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## **State Fiscal Year 2020**

(July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020)

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## Table of Contents

<b>Section 1: Introduction</b> .....	3
The Role of an Ombudsman / Governor’s Advocacy Office .....	3
2020 Updates .....	5
<b>Section 2: The Numbers</b> .....	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? .....	9
What were contacts to the Foster Care Ombudsman about?.....	9
‘Concerns’ reported .....	10
‘Concerns’ from Foster Youth as Reporter.....	18
In what kind of setting was the foster youth residing? .....	17
ODHS Child Welfare branch location.....	20
What happened next? .....	21
Findings.....	22
Mandatory Reports and Referrals .....	24
Recommendations.....	23
<b>Appendix A:</b> Comparison to previous annual reports .....	25

## 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 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 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 2014, the Youth Empowerment and Safety (Y.E.S.) line 1-855-840-6036 was made active in concert with Foster Care Awareness month.

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.

*"Thank you, Darin. Your role in this is invaluable, and I can't thank you enough."*

**-A FOSTER PARENT who contacted the FCO as the Foster Parent for a sibling was not receptive to allowing sibling visitation per the *Sibling Bill of Rights*. The FCO was able to escalate the issue and Child Welfare intervened to facilitate sibling visits.**

**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 Oregon Department of Human Services (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 Ombudsman, Civil Rights and discrimination investigations and oversight the agency's formal complaint process.

**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, 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.

**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, 2020.)

## 2020 Updates

While the Foster Care Ombudsman and GAO primarily perform work through phone and email communication, the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 has limited the ability of the Foster Care Ombudsman to travel the state and meet with foster youth, community partners, and ODHS staff. We look forward to being able to meet with everyone again when it is safe to do so.

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

*"[FOSTER YOUTH] has gone from being behind to excelling! Thanks for your support! Children need voices!"*

-A RELATIVE FOSTER PLACEMENT who contacted the FCO about a 1<sup>st</sup> grader who was missing a significant amount of their school day in order to travel to and from visits. The FCO advocated that an alternative time for visits occur and value placed on the child being in school. Child Welfare was able to change the visit schedule and the child missed a minimal amount of school as a result.

## 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 20 Total
Cases Opened	84	82	98	68	332
Cases Closed	79	101	85	73	338

The person that contacts the Foster Care Ombudsman is identified as the “reporter.” For FY 2020 the population with most contacts to the Foster Care Ombudsman was Family Members (104), which includes parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. This category was followed closely by the combination of current and former Foster Parents (102).

Role of Reporter	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Advocate	4	6	6	2	18
Agency Business	1	4	4	3	12
Anonymous	0	0	0	0	0
Attorney	2	4	2	2	10
Community Partner	4	7	2	1	14
Contractor	0	0	0	0	0
Counselor	0	1	0	0	1
Current Foster Child	11	13	9	10	43
Current Foster Parent	15	24	17	18	74
Educational Personnel	2	2	2	0	6
Family Member (bio parent, grandparent, others)	24	24	32	24	104
Former Foster Child	3	5	3	3	14
Former Foster Parent	7	9	5	7	28

Friend	1	0	3	1	5
Guardian	0	0	0	0	0
Legislator	2	1	0	1	4
Neighbor	3	1	0	1	5
Regulatory Agency	0	0	0	0	0
Total	79	101	85	73	338

## 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.

***"THEY ARE HERE!!!! ... We picked them up from their temporary placement. Their first words when they saw us were 'Daddy! Mommy!' followed by hugs and kisses. Thank you for all the effort you went through to get them to us."***

**-FOSTER PARENT after the FCO advocated for two young foster youth to be placed back in their home when they had come back into care and were placed in a different home with non-relatives.**

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.

Gender of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Female	53	57	38	32	180
Male	24	42	42	40	148
Not Applicable	1	0	3	1	5
Transgender	1	2	2	0	5
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0
Total	79	101	85	73	338

Age of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
0 - 4	15	20	22	24	81
5 - 8	13	11	23	9	56
9 - 12	12	10	10	12	44
13 - 15	13	22	12	14	61
16 - 21	20	28	14	13	75
22 +	2	5	1	0	8
Unknown	1	2	0	0	3
Not applicable	3	3	3	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>338</b>

Race of Foster Child	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total	% FCO cases	% served in Foster Care*
American Indian/Alaska Native	3	5	6	7	21	6.2	5.7
Asian	1	0	1	0	2	.6	1.6
Black	9	10	6	6	31	9.2	5.7
Hispanic	11	6	10	6	33	9.8	17.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	2	0	1	4	1.2	4.5
Not Applicable	3	1	3	1	8	2.4	-
Unknown	5	8	2	4	19	5.6	3.7
White	46	69	57	48	220	65.1	66.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

\*Source: [Child Welfare Data Book](#) (2019, p.15).



