



CHILD PROTECTION
OMBUDSMAN
of COLORADO

Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman

Fiscal Year 2018-2019

Quarter Three Performance Evaluation

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Strategic Policy Initiatives

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) developed three Strategic Policy Initiatives (SPI) during Fiscal Year 2017-18. The SPI are designed to ensure the CPO has the necessary resources and practices to address system-wide issues affecting the child protection system, while also providing a high quality of service for citizens seeking one-on-one assistance. The SPI created by the CPO – designed to guide the agency for a minimum of three fiscal years – focus on three areas of the CPO's work: communication and outreach, efficient and impactful practices and expanding expertise. To create meaningful change within the child protection system, the CPO must continue accommodating the breadth and complexity of the issues affecting children and families in Colorado.

The CPO achieved new strides during Fiscal Year 2017-18, making it the agency's most impactful year yet. From improving communication to increasing resources, the CPO made progress in each of the areas defined in the Fiscal Year 2017-18 Performance Plan. Information derived from CPO cases is now delivered to citizens and stakeholders through consistent mechanisms and templates. Communication between the CPO and agencies/providers is more open and productive than in previous years. The CPO received 611 inquiries from citizens during Fiscal Year 2017-18 – a new record for the agency.

The CPO implemented its *Case Practices and Operating Procedures* on July 1, 2017. These practices and procedures were designed to ensure the CPO handles the demand for its services in an efficient and effective manner. To continue improving how the CPO serves citizens and fulfills its statutory charge, the CPO scheduled a staff retreat in May 2018 and began a scheduled review of its *Case Practices and Operating Procedures*. As a result, the CPO revised portions of its *Case Practices and Operating Procedures* and implemented the revised policies in July 2018. To ensure the CPO is utilizing the tools and guidance provided in the SMART Act, the CPO's Fiscal Year 2018-19 Performance Plan was revised to accommodate the changes to its *Case Practices and Operating Procedures*. The majority of the changes focus on giving the CPO more flexibility to achieve strong outcomes for families, allowing the CPO to be more proactive in addressing issues and ensuring that issues identified by the CPO are resolved and systems are improved. The CPO has adjusted a number of Key Metrics within SPI Two to accommodate growth under its revised *Case Practices and Operating Procedures*.

The CPO meets weekly to discuss agency operations and determine how the agency is progressing in achieving its SPI. The CPO's [Fiscal Year 2018-19 Performance Plan](#) and [Fiscal Year 2018-19 Performance Management System](#) are frequently reviewed by CPO staff. The CPO used its weekly discussions and Performance Plan to write its Quarter Three Performance Evaluation. Below is an update on the CPO's progress in achieving the Key Metrics outlined for Fiscal Year 2018-19. The updates reflect data as of April 10, 2019.

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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.

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). The CPO has identified the following Strategies and Critical Processes as ways to become more accessible to the public and improve the consistency in which it shares its work with citizens and stakeholders. The Strategies, Critical Processes and Key Metrics outlined below are designed to ensure the CPO is fulfilling its mandate to educate the public regarding issues affecting the child protection system.

STRATEGY ONE: Maintain consistent, timely and informative methods of communicating the CPO’s work to citizens and stakeholders.

Critical Process – Produce and release quarterly reports.

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- Produce and release two CPO Quarterly Reports.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO anticipates releasing its first quarterly report during the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-19.

Quarter Three: During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-19, the CPO started the process of hiring a communications firm to help create a strategic communication plan. This plan will help the CPO meet its statutory requirements to communicate with and educate the public, stakeholders and legislators about the CPO’s work and findings. A central goal in creating this plan is to implement consistent and timely communication methods, which may include a quarterly report or newsletter. As such, the CPO has postponed launching its quarterly reports until the communication plan is complete. This critical process will be incorporated into the CPO’s Fiscal Year 2019-20 Performance Plan.

Critical Process – Complete investigation reports and case briefings using standardized templates and post finalized documents to the website in a timely fashion.

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- 100 percent of CPO’s reports will be posted to the website within 48 business hours of finalization.
- Develop a notification system to alert a list of subscribers when briefings and reports are posted to the website.
- Assess any needed changes to report formats and public release practices.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO continues to assess its templates for the case briefings and is developing a template for letters addressing compliance concerns. To date, the CPO has posted all its case briefings to its website within 48 business hours of completion.

Quarter Three: To date, the CPO has posted all of the case briefings completed in Fiscal Year 2018-19 to the website within 48 business hours of completion. Currently, the CPO is re-designing its case brief template. The new template will help ensure all case briefs contain a standard set of information and will help streamline the process for producing these documents.

Additionally, during Quarter Three, the CPO launched a [new page on its website](#). This page houses the CPO's letters of compliance concern. Such letters are produced when the CPO identifies possible violations of law or rule by an agency or provider. To date, all the letters of compliance concern have been posted to the website within 48 business hours of completion.

