



**CHILD PROTECTION**  
**OMBUDSMAN**  
of COLORADO

**Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**

**Fiscal Year 2017-2018**

**Performance Management System**

**August 1, 2017**

**Stephanie Villafuerte,**  
**Child Protection Ombudsman**

# Table of Contents

Background .....	3
Mission .....	3
Vision .....	3
Major Agency Functions .....	4
Role of the CPO .....	4
Responsibilities of the CPO .....	4
Performance Management System .....	5
Strategic Policy Initiatives .....	6
Conclusion and Timeline.....	10

## **Background**

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) was established in June 2010, under Senate Bill 10-171. This legislation provided that the CPO would operate as a program through a contract with a local non-profit agency, issued and managed by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS).

Senate Bill 10-171 was passed in response to the deaths of 12 children in Colorado who were known to child protection services. The deaths of these children in 2007 sparked an outcry by the public that there be greater oversight, accountability and transparency of the child protection system in Colorado. The public demanded to know more about how the systems charged with protecting Colorado's children were keeping them safe and working to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Years after the CPO's creation, legislators determined that CPO needed independence from the agencies it was designed to review. So, on June 2, 2015, Senate Bill 15-204, *Concerning the Independent Functioning of the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman*, was signed into law. This legislation transformed the original "program" into a distinct and independent state agency. The new, independent CPO opened in 2016.

The concept of an ombudsman dates back hundreds of years and is designed to provide citizens with an independent, unbiased and trusted intermediary between the public and an entity. In a similar fashion, the CPO works to provide a clear channel between the citizens of Colorado and the agencies and providers tasked with protecting children. The CPO is guided by standards set by organizations such as the United States Ombudsman Association and the American Bar Association. Using those standards, the CPO serves the public by independently gathering information, investigating complaints and providing recommendations to child protection agencies and providers.

To ensure the accountability and transparency of the CPO and the Ombudsman, the legislature also created the Child Protection Ombudsman Board (CPO Board) in 2015. The CPO Board was the first of its kind in the nation. By law, the CPO Board is required to oversee the Ombudsman's performance and act as an advisory body on strategic direction and outreach decisions by the CPO.

The CPO is now housed within the Colorado State Judicial Branch and is located at the Ralph L. Carr Judicial Center in Denver. Colorado's current Child Protection Ombudsman, Stephanie Villafuerte, was appointed in December 2015 by the CPO Board. Ombudsman Villafuerte took office in January 2016.

## **Mission**

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman works to improve the safety, permanency and well-being of Colorado's children by investigating complaints, delivering recommendations and driving systemic reform in the child protection system.

## **Vision**

Ensuring safety for Colorado's children today and envisioning a stronger child protection system for the future.

## **Major Agency Functions**

### **Role of the CPO**

By design, the CPO serves as an independent, neutral problem solver that helps citizens navigate a complex child protection system in an expert and timely manner. The CPO has independent access to child protection records that are not otherwise available to the public. This allows the CPO to objectively review and investigate complaints, deliver recommendations and drive systemic reform through research and education. Through objective study the CPO works to improve the delivery of services to children and families within the child protection system.

### **Responsibilities of the CPO**

The CPO was established pursuant to C.R.S. 19-3.3-101. In addition to providing all citizens free and confidential services, the CPO provides citizens and stakeholders four primary services.

**NAVIGATE** – The CPO helps citizens navigate the child protection system and directs them towards needed services and resources. Citizens often contact the CPO with questions about how a child protection agency/provider functions or which system provides a certain service. If the CPO determines that a citizen’s inquiry does not contain a complaint alleging violations by an agency/provider, the CPO will help resolve their question by providing either systems navigation or a resource referral.