### How did complainants contact the Foster Care Ombudsman?

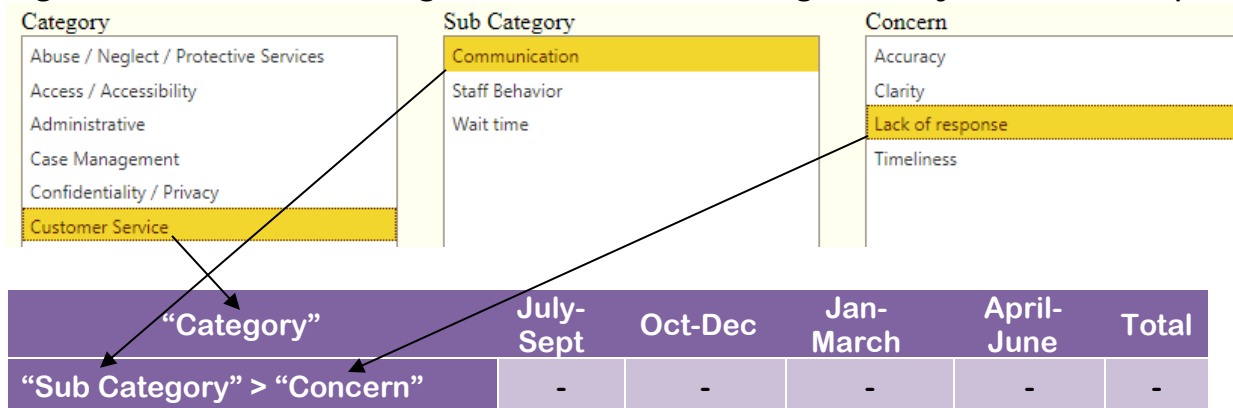
Most complainants reach the Foster Care Ombudsman through the Y.E.S. line, which stands for Youth, Empowerment and Safety, a direct phone line to the Ombudsman (1-855-840-6036). This line is published on the Foster Children’s Bill of Rights poster that is provided to all ODHS foster youth.

Method of Initial Contact	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Y.E.S. Line / Telephone	52	71	52	50	225
Email	26	29	32	22	109
In Person	1	1	0	0	2
Fax	0	0	1	1	2
Postal Mail	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>338</b>

### 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. 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	0	0	0	1
Allegation > Neglect	1	0	0	1	2
Allegation > Physical	3	1	0	0	4
Allegation > Sexual	1	1	1	0	3
Allegation > Wrongful use of a chemical or physical restraint	1	0	1	0	2
Hotline / Screening > Screening decision	1	0	0	1	2
Investigative practice > Appropriate person was not interviewed	0	0	1	0	1
Investigative practice > Inappropriate interview of child	0	1	1	0	2
Investigative practice > Inappropriate lines of inquiry	0	0	1	0	1
Investigative practice > Not enough collateral contacts	0	1	0	1	2
Investigative practice > Protective Services response to assignment	1	1	1	0	3
Investigative practice > Unwarranted / unreasonable investigation	0	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>

### Top 10 Concerns reported for FY 2020

1. Visitation (57)
2. Transitions (44)
3. Lack of response (from CW) (40)
4. Appropriateness of Placement (36)
5. Medical Access (21)
6. Safety Concerns (21)
7. Placement concerns not related to safety (20)
8. Ongoing case work – services (14)
9. Staff professionalism (13)
10. Sibling BoR: Maintaining contact (12)

Case Management	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Administrative coordination / communication > Between central office and local staff	0	1	0	0	1
Childrens' Trust > Payee not updated	0	1	0	0	1
Indian Child Welfare Act > Placement	0	0	0	0	0
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Coordination between states	0	2	0	0	2
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Other state issues	0	1	1	0	2
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) > Timeliness	0	3	0	0	3
Notification > Action agreement / letter of expectations	0	0	0	0	0
Notification > Notice not timely	0	0	0	1	1
Notification > Notification unclear / inaccurate	0	0	0	1	1
Ongoing case work > Documentation	0	0	1	0	1
Ongoing case work > Face to face contact	1	1	0	0	2
Ongoing case work > Permanency planning	1	2	0	3	6
Ongoing case work > Protective action plan	0	1	0	0	1
Ongoing case work > Safety planning	1	4	0	2	7