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 2018-2019:

- Launch Dashboard on CPO website.
- Assess improvements and needs of the Dashboard page.
- Update data in Dashboard during the first week of every month.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO initiated steps to improve its database. These improvements are key to developing the CPO's online dashboard. Once the database improvements are complete, the CPO will begin working with its web developer to finalize and launch the dashboard.

Quarter Three: During Quarter Three, the CPO completed the necessary improvements to its database. With the implementation of these improvements, the CPO's database now accurately reflects the CPO's services and operating procedures. The database now includes sections that allow analysts to more effectively track their interactions with citizens. Following the completion of the database updates, the CPO worked with its website developer and its database developer to produce a final cost estimate and timeline for completing the online Dashboard. The CPO will work with both developers during Quarter Four to build and launch the online Dashboard prior to end of Fiscal Year 2018-19.

Critical Process – Ensure transparency regarding the CPO's ongoing work by consistently updating and posting public notifications of pending cases, case briefings and legislative updates.

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- Update the list of public notifications on the Pending Cases page of the CPO's website weekly.
- Adjust the Pending Cases page of the CPO's website as necessary and improve functions that are confusing or inefficient.
- 100 percent of case briefings will be completed and posted to the Case Briefings page of the CPO's website within the 60-day deadline set in the CPO's *Case Practices and Operating Procedures*.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO continues to update its Pending Cases page on a bi-weekly basis. During Quarter One, the CPO filled two new full-time positions. These positions will allow the CPO to adjust the workload of staff members and, in turn, ensure the data used to update the page is pulled on a weekly basis. The CPO anticipates switching to weekly updates during the third or fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

Quarter Three: The CPO continues to update its Pending Cases page on a bi-weekly basis. During the second and third quarters of Fiscal Year 2018-19, the CPO continued to adjust workloads to accommodate new and departing staff members. Given these shifting workloads, the CPO will continue to update the Pending Cases page on a bi-weekly basis through the end of Fiscal Year 2018-19. This Key Metric will be incorporated into the CPO's Fiscal Year 2019-20 Performance Plan.

Currently, the CPO is re-designing its case brief template. The new template will help ensure all case briefs contain a standard set of information and will help streamline the process for producing these documents.

Critical Process – Continue to 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 2018-2019:

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

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: As the 2019 Legislative Session approaches, the CPO will dedicate significant time to strategizing how it will effectively communicate with legislators and stakeholders. The CPO is currently working with two stakeholder groups and various legislators in preparation for the upcoming session.

Quarter Three: During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-19, the CPO started the process of hiring a communications firm to help create a strategic communication plan. This plan will help the CPO meet its statutory requirements to communicate with and educate the public, stakeholders and legislators about the CPO’s work and findings. The CPO expects to have a communication plan in-hand before the end of Fiscal Year 2018-19. The CPO will begin implementing elements of the communication plan during Fiscal Year 2019-20.

During Quarter Three, the CPO hired a contract employee to develop a strategic plan that will help the CPO prioritize, promote and complete its public policy initiatives. The public policy plan will be completed by the end of Fiscal Year 2018-19. This plan will include methods for communicating and coordinating with legislators regarding child protection issues identified by the CPO, and methods for creating effective change.

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

Critical Process – Continue to 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 2018-2019:

- 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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: During Quarter One, the CPO filled a new position designed to address complaints and issues involving the state’s Division of Youth Services (DYS). This employee has started devising an outreach strategy to connect with citizens and stakeholders involved with the DHS. Additionally, the Ombudsman worked with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) to address compliance questions regarding the state’s mandatory reporting statutes.

Quarter Three: The CPO’s Chief Analyst for the DHS completed significant outreach during quarters two and three. This employee has visited three facilities since joining the CPO and has attended half a dozen meetings with juvenile justice stakeholders and DHS leadership.

During the Quarter Three, the CPO started the process of hiring a communications firm to help create a strategic communication plan. This plan will help the CPO focus its education efforts on issues and stakeholder communities the CPO has had less contact with.

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

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- 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 a listserv of all rural agencies/providers and organizations.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: During Quarter One, the CPO held its annual out-of-town board meeting in Alamosa, Colorado. While in Alamosa, CPO staff and the Ombudsman met with roughly a dozen agencies and providers, including human services, child advocates, judges, county attorneys, Guardians ad litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). Since visiting southern Colorado, the CPO has continued to work with several of these agencies. This meeting is one of the two outreach campaigns the CPO has planned for Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

Quarter Three: During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-19, the CPO started the process of hiring a communications firm to help create a strategic communication plan. This plan will help the CPO concentrate its outreach on geographic areas where the CPO and its services have had less exposure. Additionally, the CPO will develop a strategic plan during Quarter Four to help the agency streamline its public policy initiatives. This plan will include methods for increasing collaboration with stakeholders in rural areas.

