



Foster Care Ombuds Annual Report

GAO activity - Foster Care Ombuds cases closed comparison 2023

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

FCO Cases Closed by ODHS Program

Case Program Type	2023
ODHS - SSP - SNAP	1
ODHS-Child Welfare	354
ODHS-Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	11
ODHS-OTIS/Licensing	3
OHA-Mental Health	1
Total	370

Total days from case open to close

Open Range	2023
02 days or less	17
03 to 10 Days	50
11 to 20 Days	49
21 to 30 Days	20
31 to 60 Days	107
61 to 90 Days	83
90+ Days	44
Total	370

How FCO heard about concerns

Case Intake SubType	2023
Y.E.S. line	141
Direct to Ombuds	75
FCO.info	64
GAO main line	58
GAO Info	13
Governor's Office	5
ODHS Info	3
Direct Mail	2
GAO.CR	2
ODHS Director's Office	2
ODHS/OHA Program	2
Other	2
Unknown	1
Total	370



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

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

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

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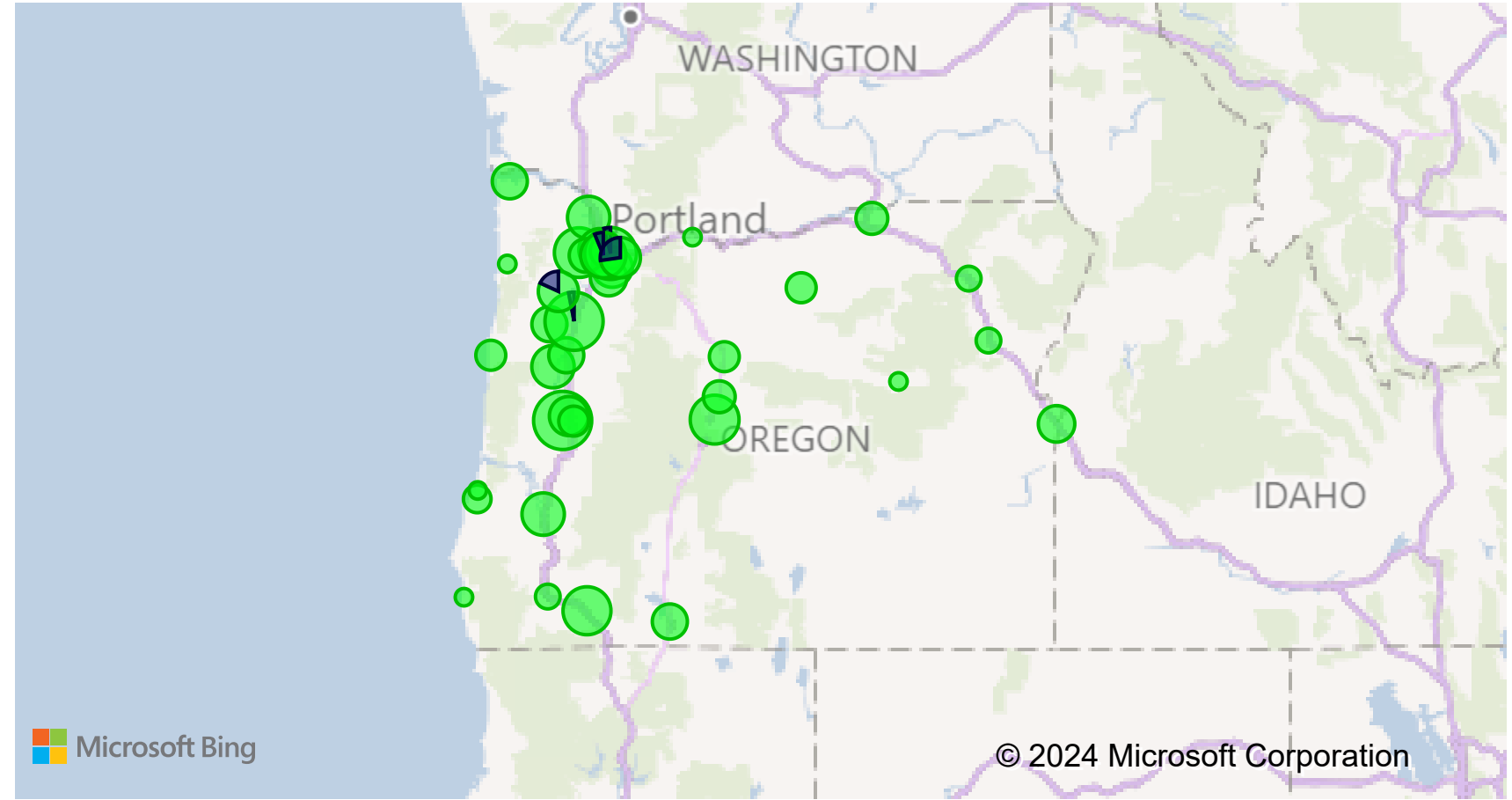
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The GAO tracks cases by branch location of the Foster Youth's case. This information is tracked periodically and annually to see how well it aligns with the number of Foster Youth in the community.

