



State Fiscal Year 2019

(July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)

Published December 27, 2019

Submitted by **Darin Mancuso**
Oregon Foster Care Ombudsman
Governor's Advocacy Office

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction	3
The Role of an Ombudsman / Governor’s Advocacy Office	3
2019 Updates	5
Section 2: The Numbers	6
Who reached out to the Foster Care Ombudsman?.....	6
Case Management	6
Role of the Reporter	6
Demographic information.....	7
How did complainants contact the Foster Care Ombudsman?	8-9
What were contacts to the Foster Care Ombudsman about?.....	9
‘Concerns’ July 1, 2018 - December 31, 2018.....	9
‘Concerns’ January 1, 2019 - June 30, 2019.....	13
‘Concerns’ from Foster Youth as Reporter.....	16
Where was the foster child residing?	17
Placement	20
DHS Child Welfare branch location	21
What happened next?	22
Findings.....	23
Mandatory Reports and Referrals	24
Recommendations.....	24

Section 1: Introduction

In 2013, Oregon's foster youth worked collectively for the passage of Senate Bill 123 which resulted into changes to Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 418.200. A part of these changes was the creation of the Foster Children's Bill of Rights, which 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 who was embedded in the Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO) and dedicated specifically for matters concerning foster youth. By May of 2014, the Youth Empowerment and Safety (Y.E.S.) line 1-855-840-6036 was made active 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 (Court Appointed Special Advocates), 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, among others. The group meets on the third Thursday, quarterly 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. For more information on how to attend, please contact the Foster Care Ombudsman.

The Role of an Ombudsman

What is an Ombudsman?

The word Ombudsman is derived from Swedish, meaning, "an official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against mal-administration, especially that of public authorities." Here, the meaning "man" is gender neutral and may refer to any person fulfilling the role of Ombudsman.

Who does the Ombudsman report to?

The Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO) is an Ombudsman office to help affected parties work through questions, concerns, or complaints related to Department of Human

Services (DHS) services or action. This GAO is organizationally independent of the programs under its review and reports regularly to the DHS Director and Office of the Governor on patterns and trends of complaints. The GAO includes the DHS Ombudsman program, the Foster Care Ombudsman, Civil Rights and discrimination investigations and oversight the agency's formal complaint process. In addition to staff, the GAO office often works with volunteers that may assist with issues outside of case work. During FY 2019, the office of the Foster Care Ombudsman had 3 volunteers or interns, who assisted on many projects, including this report. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Foster Care Ombudsman or GAO Administrator.

Who is Oregon's Foster Care Ombudsman?

The Oregon Foster Care Ombudsman is Darin Mancuso. Darin comes from a background of public service in the juvenile system.

What or who does the Foster Care Ombudsman investigate?

The Foster Care Ombudsman has the authority to investigate

constituent complaints stemming from any public or contracted body, associated with a foster youth or the foster care system. These complaints come from a variety of sources: Foster youth, their friends, neighbors, biological families, guardians, foster families, mental health and medical staff, attorneys, DHS staff, attorneys, community partners, legislators, CASA, educators, social services providers and others in some way associated with the foster care system.

What is foster care and why do children come into foster care?

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. Most children are in foster care because of a history of abuse or neglect. Children enter foster care for different reasons. Sometimes their families cannot provide them with the basic safety and protection they need and as a result, children are abused or neglected. Others' experience includes parental substance abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or abandonment (Oregon Department of Human Services, 2019.)

2019 Updates

The 2019 report marks some changes to the GAO case management system. This will be most notable in the “Concern” categories tracked by the Ombudsman (beginning on page 14). Generally, the changes were made to better reflect what concerns were brought to the Ombudsman’s attention.

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

Section 2: The Numbers

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	FY 19 Total
Cases Opened	75	78	94	89	336
Cases Closed	71	79	75	99	324

The person that contacts the Foster Care Ombudsman is identified as the “reporter.” For FY 2018 the population with most contacts to the Foster Care Ombudsman was foster parents, specifically “Current/Former Foster Parent” to child(ren).