During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-19, the CPO began compiling a list of stakeholders across Colorado. The document includes contact information, location and a list of events and opportunities to engage with that agency or provider. This list will play an important role in creating the CPO’s strategic plans for communication and public policy priorities.

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

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- 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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO has no updates for this Critical Process.

Quarter Three: The CPO and its website developer are working to determine the best application for creating a Spanish version of the CPO website. Once the CPO's strategic communication plan is complete, the CPO will work to finalize new literature and materials. The CPO will then work to create and distribute literature printed in Spanish and will distribute such materials accordingly. This critical process will be incorporated into the CPO's Fiscal Year 2019-20 Performance Plan.

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.

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 recognize complex cases quickly and resolve 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 number of open Information/Resource Referrals and Assists and conversely increase the amount of time CPO staff dedicate to systemic issues affecting the child protection system.

Critical Process – Streamline the process for identifying inquiries that result in Information/Resource Referral or Assists and close such cases in a timely manner.

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- 80 percent of inquiries resulting in an Information/Resource Referral will be closed within 30 business days of receiving the inquiry.
- 80 percent of inquiries resulting in Assists will be closed within 60 business days.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO has started tracking this data and will continue to do so throughout Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

Quarter Three: The CPO has continued to track this data. The agency will compile and analyze this data prior to the completion of its Fiscal Year 2019-20 Performance Report. It will report whether the CPO completed these key metrics in the CPO's Fiscal Year 2019-20 Performance Report.

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

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

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

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO has implemented a tracking system for all investigation reports. CPO staff continue to produce case briefings when appropriate and the CPO is tracking these cases to monitor compliance with the 60-business day deadline.

Quarter Three: CPO staff continued working on two investigation reports during quarters two and three. Each of those reports will be released during Quarter Four of Fiscal Year 2018-19. Both cases extended beyond the 60-business day deadline. Case briefs explaining the timeline for each case were posted to the website.

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

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- Continue holding weekly Case Staffing meetings.
- Develop an electronic system for tracking trends and issues identified by staff.
- Launch one investigation based on information gained from data collected from cases involving Assists.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: Staff continue to hold weekly case staffings to discuss cases and issues identified by analysts. During Quarter One, the CPO opened an investigation based on a series of inquiries received by the CPO. The CPO is working to develop a function in its database which will allow staff to log and track issues effectively.

Quarter Three: Staff continue to hold weekly case staffings to discuss cases and issues identified by analysts. During Quarter Three, the CPO implemented a new function in its database that allows analysts to note when a case involved a specific issue. This now gives the CPO the ability to pull reports which will help the CPO identify case trends sooner.

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). These recommendations are often included in the CPO’s investigation reports. An investigation is the most time and resource intensive service the CPO provides. To ensure the CPO is completing these cases in a timely manner and maintaining a quality of work that will drive change within the child protection system, the agency must ensure its staff are both capable and well-equipped.

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 2018-2019:

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

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO hired two child protection systems analysts during Quarter One. As a result, the agency now has eight full-time employees. CPO staff are working to assess caseloads and workflow. This analysis is part of the CPO’s efforts to ensure the agency is operating efficiently and effectively.

Quarter Three: During Quarter Three, two child protection systems analysts left the agency. Their departures provided the CPO with an opportunity to assess its needs and caseloads. The CPO has hired a new child protection systems analyst who will start with the agency on May 1, 2019. This analyst's caseload will be comprised primarily of child welfare cases. The CPO will continue to assess caseloads and workflow to determine its staff needs and best use of the remaining position.

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

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

- As the expertise of current staff grow, and/or the CPO gains additional staff, CPO staff will aid in outreach efforts and identifying systemic issues within their given area of expertise. These areas of expertise may include, DYS, mental health or child welfare.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: Both child protection systems analysts hired during Quarter One have extensive experience and expertise regarding the systems that comprise DYS, mental health and child welfare. During the next two quarters, these analysts will be charged with developing effective communication strategies for their respective specialties.

Quarter Three: The CPO's chief analyst for the DYS has continued to build the CPO's new program. Additionally, the CPO's incoming child protection analyst has experience and expertise regarding public health programs and initiatives, in addition to child welfare services.

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

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

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

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

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: A system for tracking recommendations and appropriate follow-up with agencies is one element of the improvements the CPO plans to make to its database during Quarter Two.

Quarter Three: The CPO finished implementing updates to its database during Quarter Three. One of these improvements allows CPO staff to enter notes for each recommendation indicating whether that recommendation has been implemented.

Conclusion

The 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 CPO will comply with its requirements under the statute and will submit the required reports and evaluations.