ODHS branch location (county)

County	2023
MULTNOMAH	61
LANE	48
MARION	43
DESCHUTES	25
WASHINGTON	21
CLACKAMAS	19
JACKSON	19
BENTON	13
COLUMBIA	13
DOUGLAS	13
YAMHILL	11
MALHUER	8
CLATSOP	7
KLAMATH	7
LINN	7
POLK	7
	6
UMATILLA	5
COOS	4
HARNEY	4
JEFFERSON	4
LINCOLN	4
WHEELER	4
BAKER	2
JOSEPHINE	2
UNION	2
CURRY	1
GRANT	1
HOOD RIVER	1
TILLAMOOK	1
Total	370

Child Welfare Branch by ZIP code



● ODHS-Child Welfare ● ODHS-Intellectual and Developmental Disa...
**the county appearing blank represents a branch in Washington County. This is a known bug in our reporting system and we have requested a fix.*

Foster Youth Placement Setting

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substitute care (FCO Only)	370
Non Relative Foster Care	160
Relative Foster Care	59
Not Applicable	47
In-Home Plan	33
I/DD Foster Home	15
Self-Selected Environment	13
BRS Residential	11
Detention/Hospital	11
Treatment Foster Care	9
Guardianship	7
Hotel/Office	4
Total	370

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

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Foster Youth Information and Demographics

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

Race / Ethnicity

Foster Youth Race / Ethnicity	2023
American Indian/Alaska Native	40
Asian	2
Black or African American	41
Did Not Answer	1
Hispanic/Latino	82
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	7
Unknown	28
White	353
Total	554

Gender

Foster Youth Gender	2023
Female	239
Male	214
Non-binary	2
Transgender	11
Unknown	
Total	466

Age

Participant Age Group at Closure	2023
Group 0: Unknown	1
Group 1: 0-4	302
Group 2: 5-8	102
Group 3: 9-12	48
Group 4: 13-15	5
Group 5: 16-21	1
Group 6: 22-64	6
Group 7: 65+	1
Total	466

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Role of the 'Reporter'

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

Role of the 'Reporter'

Role / Relationship to Foster Youth	2023
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocate	10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attorney	10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Partner	33
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current Foster Child	17
<input type="checkbox"/> Current Foster Parent	88
Adoptive Parent	1
Foster Care Provider	3
Foster Parent	79
Grandparent	2
Self	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational Personnel	6
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Member	141
Adoptive Parent	7
Biological Child	1
Biological Parent	56
Grandparent	45
Incarcerated Parent	3
Other Family Member	25
Self	1
Sibling	1
Step Parent	2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Former Foster Child	10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Former Foster Parent	35
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Friend	8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guardian	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legislator	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neighbor	4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regulatory Agency	1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unknown	5
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Case Concerns

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

Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Allegation	
Emotional	1
Exploitation	1
Failure to protect	1
Involuntary seclusion	1
Neglect	3
Physical	3
Threat of Harm	1
Wrongful use of a physical or chemical restraint	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Disposition	
Founded	3
Unfounded	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotline/Screening	
Family Support Services (FSS)	1
Outcome not shared with reporter	2
Screening decision	10
<input type="checkbox"/> Investigative practice	
Appropriate person was not interviewed	2
Inappropriate interview of child	2
Inappropriate lines of inquiry	1
Not enough collateral contacts	3
Outside of timelines	4
Protective Services response to assignment	13
Total	58