Ongoing case work > Services	3	7	2	2	14
Ongoing case work > Visits	0	1	0	1	2
Payment of service denial > Payment / benefit issue	0	0	0	1	1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoption assistance	0	1	0	0	1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA)	0	1	0	0	1
Permanency / Adoption > Adoptive placement	0	0	2	0	2
Permanency / Adoption > Disruption	0	0	1	0	1
Permanency / Adoption > Relative preference	0	0	0	1	1
Permanency / Adoption > Sibling planning	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>52</b>

Confidentiality / Privacy	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Health information > Agency shared inappropriately	1	0	0	0	1
Personal information > Agency shared inappropriately	2	1	2	1	6
Personal information > Provider shared inappropriately	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>

Customer Service	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Communication > Accuracy	0	1	2	2	5
Communication > Clarity	1	6	0	0	7
Communication > Lack of response	11	12	12	5	40
Communication > Timeliness	3	5	1	2	11
Staff Behavior > Conflict of interest	0	1	0	0	1
Staff Behavior > Expertise/training	1	2	1	1	5
Staff Behavior > Not Helpful	1	0	0	0	1
Staff Behavior > Professionalism	1	6	4	2	13
Staff Behavior > Retaliation	0	0	0	0	0
Staff Behavior > Unfair / unequal treatment	0	1	0	0	1
Wait time > In person	0	1	0	0	1
Wait time > On the phone	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>85</b>

Discrimination	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Gender > Bias	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

Foster Care	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Certification / licensing > Applicant counseled to withdraw	0	1	0	0	1
Certification / licensing > Denial	0	1	1	1	3
Certification / licensing > Emergency certification	0	1	0	0	1
Certification / licensing > Exceptions requests	0	0	1	1	2

Certification / licensing > Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	4	2	8	6	20
Certification / licensing > Foster provider has not received training	0	0	1	0	1
Certification / licensing > Home study process	0	2	2	0	4
Certification / licensing > Out-of-home care assessments	3	0	2	1	6
Certification / licensing > Revocation	0	0	0	1	1
Certification / licensing > Safety concerns	4	2	8	7	21
Certification / licensing > Timeliness	2	0	1	0	3
Education > Information	0	0	1	0	1
Education > Placement	3	1	5	2	11
Education > Support	0	2	4	0	6
Finances > Credit	0	2	0	0	2
Finances > Maintain	0	1	0	1	2
Medical/Dental > Dental Access	0	3	0	1	4
Medical/Dental > Medical Access	8	4	7	2	21
Mental Health > Access	3	2	2	1	8
Mental Health > CANS level	0	2	0	0	2
Personal needs > Access to hygiene products	1	0	1	0	2
Personal needs > Clothing needs	4	1	0	3	8
Personal needs > Dietary needs	1	0	0	0	1
Placement > Appropriateness of placement	13	7	5	11	36
Placement > Removal from current caretaker	1	0	0	1	2

Recreation/Activities/Employment > Access	1	1	0	1	3
Recreation/Activities/Employment > Support	0	1	0	0	1
Residential care > Rules	0	1	1	2	4
Residential care > Staff	3	5	1	4	13
Separation/Reunification > Belongings	4	4	0	2	10
Separation/Reunification > Continuation of svcs	1	1	0	0	2
Separation/Reunification > In-home safety plan	0	1	0	0	1
Separation/Reunification > Notification of change	0	0	0	1	1
Separation/Reunification > Transition	14	14	10	6	44
Separation/Reunification > Visitation	15	11	14	17	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>305</b>

Legal / Due process	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Custody > Agency involvement	0	2	0	0	2
Disposition or findings review > Did not receive disposition letter	0	1	0	0	1
Disposition or findings review > Founded review past due	0	1	0	1	2
Federal /state law or admin rule > Advocacy for change	1	3	4	0	8
Federal /state law or admin rule > Advocacy for new law / rule	0	0	1	0	1
Release of records / records requests > Fee waiver	0	0	1	0	1

Release of records / records requests > Records incomplete	0	1	0	0	1
Release of records / records requests > Request not granted	0	3	1	1	5
Release of records / records requests > Timeliness	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>

Rights of...	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Ability to file complaints without retaliation	0	1	0	0	1
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Notification of Court/CRB	2	1	1	0	4
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided w/ BoR at statutory intervals	1	3	0	1	5
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided with current, important contacts	1	1	1	0	3
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Provided with "How do I..." information	0	1	0	0	1
Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 > Transportation to Court/CRB	2	5	0	0	7
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Have a sibling contact plan	2	1	0	0	3



Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Maintain contact through visits and other comm	4	1	5	2	12
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Placed together when safe and appropriate	1	3	3	1	8
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Provided with transportation to maintain contact	2	0	0	0	2
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Provided with Sibling BoR timely	1	1	0	0	2
Foster Children Siblings 418.608 / Private, less restrictive contact as possible	0	0	0	1	1
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Have input into a permanency plan	0	1	2	0	3
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Included as a valued member of a team	0	2	1	0	3
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Informed of any condition...that affects FP	0	0	0	1	1
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Receive support services	0	3	0	0	3
Foster Parents ORS 418.648 > Treated with dignity / respect	0	1	0	1	2
Grandparents / Relatives > Relative contact	1	0	0	0	1
Grandparents / Relatives > Relative visitation	1	0	0	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>65</b>

## Concerns Expressed by Current or Former Foster Youth as Reporter

Beginning 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.

“Category – Sub Category – Concern” reported by Current or Former Foster Youth	Total	%
Customer Service - Communication - Lack of response	11	12.2
Foster Care - Residential care - Staff	11	12.2
Foster Care - Placement - Appropriateness of placement	7	7.8
Foster Care - Medical/Dental - Medical Access	5	5.6
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Belongings	4	4.4
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Transition	4	4.4
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Visitation	4	4.4
Customer Service - Communication - Clarity	3	3.3
Foster Care - Education - Placement	3	3.3
Case Management - Ongoing case work - Services	2	2.2
Customer Service - Communication - Timeliness	2	2.2
Customer Service - Staff Behavior - Professionalism	2	2.2
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Safety concerns	2	2.2
Foster Care - Personal needs - Clothing needs	2	2.2
Foster Care - Residential care - Rules	2	2.2
Legal / due process - Release of records / records requests - Request not granted	2	2.2
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Notification of Court/CRB	2	2.2
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Provided with current, important contacts	2	2.2
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Transportation to Court/CRB	2	2.2
Rights of... - Foster Children Siblings 418.608 - Maintain contact through visits and other comm	2	2.2
Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services - Allegation - Sexual	1	1.1
Case Management - Ongoing case work - Face to face contact	1	1.1
Case Management - Permanency / Adoption - Adoption assistance	1	1.1
Confidentiality / Privacy - Personal information - Agency shared information inappropriately	1	1.1

Customer Service - Staff Behavior - Not helpful	1	1.1
Customer Service - Staff Behavior - Unfair / Unequal treatment	1	1.1
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	1	1.1
Foster Care - Certification / licensing - Out-of-Home Care assessments	1	1.1
Foster Care - Education - Support	1	1.1
Foster Care - Finances - Maintain	1	1.1
Foster Care - Separation/Reunification - Continuation of svcs	1	1.1
Legal / due process - Release of records / records requests - Fee waiver	1	1.1
Legal / due process - Release of records / records requests - Timeliness	1	1.1
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Provided w/ BoR at statutory intervals	1	1.1
Rights of... - Foster Child / Children ORS 418.201 - Provided with 'How Do I...' information	1	1.1
Rights of... - Foster Children Siblings 418.608 - Private, less restrictive contact as appropriate	1	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	

### 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)	16	19	6	9	50
Detention/Hospital	0	4	1	1	6
Guardianship	0	0	0	0	0
Homeless	0	0	0	0	0
Hotel/Office	0	0	1	1	2
IDD Foster Care	2	1	2	3	8
Non-Relative Foster Care	34	44	45	32	155
Not Applicable	16	23	13	8	60
Out of state BRS	0	0	0	0	0
Relative Foster Care	10	9	16	18	53
Treatment Foster Care	1	1	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>338</b>