Role of Reporter	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Advocate	4	3	5	4	16
Agency Business	3	1	3	2	9
Anonymous	-	-	-	-	0
Attorney	-	-	1	4	5
Community Partner		5	2	2	9
Contractor	-	-	1	-	1
Current Foster Child	10	12	9	12	43
Current Foster Parent	23	23	22	31	99
Educational Personnel	-	-	1	4	5
Family Member (bio parent, grandparent, others)	20	27	13	24	84
Former Foster Child	2	2	3	7	14
Former Foster Parent	8	2	12	7	29

Friend	-	4	-	1	5
Guardian	-	-	2	-	2
Legislator	-	-	-	-	0
Neighbor	1	-	-	1	2
Regulatory Agency	-	-	1	-	1
Total	71	79	75	99	324

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.

ISSUES WITH VISITS

A foster parent expressed concern that the 6-year-old foster child was having behavioral struggles after visits with her mother. The FCO was able to escalate this issue to the Child Welfare caseworker and advocate that visits be reduced. Visitation was reduced and the child's behaviors at the foster home and school improved greatly.

Gender of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Female	36	37	45	46	164
Male	30	32	28	51	141
Not Applicable	3	9	1	1	14
Transgender	-	1	-	-	1
Unknown	2	-	1	1	4
Total	71	79	75	99	324

Age of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
0 - 4	24	16	19	27	86
5 - 8	9	15	14	12	50
9 - 12	5	12	11	16	44

13 - 15	8	9	16	16	49
16 - 21	16	14	14	21	65
22 +	4	4	-	5	13
Unknown	3	-	-	1	4
Not applicable*	2	9	1	1	13
Total	71	79	75	99	324

**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.*

Race of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
American Indian	3	1	5	4	13
Asian	2	1	-	2	5
Black	8	5	6	3	22
Hispanic	-	4	8	6	18
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	-	1	1	3
Not Applicable	-	9	1		0
Unknown	4	9	3	9	25
White	53	50	51	74	228
Total	71	79	75	99	324

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

How did complainants contact the Foster Care Ombudsman?

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

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY

Foster parents from Central Oregon contacted the Foster Care Ombudsman and shared that a multitude of concerns regarding Child Welfare. The foster care Ombudsman, Governor's Advocacy Office Administrator and Child Welfare Foster Care manager met with several foster parents in person to discuss concerns and developed a plan to address them with the local leadership.

Method of Initial Contact	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Y.E.S. Line / Telephone	45	52	50	73	220
Email	25	26	23	24	98
In Person	-	-	-	2	2
Fax	-	-	1	-	1
Postal Mail	1	1	1	-	3
Total	71	79	75	99	324

What were 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.

Note: As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO), which includes the Foster Care Ombudsman, revised the concern categories tracked by the office in order to more closely represent the concerns of reporters. The difference will be most obvious in this annual report, as the change began in the middle of this reporting year. Future reports will more closely reflect January 2019-July 2019 categories. Please contact the Foster Care Ombudsman or GAO Administrator for tips on comparing newer reports to historical reporting.

2018 Concerns (July 1 – December 31)

Adoption	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Adoptive Placement	1	1	2
Relative Preference	2	-	2
Sibling Split	-	2	2
Total	2	3	6

Certification / Licensing	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Emotional	1	1	2
Exceptions requests	-	-	0
Exploitation	-	-	0
Neglect	1	-	1
Out-of-home care assessments	-	-	0

Physical	2	-	2
Safety concerns	3	3	6
Sexual	-	1	1
Total	7	5	12

Child Protective Services	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Customer Service	1	-	1
Protective Action Plan	1	-	1
Review of disposition	-	1	1
Total	2	1	3

Child Welfare	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Caseworker	19	21	40
Certifier	1	1	2
ICWA	-	-	0
Supervisor	1	1	2
Total	21	23	44

Confidentiality/Privacy	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Health information - agency shared inappropriately	1	1	2
Personal information - provider shared inappropriately	-	1	1
Total	0	1	3

Custody	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Guardianship	2	-	2
Non-DHS	1	-	1
Total	3	0	3

Education	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Information	-	-	0
Placement	1	-	1
Support	1	-	1
Total	2	0	2

Finance	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Credit	2	-	2
Maintain	-	-	0
Opportunities	1	-	1
Support	-	-	0
Support/Bank	1	-	1
Total	4	0	4

Medical/Dental	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Dental Access	2	2	4
Dental Refusal	-	-	0
Medical Access	2	6	8
Medical Refusal	-	-	0
Total	4	8	12

Mental Health	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Access	4	3	7
Alcohol/Drug	-	-	0
Crisis	-	-	0
Other	-	-	0
Refusal	1	-	1
Self Harm	-	-	0
Suicidal	-	-	0
Total	5	3	8