Case Management

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing case work	
Safety planning	33
Services	20
Permanency planning	13
Face to face contact	4
Documentation	1
Visits	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanency / Adoption	
Adoption committee review	2
Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA)	2
Adoption assistance	1
Adoptive placement	1
Disruption	1
Mediation	1
Relative preference	1
Sibling planning	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Payment or service denial	
Payment / benefit issue	5
K-Plan	1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notification	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	
Timeliness	1
Total	91

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Case Concerns (continued)

Confidentiality / Privacy

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal information	
Agency shared information inappropriately	3
Agency made inappropriate request	1
Community partner shared info inappropriately	1
Provider shared information inappropriately	1
Total	6

Customer Service

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	
Lack of response	38
Accuracy	7
Clarity	5
Timeliness	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Behavior	
Professionalism	10
Not helpful	3
Bias	2
Expertise / training	2
Retaliation	2
Total	70

Discrimination

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
Total	

Eligibility

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Denial	
General Assistance (GA)	1
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	1
Total	2

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Case Concerns (continued)

Foster Care

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Separation/Reunification	
Visitation	33
Transition	15
Belongings	2
Continuation of svcs	1
In-home safety plan	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Certification / licensing	
Foster placement concerns (not related to safety)	16
Safety concerns	13
Exceptions requests	6
Out-of-Home Care assessments	4
Home study process	3
Applicant counseled to withdraw	2
Emergency certification	2
Revocation	2
Denial	1
Timeliness	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Placement	
Appropriateness of placement	30
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical/Dental	
Medical Access	10
Dental Access	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	
Information	3
Support	3
Placement	2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finances	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health	
Access	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal needs	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation/Activities/Employment	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residential care	1
Total	171

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Case Concerns (continued)

Legal / Due Process

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Disposition or findings review	9
Did not receive disposition letter	8
Not eligible for review-timelines	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal / state law or admin rule	4
Advocacy for change	3
Advocacy for new law / rule	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Release of records / records requests	4
Timeliness	2
Not a legal party	1
Records inaccurate	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Termination of parental rights	3
Legal process	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Custody	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship	1
Guardianship assistance	1
Total	23

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

Concern SubCategory Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Children Siblings 418.608	22
Have a sibling contact plan	1
Maintain contact through visits and other comm	11
Placed together when safe and appropriate	8
Private, less restrictive contact as appropriate	1
Provided with transportation to maintain contact	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Parents ORS 418.648	11
Included as a valued member of a team	3
Receive support services	2
Treated with dignity / respect	6
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents 419B.875 / Relatives	18
Consideration for placement / relative search	3
Notification of Court hearings	8
Relative visitation	7
Total	51

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Case Concerns (continued)

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

Concerns from Current or Former Foster Youth as 'Reporter'

Concern Category Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Care	14
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	5
Information	3
Support	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal needs	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Placement	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Certification / licensing	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Finances	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical/Dental	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/Activities/Employment	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Separation/Reunification	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Case Management	7
<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing case work	7
<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Background check	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Customer Service	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Behavior	1
Professionalism	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal / due process	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Release of records / records requests	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Abuse / Neglect / Protective Services	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Allegation	1
Wrongful use of a physical or chemical restraint	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Rights of...	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Children Siblings 418.608	1
Total	29

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Case Resolutions

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

FCO Findings

Case Unit	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Care Ombuds	482
Consultation	195
Not Valid	133
Valid/Resolved	123
Valid/Not Resolved	24
Unable to contact complainant	4
No Action Taken	2
Forwarded to Program Office	1
Total	482

Ombuds Action

Concern Category Type	2023
<input type="checkbox"/> GAO action	11
<input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory reporting	6
Child abuse report made	4
Child Caring Agency report (ORS 418.260)	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Other agency referrals	5
Human Resources	3
Office of Public Defense Services (OPDS)	2
Total	11

Recommendations

Case Program Type	2023
ODHS-Child Welfare	13
OHA-Mental Health	1
Total	14

Glossary of frequently used terms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GAO Findings Defined

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

Educating the Public Findings

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

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

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

Case Resolution Findings

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

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

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

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