**INVESTIGATE** – The CPO objectively researches and investigates concerns about the delivery of services to children and families within the child protection system. If the CPO determines that a complaint about an agency/provider within the child protection system includes allegations that rules or laws were violated in the delivery of services to children, the CPO will open an investigation. During an investigation CPO staff will conduct a comprehensive, independent study of relevant facts, records and witness statements. The CPO’s investigations may include a single agency/provider or multiple systems impacting multiple families in Colorado.

**ILLUMINATE** – The CPO’s work illuminates the strengths and weaknesses within the child protection system that are directly impacting the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families. By publicly releasing investigation reports, violations and data, the CPO provides citizens and stakeholders with the information necessary to maintain a transparent and accountable child protection system.

**REFORM** – The CPO will make recommendations to the public, child protection agencies/providers, the General Assembly and the Governor that help reform and improve outcomes for children and families.

## **Performance Management System**

### **Introduction**

The CPO's Performance Management System is designed to ensure CPO staff maintain continuous communication concerning progress in achieving the key metrics outlined in the CPO's Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan. This system will also provide CPO staff the opportunity to discuss any needed adjustments to the agency's strategy for completing the key metrics.

### **Task Management and Progress Communication**

**DAPULSE** – During the past fiscal year, the CPO employed the program Dapulse. The web-based project tracking and sharing program allowed CPO staff members to efficiently share their ongoing work, provide progress updates and new initiatives. Each task is assigned to, or created by, a specific staff member and includes a due date and brief description. The program allowed the CPO to avoid lengthy progress meetings and streamlined communications. If a staff member encountered a roadblock, they noted the issue in the program and prompted a problem solving discussion with the appropriate individuals. The CPO will continue to use Dapulse during Fiscal Year 2017-2018. The Ombudsman and staff will regularly update their project lists in Dapulse to ensure information is up to date and complete.

**BI-WEEKLY STAFF MEETINGS** – CPO staff hold hour-long staff meetings every other week. In addition to the capabilities of Dapulse, these meetings are designed to discuss ongoing projects and upcoming events. As these discussions relate to the CPO's Strategic Policy Initiatives, any progress will be reflected in one of the CPO's two performance evaluations.

**QUARTERLY SMART ACT MEETINGS** – Each quarter, the CPO will hold a meeting with all staff to determine the status of each key metrics outlined in the CPO's Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan. Unlike the bi-weekly staff meetings, these quarterly meetings are dedicated to discussing projects and progress related to the CPO's three strategic policy initiatives. Summaries of these meetings will be reflected in the CPO's Annual Performance Report and Performance Evaluations. They will also be included in the CPO's presentations to the Joint Judiciary Committee.

**CPO DATABASE** – The CPO launched its new database in June 2017. The new system will allow the CPO to efficiently and accurately determine whether it is meeting the deadlines outlined in its Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan.

## **Strategic Policy Initiatives**

A total of three strategic policy initiatives, five strategies and 14 critical processes were outlined in the CPO’s Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan.

The CPO received at least 564 contacts during Fiscal Year 2016-2017. While the high demand for one-on-one services continues, so does the necessity for the CPO to tackle complex, systemic issues facing the child protection system. During Fiscal Year 2016-2017, the CPO opened two cases involving statewide issues affecting the child protection system. These two investigations are the first of their kind and require significant staff time to complete. To date, staff have dedicated hundreds of hours, contacted dozens of agencies and reviewed thousands of pages of documents in these two ongoing cases. The findings and recommendations that will be made in these two cases have the potential to greatly improve the delivery of services to multiple families by multiple agencies. As a result, the strategic policy initiatives outlined in the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan are designed to position the CPO in a place where it has the necessary resources and practices to handle large systemic cases while maintaining a high quality of service for citizens seeking one-on-one assistance.

<b>1</b>	<b>STRATEGIC POLICY INITIATIVE: Improve communication methods and increase outreach campaigns to better educate and engage citizens and stakeholders on issues facing the child protection system.</b>
----------	--

The CPO is statutorily required to educate citizens and stakeholders “concerning child maltreatment and the role of the community in strengthening families and keeping children safe.” See C.R.S. 19-3.3-103(2)(c). During the past fiscal year, the CPO worked to identify ways to become more accessible to the public and improve the transparency of its work. The strategies, critical process and key metrics outlined below are designed to ensure the CPO is fulfilling its mandate.