Permanency	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Current caretaker status	1	2	3
Total	1	2	3

Recreation/Activities/Employment	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Access	2	1	3
Support	-	-	0
Total	2	1	3

Rights	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Access to	3	6	9
Notice of Court/CRB	-	1	1
Receipt of	-	-	0
Retaliation for issuing	-	-	0
Total	3	7	10

Separation/Unification	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Belongings	2	-	2
Continuation of Services	1	1	2
Current Caretaker Status	-	-	0
Notification of Change	4	5	9
Transition	15	8	23
Visitation	16	18	34
Total	38	32	70

Services	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
Comprehensive	9	7	16
Involved	-	2	2
Self Advocate	14	15	29
Transportation	-	1	1
Total	23	25	48

2019 Concerns (January 1 – June 30)

Case Management	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Administrative coordination / communication > Between central office and local staff	1	-	1
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Other state issues	1	-	1
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Timeliness	-	1	1
Notification > Action agreement / letter of expectations	1	-	1
Ongoing case work > Face to face contact	1	1	2
Ongoing case work > Permanency planning	-	3	3
Ongoing case work > Safety planning	-	1	1
Ongoing case work > Services	-	3	3
Payment or service denial > K-Plan	-	1	1
Payment or service denial > Payment / benefit issue	1	-	1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoptive placement	1	-	1
Permanency / Adoption > Sibling Planning	2	2	4
Total	8	12	20

Administrative	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Permanency / Adoption > Sibling Planning	1	-	1
Total	1	0	1

Abuse/Neglect/Protective Services	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Allegation > Involuntary seclusion	1	-	1
Allegation > Neglect	1	-	1
Allegation > Physical	-	1	1
Allegation > Sexual	-	1	1
Hotline/Screening > Screening decision	-	1	1
Investigative practice > Inappropriate lines of inquiry	-	1	1
Investigative practice > Unwarranted / unreasonable investigation	-	1	1
Total	2	5	7

Customer Service	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Communication > Accuracy	-	1	1
Communication > Clarity	2	1	3
Communication > Lack of response	8	13	21
Communication > Timeliness	3	7	10
Staff behavior > Conflict of interest	1	-	1
Staff behavior > Expertise / training	2	2	4
Staff behavior > Professionalism	2	4	6
Staff behavior > Retaliation	1	-	1
Wait time > On the phone	1	-	1
Total	20	28	48

Confidentiality / Privacy	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Health information > Community partner shared inappropriately	1	-	1
Personal information > Agency shared inappropriately	-	2	2
Personal information > Community partner shared inappropriately	-	1	1
Personal information > Provider shared inappropriately	-	1	1
Total	1	4	5

Eligibility	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Denial > Oregon Health Plan (OHP)	1	1	2
Total	1	1	2

Foster Care	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Certification / licensing > Emergency certification	-	1	1
Certification / licensing > Exceptions requests	-	1	1
Certification / licensing > Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	2	3	5
Certification / licensing > Home study process	2	1	3
Certification / licensing > Out-of-home care assessments	9	5	14
<i>Certification / licensing > Emotional (category retired)</i>	-	1	1
Certification / licensing > Safety concerns	4	8	12

Education > Information	1	1	2
Education > Placement	6	4	10
Education > Support	3	3	6
Finances > Support/Bank	-	2	2
Medical/Dental > Dental access	1	2	3
Medical/Dental > Medical access	3	5	8
Mental Health > Access	2	7	9
Mental Health > Crisis	-	1	1
Personal needs > Access to hygiene products	-	1	1
Personal needs > Clothing needs	-	1	1
Placement > Appropriateness of placement	2	12	14
Placement > Removal from current caretaker	3	5	8
Residential care > Rules	-	2	2
Residential care > Staff	-	4	4
Recreation/Activities/Employment > Access	1	-	1
Separation/Reunification > Belongings	1	1	2
Separation/Reunification > Continuation of svcs	1	1	2
Separation/Reunification > Notification of change	-	1	1
Separation/Reunification > Transition	23	15	38
Separation/Reunification > Visitation	15	15	30
Total	79	103	182

Legal / Due process	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Federal/state law or admin rule > Advocacy for change	1	1	2
Release of records / records requests > Timeliness	-	1	-
Total	1	2	2

Rights of...	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided w/ BoR at statutory intervals	-	1	1
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided with current, important contacts	-	1	1
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Transportation to Court/CRB	1	-	1
Foster Children Siblings ORS 418.608 / Maintain contact through visits and other comm	1	5	6