## ODHS Child Welfare Branch Location

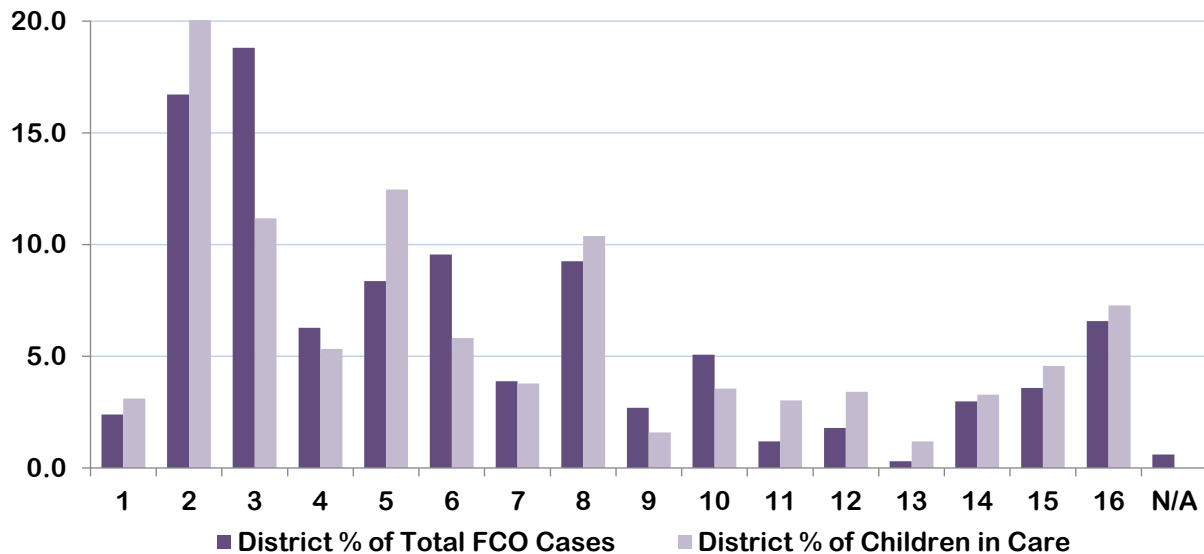
ODHS District / Counties	FCO Cases	District % of Total FCO Cases	Children in Foster Care on 9/30/19*	District % of Children in Care
1 Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook	7	2.1	250	3.3
2 Multnomah	66	19.6	1,525	19.9
3 Marion, Polk, Yamhill	51	15.1	801	10.4
4 Linn, Benton, Lincoln	22	6.5	447	5.8
5 Lane	32	9.5	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	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>		<b>7672</b>	

\*Source: [Child Welfare Data Book](#) (2019, p.31). **Note:** total number of "Children in Foster Care" in source document appears not to match the total in our third column. This is because the source document shields numbers below a certain threshold to protect the confidentiality of youth. Our data include all counties for which Child Welfare reported data.

A FATHER contacted the FCO to share that his daughter was expressing that she does not want to attend church with the Foster Parents. The FCO was able to have the supervisor talk with the foster youth privately and learned that in fact she did not want to attend church. As a result, the youth was able to engage in alternative activities while the Foster Parents attended church services.

Figure 1 (on the following page) compares the number of Foster Care Ombudsman cases for FY 2020 to the number of foster 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 ODHS district.

**Figure 2: Foster Care Ombudsman cases relative to ODHS district % of children in care, FY 2020**



### 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.

**A FOSTER PARENT contacted the FCO with a concern that the foster youth was having a negative outcome before and after visits with family. The FCO helped navigate this issue with the child’s therapist and a written recommendation was submitted to the Court where the Judge ordered that visitation be discontinued.**

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.

## Findings

Resolution	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-March	April-June	Total
Consultation	19	20	36	31	106
Forwarded to Program / Policy Office	1	0	2	2	5
Inquiry / Information Only	0	0	0	0	0
No Action Taken	0	0	0	0	0
Not Valid	30	33	49	23	135
Unable to Contact	1	0	0	2	3
Unable to Determine	0	0	1	0	1
Valid/Not Resolved	5	7	8	2	22
Valid/Resolved	27	42	38	31	138
Total	83	102	134	91	410

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 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.

## Mandatory Reports and Referrals

In FY 2019 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 ODHS 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 - Child abuse report made (ORS 419B.010)	7	5	3	7	22
Mandatory reporting - Child Caring Agency report (ORS 418.260)	0	2	1	3	6
Other agency referrals - Human Resources	0	1	2	1	4
Other agency referrals - Information Security & Privacy Office (ISPO)	0	0	0	0	0
Other agency referrals - Overpayment/Fraud	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>

## Recommendations

As a part of quarterly reporting to the ODHS Director and Child Welfare Director, the Foster Care Ombudsman's recommendations are shared with ODHS administration and local management based on the findings of the office. The Foster Care Ombudsman 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.

**A FOSTER PARENT contacted the FCO with a concern that the foster youth was not being allowed back into school without releasing their mental health records. The FCO spoke with the school administration and advocated that the youth return without providing this confidential information. The youth was allowed to return without providing the confidential records.**



## Appendix A: Comparison to previous annual reports

Previous reports may be found in full at:

<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/aboutdhs/pages/fostercare-ombudsman.aspx>

The best attempt has been made to make comparisons across years, though several slight changes to GAO reporting will be noted across certain 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
Cases Opened	237	289	328	336	332
Cases Closed	125*	289	307	324	338

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

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

*\*\*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
Female	54	173	165	164	180
Male	58	103	137	141	148
Transgender	1	5	2	1	5
Unknown	1	8	3	4	0
Not applicable	-	-	-	14	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>114*</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>338</b>

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

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

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

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

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

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