<b>STRATEGY ONE: Create more consistent, timely and informative methods of communicating the CPO’s work to citizens and stakeholders.</b>
<b>Critical Process – Produce and release quarterly reports.</b>
<b>Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Produce and release two CPO Quarterly Reports. (First report to be released in April 2018.)</li><li>• Re-tool report formats as necessary.</li></ul>
<b>Critical Process – Complete investigation reports and investigative briefings using standardized templates and post finalized documents to the website in a timely fashion.</b>
<b>Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100 percent of the CPO’s reports and briefings will be produced using a standardized template.</li><li>• 80 percent of CPO reports will be posted to the website within 72 business hours of finalization.</li><li>• 100 percent of CPO briefings will be posted to the website within 48 business hours of finalization.</li><li>• Assess any needed changes to report formats and public release practices.</li></ul>

**Critical Process – Develop and maintain a Dashboard page on the CPO’s website that provides citizens and stakeholders access to CPO data.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Launch Dashboard. (Launch expected in July 2017.)
- Assess improvements and needs of the Dashboard page.
- Update data in Dashboard during the first week of every month.

**Critical Process – Ensure transparency regarding the CPO’s ongoing work by consistently updating and posting public notifications of pending investigations, investigative briefings and legislative updates.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Update the list of public notifications on the Pending Cases page of the CPO’s website bi-weekly.
- 70 percent of investigative briefings will be completed and posted to the Investigative Briefings page of the CPO’s website within the 60-day deadline set in the CPO’s *Case Practices and Operating Procedures*.
- Update the CPO’s bill tracker every Monday during legislative session.

**Critical Process – Improve communication with legislators concerning issues the CPO has identified and provide consistent and timely communication of CPO findings and recommendations.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Create policy for consistently sharing information with legislators, including an email listserv.
- Create listserv that includes all legislators.
- Provided informational reports and investigation reports directly to legislators.
- Provide information about the ongoing work the CPO is doing and how to access that information on the website.

**STRATEGY TWO: Expand outreach efforts and improve campaigns to better engage and serve communities less familiar with CPO services.**

**Critical Process – Increase engagement with foster and adoptive parents, kinship providers, children and juveniles, mandatory reporters and the child protection legal community through education and outreach campaigns.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Identify organizations and agencies/providers – which the CPO has not previously partnered with – that serve the five identified communities.
- Distribute CPO literature to all agencies/providers and organizations identified.
- Develop a strategic plan to connect with identified organizations and agencies/providers. Schedule speaking and informational meetings.
- Complete outreach campaigns with four of the organizations and agencies/providers.

**Critical Process – Increase engagement with agencies/providers and organizations in rural communities through education and outreach campaigns.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Distribute CPO literature to all child welfare departments and judicial districts in the state.
- Complete two outreach campaigns in different rural judicial districts. During those campaigns engage with entities such as, child welfare departments, court improvement programs, school districts, regional hospitals and law enforcement.
- Create listserv of all rural agencies/providers and organizations.

**Critical Process – Expand services to the Spanish-speaking community through increased outreach and improved accessibility.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Distribute Spanish literature to all county child welfare departments and all judicial districts.
- Create the capability to view a Spanish version of the CPO website.

**2**

**STRATEGIC POLICY INITIATIVE: Implement practices that ensure the CPO manages its caseload efficiently and effectively, allotting staff the necessary time and resources to investigate systemic concerns.**

During Fiscal Year 2016-2017, individual CPO staff members managed an average caseload of at least 50 open cases a month. Those cases varied from less complicated inquiries about child protection systems, to investigations that involved allegations of rule and law violations by multiple agencies. The demand for CPO services has increased steadily since the agency’s inception, as has the breadth and complexity of issues presented to the CPO.