Foster Children Siblings ORS 418.608 / Placed together when safe and appropriate	2	-	2
Foster Children Siblings ORS 418.608 / Private, less restrictive contact as possible	1	-	1
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Included as a valued member of a team	1	4	5
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Receive support services	1	-	1
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Treated with dignity / respect	1	1	2
Total	8	12	20

Concerns Expressed by Current or Former Foster Youth as Reporter

In FY 2019, the Foster Care Ombudsman 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 Ombudsman. As with other concerns reported in FY 2019, these options were updated mid-year, making some related categories appear more than once. To highlight some reasons for these changes, however, a leading complaint since the establishment of the Foster Care Ombudsman has been “Foster Care – Child Welfare – Caseworker” while in future reports, you will see more specific concerns noted such as “Customer Service – Communication – Lack of Response,” which this office finds to be more specific and actionable.

Concern (3 Descending Categories)	Freq.	%
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Visitation	63	13.2
Foster Care - Child Welfare - Caseworker	44	9.2
Foster Care - Services - Self Advocate	33	6.9
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Safety concerns	22	4.6
Customer Service - Communication - Lack of response	19	4.0
Foster Care - Services - Comprehensive	19	4.0
Foster Care - Mental Health - Access	16	3.3
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Out-of-Home Care assessments	15	3.1
Foster Care - Medical/Dental - Medical Access	15	3.1
Foster Care - Placement - Appropriateness of placement	14	2.9
Foster Care - Education - Placement	11	2.3
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Notification of change	11	2.3
Customer Service - Communication - Timeliness	10	2.1

Foster Care - Rights - Access to	9	1.9
Foster Care - Placement - Removal from current caretaker	8	1.7
Foster Care - Medical/Dental - Dental Access	7	1.5
Customer Service - Staff Behavior - Professionalism	6	1.3
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Emotional	6	1.3
Foster Care - Education - Support	6	1.3
Rights of... - Foster Children Siblings 418.608 - Maintain contact through visits and other comm	6	1.3
Foster Care - Recreation/Activities/Employment - Access	5	1.0
Rights of... - Foster Parents ORS 418.648 - Included as a valued member of a team	5	1.0
Case Management - Ongoing case work - Permanency planning	4	0.8
Case Management - Permanency / Adoption - Sibling planning	4	0.8
Customer Service - Staff Behavior - Expertise / training	4	0.8
Foster Care - Residential care - Staff	4	0.8
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Belongings	4	0.8
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Continuation of svcs	4	0.8
Case Management - Ongoing case work - Services	3	0.6
Customer Service - Communication - Clarity	3	0.6
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	3	0.6
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Home study process	3	0.6
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Physical	3	0.6
Foster Care - Finances - Support/Bank	3	0.6
Foster Care - Child Welfare - Supervisor	3	0.6
Rights of... - Foster Children Siblings 418.608 - Placed together when safe and appropriate	3	0.6
Rights of... - Foster Children Siblings 418.608 - Private, less restrictive contact as appropriate	3	0.6
Child Welfare - Permanency - Current Caretaker Status	3	0.6
Case Management - Ongoing case work - Face to face contact	2	0.4
Confidentiality / Privacy - Personal information - Agency shared information inappropriately	2	0.4
Confidentiality / Privacy - Personal information - Provider shared information inappropriately	2	0.4
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Exceptions requests	2	0.4
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Sexual	2	0.4
Foster Care - Education - Information	2	0.4

