someone who is also looking into this from an outside perspective has been reassuring."

Sometimes the Ombuds' findings are not what the caller wants to hear but may be reaffirming.

When the Foster Care Ombuds closes a case, the Ombuds writes up a findings narrative and chooses a closing resolution. Cases may have more than one resolution, and future reports will make efforts to directly tie concerns to resolutions.

Findings *(categories explained on the following page)*

Resolution*	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Consultation	46	33	51	48	178
Forwarded to Program / Policy Office	1	1	2	1	5
Inquiry	0	0	0	0	0
No Action Taken	0	0	0	2	2
No Authority to Investigate	2	0	0	0	2
Not Valid	42	34	44	33	153
Unable to Contact	3	5	0	0	8
Unable to Determine	1	0	0	0	1
Valid/Not Resolved	8	4	9	8	29
Valid/Resolved	33	35	38	43	149
Total	136	112	144	135	527

*For attendees of the quarterly FCO Advisory Group, errors were found for this total in our quarterly reports. Totals have been corrected here.



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 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

- ***Valid/Resolved***—complaints are those that the Ombuds has determined have merit, and changes have been or are being made by the Department.
- ***Valid/Not Resolved***—complaints that the Ombuds 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 Ombuds*—the Department disagreed with the Ombuds' 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 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.



Mandatory Reports and Referrals

In FY 2019 the Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO), which includes the Foster Care Ombuds, began to track reports made to other offices for their review. These include mandatory reports of abuse or neglect to the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH 1-855-503-7233), mandatory reports of abuses, deficiencies, or violations of Child Caring Agencies (CCAs) or other agency referrals to offices such as ODHHS Human Resources or other investigatory offices. This information is being reported to recognize our obligation to make certain statutory reports, but also demonstrate that this office flags for referral other matters that we determine to be outside of our ability to review.

Note: These reports and referrals were occurring in accordance with relevant statutes and internal procedure before this report, but the GAO has only been recording these in an easily reportable way since May 2019.

Report or Referral Type	July-Sept	Oct-Dec*	Jan-March*	April-June	Total
Mandatory reporting – Adult abuse report made (ORS 124.055)	1	1	0	1	3
Mandatory reporting - Child abuse report made (ORS 419B.010)	5	1	4	2	12
Mandatory reporting - Child Caring Agency report (ORS 418.260)	1	1	0	1	3
Other agency referrals - Human Resources	0	1	1	0	2
Other agency referrals - Information Security & Privacy Office (ISPO)	1	0	0	0	1
Other agency referrals - Overpayment/Fraud	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	4*	5*	4	21

**For attendees of the quarterly FCO Advisory Group, errors were found for this total in our Q2 and Q3 quarterly reports. These have been corrected here.*



Recommendations

As a part of quarterly reporting to the ODHS Director and Child Welfare Director, the Foster Care Ombuds' recommendations are shared with ODHS administration and local management based on the findings of the office. The Foster Care Ombuds and Governor's Advocacy Office continue to improve our methodology for recording and reporting formal recommendations and are working to publish recommendations or themes in future reports.

For the cases in this reporting period, the Foster Care Ombuds made 23 recommendations to Child Welfare leadership.

"I also wanted to thank Darin for playing a critical role in helping manage the relationship with the [family name], attending several community meetings with the [local] Foster Parent Association, and being a trusted resource by the family and foster parents. His help was invaluable to guide this relationship to a positive outcome."

Fariborz Pakseresht, ODHS Director



Appendix A: Comparison to previous annual reports

Previous reports may be found in full at: (<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/aboutdhs/pages/fostercare-ombuds.aspx>)

The best attempt has been made to make comparisons across years, though several slight changes to GAO reporting may be noted across years. When a data point was not reported for that year, it will be represented by a dash (-), while zeroes will be reported as zeroes.