To facilitate systemic reform through comprehensive investigations and inclusive policy resolution, the CPO must create more efficient methods of recognizing complex cases sooner and resolving less complicated cases faster. The strategy below will help the CPO achieve this goal and ensure that the quality of services is maintained.

**STRATEGY ONE: Implement practices and procedures that will decrease the amount of time investigations are open and conversely increase the amount of time CPO staff dedicate to systemic issues affecting the child protections system.**

**Critical Process – Streamline the process for identifying inquiries that result in systems navigation or a resource referral and close such inquiries in a timely manner.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- 90 percent of inquiries resulting in systems navigation or a resource referral will be closed within 10 business days of receiving the inquiry.

**Critical Process – Meet deadlines for completing investigations, as stated in the CPO’s *Case Practices and Operating Procedures*.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- 80 percent of CPO investigations will be closed within the 60-business day deadline. (This figure does not include investigations in which investigative briefings are completed.)

**Critical Process – Utilize data to identify trends in the child protection system to launch investigations sooner.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Create and implement a policy that requires CPO staff – on a reoccurring and scheduled basis – to analyze data and individual caseloads to identify trends or issues that need to be investigated.



### 3

**STRATEGIC POLICY INITIATIVE: Increase the expertise and resources needed to investigate and research systemic issues within the child protection system.**

The CPO is charged with recommending systemic changes to “improve the safety of and promote better outcomes for children and families receiving child protection services in Colorado.” See C.R.S. 19-3.3-103(2)(e). To date, the CPO has identified several systemic issues affecting the delivery of services to children and families within the child protection system. The CPO launched two statewide investigations regarding such issues. In addition, the CPO dedicates substantial staff time to collaborating with stakeholders and completing independent research to identify and monitor concerns both central and peripheral to the child protection system. However, during Fiscal Year 2016-2015, it became clear that limited staff and resources will narrow the opportunities the CPO has to fulfill its role of driving change in those areas.

**STRATEGY ONE: Expand expertise and resources to ensure the CPO is fulfilling its mandated charge of investigating systemic issues and driving reform across the child protection system.**

**Critical Process – Analyze whether systemic issues warrant additional staff and expertise.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Hire new child protection systems analyst.
- Redistribute caseloads and reassess best approaches to systemic investigations and research.

**Critical Process – Use expertise of staff to complete outreach in relevant areas.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Child protection system analyst with expertise in the DYC will aid in outreach efforts and identifying systemic issues within this area.

**STRATEGY TWO: Improve how the CPO tracks and analyzes its recommendations to agencies/providers.**

**Critical Process – Design and implement system to track status of CPO recommendations.**

**Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:**

- Create and implement a policy that allows the CPO to track recommendations and determine whether they have been implemented.

## **Conclusion and Timeline**

The Child Protection Ombudsman respectfully submits this report to the Joint Budget Committee and the General Assembly, as is required under C.R.S. 2-7-204. The Office will comply with its requirements under the statute and will submit the required reports and evaluations.

<b>June 2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and write Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan.</li> <li>• Submit and post Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>July 2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and write Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Management System.</li> </ul>
<b>August 2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit and post Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Management System.</li> </ul>
<b>October 2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and write Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Report.</li> <li>• Hold first quarter review meeting with Ombudsman and staff.</li> </ul>
<b>November 2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit and post Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Report.</li> </ul>
<b>December 2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold second quarter review meeting with Ombudsman and staff.</li> <li>• Research and write Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Quarter Two Performance Evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>January 2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit and post Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Quarter Two Performance Evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>March 2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold third quarter review meeting with Ombudsman and staff.</li> <li>• Research and write Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Quarter Three Performance Evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>April 2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit and post Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Quarter Three Performance Evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>June 2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and write Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Performance Plan.</li> </ul>