Foster Care - Finances - Credit	2	0.4
Foster Care - Residential care - Rules	2	0.4
Foster Care - Rights - Notice of Court/CRB	2	0.4
Foster Care - Services - Involved	2	0.4
Legal / due process - Federal / state law or admin rule - Advocacy for change	2	0.4
Rights of... - Foster Parents ORS 418.648 - Have input into a permanency plan	2	0.4
Rights of... - Foster Parents ORS 418.648 - Treated with dignity / respect	2	0.4
Child Welfare - Adoption - Relative Preference	2	0.4
Child Welfare - Custody - Guardianship	2	0.4
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services - Allegation - Involuntary seclusion	1	0.2
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services - Allegation - Neglect	1	0.2
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services - Allegation - Physical	1	0.2
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services - Allegation - Sexual	1	0.2
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services - Investigative practice - Inappropriate lines of inquiry	1	0.2
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services - Investigative practice - Unwarranted/unreasonable investigation	1	0.2
Case Management - Administrative coordination / communication - Between central office and local staff	1	0.2
Case Management - Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children - Other state issues	1	0.2
Case Management - Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children - Timeliness	1	0.2
Case Management - Notification - Action agreement / letter of expectations	1	0.2
Case Management - Ongoing case work - Safety planning	1	0.2
Case Management - Payment or service denial - K-Plan	1	0.2
Case Management - Payment or service denial - Payment / benefit issue	1	0.2
Case Management - Permanency / Adoption - Adoptive placement	1	0.2
Confidentiality / Privacy - Health information - Agency shared information inappropriately	1	0.2
Confidentiality / Privacy - Health information - Community partner shared info inappropriately	1	0.2
Confidentiality / Privacy - Personal information - Community partner shared info inappropriately	1	0.2
Customer Service - Communication - Accuracy	1	0.2
Customer Service - Staff Behavior - Conflict of interest	1	0.2
Customer Service - Staff Behavior - Retaliation	1	0.2

Eligibility - Denial - Oregon Health Plan (OHP)	1	0.2
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Emergency certification	1	0.2
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Exploitation	1	0.2
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Neglect	1	0.2
Foster Care - Finances - Opportunities	1	0.2
Foster Care - Mental Health - Crisis	1	0.2
Foster Care - Mental Health - Refusal	1	0.2
Foster Care - Mental Health - Other	1	0.2
Foster Care - Personal needs - Access to hygiene products	1	0.2
Foster Care - Personal needs - Clothing needs	1	0.2
Foster Care - Services - Transportation	1	0.2
Legal / due process - Release of records / records requests - Timeliness	1	0.2
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Provided w/ BoR at statutory intervals	1	0.2
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Provided with current, important contacts	1	0.2
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Transportation to Court/CRB	1	0.2
Rights of... - Foster Parents ORS 418.648 - Receive support services	1	0.2
Child Welfare - Adoption - Customer Service	1	0.2
Child Welfare - Adoption - Sibling Split	1	0.2
Child Welfare - Adoption - Unknown	1	0.2
Child Welfare - Child Protective Services - Protective Action Plan	1	0.2
Child Welfare - Permanency - Adoptions & Safe Families Act	1	0.2
Child Welfare - Permanency - Grandparent Rights	1	0.2
Child Welfare - Permanency - Home Study	1	0.2
Customer Services CW - Child Protective Services - Customer Service - Staff Behavior	1	0.2

Where was the foster child residing?

Current Placement Status	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Behavioral Rehabilitative Services (BRS)	9*	9	6	14	38
Detention/Hospital	-	3	3	2	8
Guardianship	-	-	-	-	0
Homeless	-	-	-	-	0
Hotel/Office	-	-	-	1	1
IDD Foster Care	-	3	1	3	7
Non-Relative Foster Care	38	39	42	47	166
Not Applicable	12	15	9	21	57
Out of state BRS*	1	-	-	-	1
Relative Foster Care	10	10	12	11	43
Treatment Foster Care	1	-	3	-	4
Total	71	79	76	99	325

* Prior reports would have typically counted out of state placements as "Behavioral Rehabilitative Services" for a common reason a child is placed out of state and not in a home-like setting. For this and future reports, the FCO will intentionally track and report out cases involving youth placed in a facility outside of Oregon.

OUT OF STATE PLACEMENTS

In the spring of 2019 there were reports in the media about a high number of Oregon foster youth being placed in out of state facilities. As a result of this news, the Foster Care Ombudsman reached out to relevant Child Welfare staff to ensure that those youth were being issued their Bill of Rights with the contact information for the FCO.