Cases	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Cases Opened	237	289	328	336	332	386
Cases Closed	125*	289	307	324	338	331

**only quarters 3-4 reported in FY '16*

Role of Reporter	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Advocate	20	28	36	16	18	11
Agency Business (ex. ODHS staff)	2	3	5	9	12	9
Anonymous	-	1	1	0	0	0
Attorney	2	3	1	5	10	7
Biological parent (included under 'Family Member' after FY 2017)	14	6	-	-	-	-
Community Partner	2	2	19	9	14	17
Client (other ODHS program)	-	-	-	-	-	1
Contractor	1	1	0	1	0	0
Current Foster Child	71	108	67	43	43	30
Current Foster Parent	48	48	64	99	74	81
Educational Personnel	5	1	4	2	6	1
Family Member	38	48	75	84	104	113
Former Foster Child	10	19	13	14	14	11
Former Foster Parent	16	16	15	29	28	25
Friend	4	4	4	5	5	14
Guardian	-	1	0	2	0	3
Legislator	-	0	1	0	4	0
Medical staff	2	0	-	-	-	-
Neighbor	2	1	2	2	5	2
Regulatory Agency	-	-	-	2	0	0
Therapist/Counselor	-	1	-	-	-	4
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	237	291	307*	324	338	331

**'Reporter' for FY '18 was reported differently at the time and recalculated here to match other years' methodology*



Gender	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Female	54	173	165	164	180	174
Male	58	103	137	141	148	146
Transgender	1	5	2	1	5	6
Unknown	1	8	3	4	0	5
Not applicable	-	-	-	14	5	-
Total	114*	289	307	324	338	331

**only quarters 3-4 reported in FY '16*

Age	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
0-4	41	54	53	86	81	109
5-8	26	47	39	50	56	53
9-12	33	33	46	44	44	58
13-15	49	46	74	49	61	42
16-21	67	80	75	65	75	50
22+	11	5	10	13	8	7
Unknown	1	14	4	4	3	7
Not applicable	9	10	6	13	10	5
Total	237	289	307	324	338	331

Race	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
American Indian/Alaska Native	6	17	16	13	21	22
Asian	2	3	1	5	2	3
Black	13	13	23	22	31	42
Hispanic/Latino	1	11	2	18	33	37
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	2	2	3	4	4
White	82	196	246	228	220	197
Unknown	10	33	16	25	19	25
Not applicable	-	-	-	0	8	1
Total	114*	275	307	324	338	331

**only quarters 3-4 reported in FY '16*



Child Welfare District - Counties	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
1 - Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook	7	14	7	7	8	7
2 - Multnomah	59	50	61	66	56	66
3 - Marion, Polk, Yamhill	25	38	31	51	63	51
4 - Lincoln, Linn, Benton	16	22	27	22	21	22
5 - Lane	37	27	31	32	28	32
6 - Douglas	5	16	15	21	32	21
7 - Coos, Curry	3	9	10	22	13	22
8 - Jackson, Josephine	17	20	15	18	31	18
9 - Gilliam, Hood River, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler	3	7	11	2	9	2
10 - Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson	13	15	20	17	17	17
11 - Klamath, Lake	12	12	12	3	4	3
12 - Morrow, Umatilla	6	2	6	6	6	6
13 - Baker, Union, Wallowa	1	2	0	2	1	2
14 - Grant, Harney, Malheur	3	11	7	9	10	9
15 - Clackamas	11	15	18	20	12	20
16 - Washington	16	18	28	30	22	30
Central Office	3	-	-	-	-	-
n/a	-	11	7	9	2	9
Total	237	289	306	337	335	337

Resolution	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Consultation	74	117	113	96	106	178
Forwarded to Program or Policy Unit	-	-	1	2	5	5
Inquiry	2	3	4	1	0	0
No Action Taken	-	-	1	2	0	2
No Authority to Investigate	-	-	-	-	-	2
Not Valid	51	75	64	98	135	153
Unable to Contact	3	7	7	6	3	8
Unable to Determine	-	-	-	1	1	1
Valid/Not Resolved	5	14	14	15	22	29
Valid/Resolved	31	73	104	108	138	149
Total	233	289	308	329	410	527