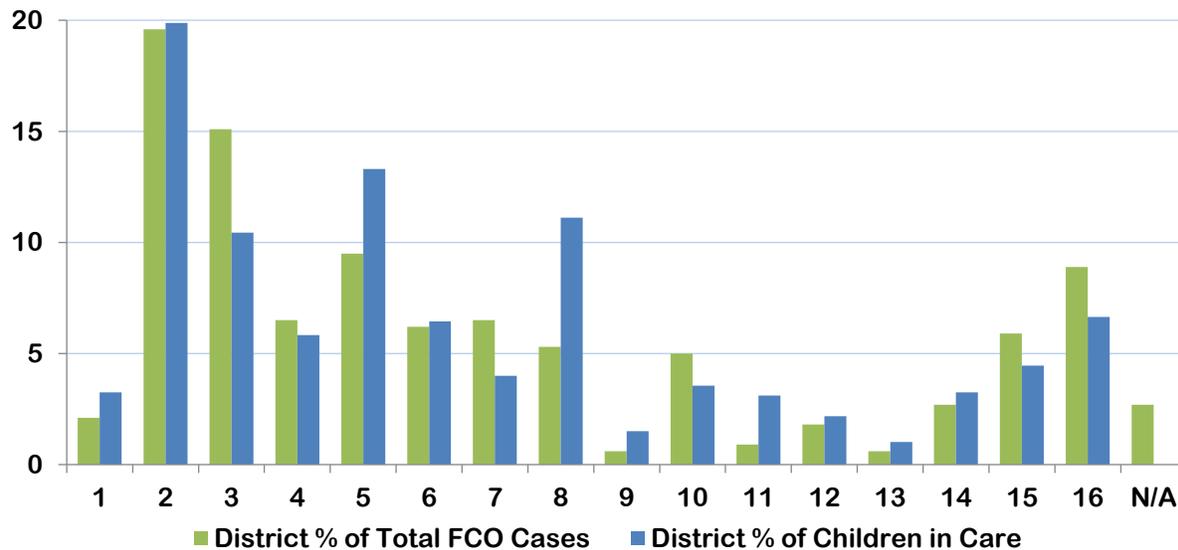
DHS Child Welfare Branch Location

DHS District / Counties	FCO Cases	District % of Total FCO Cases	Children in Foster Care on 9/30/18*	District % of Children in Care
1 Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook	7	2.1	250	3.3
2 Multnomah	66	19.6	1,525	19.9
3 Marion, Polk, Yamhill	51	15.1	801	10.4
4 Linn, Benton, Lincoln	22	6.5	447	5.8
5 Lane	32	9.5	1,021	13.3
6 Douglas	21	6.2	495	6.5
7 Coos, Curry	22	6.5	307	4.0
8 Jackson, Josephine	18	5.3	853	11.1
9 Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler	2	0.6	115	1.5
10 Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson	17	5	272	3.5
11 Klamath, Lake	3	0.9	239	3.1
12 Morrow, Umatilla	6	1.8	167	2.2
13 Baker, Union, Wallowa	2	0.6	78	1.0
14 Grant, Harney, Malheur	9	2.7	250	3.3
15 Clackamas	20	5.9	342	4.5
16 Washington	30	8.9	510	6.6
N/A	9	2.7	-	-
Total	337		7,672	

*Source: [Child Welfare Data Book](#) (2018, p.31)

Figure 1 (on the following page) compares the number of Foster Care Ombudsman cases for FY 2019 to the number of youth in care as of September 30, 2018. While this is not an apples-to-apples comparison, we use this data to assess the representation of the foster youth population in the Foster Care Ombudsman's work. As you can see, the number of cases has a close relationship to the number of Foster Youth in each DHS district.

Figure 1: Foster Care Ombudsman cases relative to DHS district % of children in care, FY 2019



What happened next?

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

When the Foster Care Ombudsman closes a case, the Ombudsman 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.

FOSTER YOUTH & COURT HEARINGS

The FCO was contacted by a youth who was not permitted to attend her Court hearings. The FCO challenged this decision with and the youth was transported and appeared at her hearing.

Resolution	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Consultation	29	30	17	20	96
Forwarded to Program / Policy Office	-	1	1	-	2
Inquiry / Information Only	-	-	-	1	1
No Action Taken	1	1	-	-	2
Not Valid	20	20	26	32	98
Unable to Contact	1	2	1	2	6
Unable to Determine	-	-	1	-	1
Valid/Not Resolved	2	7	1	5	15
Valid/Resolved	18	20	29	41	108
Total	71	81	76	101	329

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.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

A foster youth reported that their belongings from their last foster home were not transported to their new foster home. The FCO worked with the child welfare supervisor and ultimately all items were returned to the foster youth.

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.

Mandatory Reports and Referrals

Late in the fiscal year, the Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO), which includes the Foster Care Ombudsman, 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 DHS 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 have been 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	Freq.
Mandatory reporting - Child abuse report made	4
Mandatory reporting - Child Caring Agency report (ORS 418.260)	2
Other agency referrals - Human Resources	2
Other agency referrals - Information Security & Privacy Office (ISPO)	2

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 recording and reporting formal recommendations and will publish recommendations in future reports.