



CHILD PROTECTION
OMBUDSMAN
of COLORADO

Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman

Fiscal Year 2017-2018

Quarter Two Performance Evaluation

January 11, 2018

**Stephanie Villafuerte,
Child Protection Ombudsman**

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 cases involving statewide issues affecting the child protection system. These 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 ongoing cases. The findings and recommendations that will be made in these 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.

The CPO staff met in January 2018 to determine how the agency is progressing in achieving its strategic policy initiatives. The CPO's [Performance Plan](#), [Performance Management System](#) and [Quarter One Performance Evaluation](#) were reviewed. The CPO used that analysis and discussion to write its Quarter Two Performance Evaluation.

A complete report of the CPO's strategic policy initiatives – including outcome metrics – may be found in the CPO's [Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Performance Plan](#). Below is an update on the CPO's progress in achieving the Key Metrics outlined for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. The updates reflect data as of January 11, 2018.

1

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). 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 processes and key metrics outlined below are designed to ensure the CPO is fulfilling its mandate.

STRATEGY ONE: Create more 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 2017-2018:

- Produce and release two CPO Quarterly Reports. (First report to be released in April 2018.)
- Re-tool report formats as necessary.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO has started building a template for its quarterly reports and a distribution list. The CPO will draft its first quarterly report in February 2018.

Quarter Two: A selection of topics for the CPO's first quarterly report have been selected. During Quarter Three, the CPO will select the final topics and draft its first quarterly report in February 2018. The CPO will also finalize its distribution list and seek stakeholder input for data and topics that would be beneficial to include.

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

Key Metrics During Fiscal Year 2017-2018:

- 100 percent of the CPO's reports and briefings will be produced using a standardized template.
- 80 percent of CPO reports will be posted to the website within 72 business hours of finalization.
- 100 percent of CPO briefings will be posted to the website within 48 business hours of finalization.
- Assess any needed changes to report formats and public release practices.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO finalized the standardized templates for its investigative briefings and investigation reports. Since July 1, 2017, the CPO has released one investigative report and one investigative briefing using these templates. (Those documents may be found on the CPO's website.)

Quarter Two: The CPO has continued to use the standardized template created in Quarter One. During Quarter Two, the CPO released three investigation reports, 2016-2074, 2016-2553 and 2016-2296. All three investigation reports were posted to the CPO's website within 72 business hours of receiving the agency/provider's final responses. One of these three reports – 2016-2074 – was the CPO's first statewide, systemic investigation regarding Colorado's adoption assistance program. The CPO utilized a different report format for this investigation report. The unique report format was deemed necessary for effectively conveying this investigation. The CPO will likely create unique report formats for all statewide or systemic investigation report in the future.

Also during Quarter Two, the CPO released two investigative briefings (2017-2630 and 2017-2736). Both investigative briefings were posted to the CPO's website within 48 hours of finalization and were completed using the CPO's standardized templates. (The documents mentioned above are available on the CPO's website.)

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: In September 2017, the CPO finalized the program in its case management system that provides the necessary information for the CPO's Dashboard page. Currently, the CPO is working on implementing an intuitive and informative webpage that will allow citizens to utilize this data. Delays in completing the data report account for the delay in launching the CPO Dashboard page.

Quarter Two: The CPO has created the Dashboard page, finalized the theme and the information that will be shared on the page. Currently, the CPO is working to ensure that the data reports pulling from the CPO's internal case management system accurately represent the CPO's work. The CPO expects the Dashboard to launch early during Quarter Three.

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: Currently, the CPO is updating its Pending Cases page on a bi-weekly basis. This practice has been in place since July 1, 2017. The CPO also completed and posted its first investigative briefing in September 2017. This investigative briefing was posted within the CPO's 60-day deadline.

Quarter Two: The CPO continued updating its Pending Cases page on a bi-weekly basis during Quarter Two. To accommodate staff availability, the CPO has started updating the page every other Tuesday, as opposed to every other Monday.

The CPO released two investigative briefings during Quarter Two. The investigative briefing for case 2017-2630 was released 67 business days after the case was opened – seven days beyond the CPO's policy. The briefing for case 2017-2736 was released 31 business days after the case was opened, well within the deadline of 60-business days.

The CPO will begin updating its Bill Tracker page after the 2018 General Assembly convenes and legislation is introduced.

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: In addition to improving and increasing the information available to legislators on its website, the CPO has started drafting a strategic communication policy for the upcoming legislative session. This policy includes all the key metrics created for this critical process, and additional communication strategies.

Quarter Two: The CPO continued to collect legislators updated and preferred email addresses for the distribution listserv. Legislators were all provided a copy of the CPO’s investigation report regarding its investigation of Colorado’s adoption assistance program. The CPO has also submitted an application to the Rocky Mountain Children’s Law Center to present during the 2018 Children’s Caucus. Child Protection Ombudsman Villafuerte held roughly a dozen meetings with legislators during Quarter Two to update them on the ongoing work of the CPO, as well as goals for the 2018 legislative session.

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: CPO staff is currently completing a list of organizations and agencies/providers within these communities to determine which engagement opportunities would be most impactful. During Quarter One, the CPO scheduled educational meetings with representatives from the child protection legal community and the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

Quarter Two: The CPO held a round table discussion with representatives from the child protection legal community during Quarter Two. To ensure ongoing communication and coordination with this stakeholder group, the CPO will be hosting a monthly meeting for the group.

The completion and release of the CPO’s investigation report regarding the state’s adoption assistance program served as a catalyst to expand outreach efforts with the foster and adoptive parent community. The CPO is working with various stakeholder groups within this community to distribute the investigation report and continue improving this program. The CPO has also attended several meetings of the Governor’s Cabinet Youth Education Task Force to discuss educational outcomes for foster youth.

The CPO has continued its outreach to the DYS. As a result, the DYS will now feature the CPO’s information on its website for juveniles and families.

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: During Quarter One, the Ombudsman traveled to southwest Colorado to visit with directors of seven county human services departments. The CPO is currently in the process of revamping its literature to provide to all county human services departments.

Quarter Two: The CPO has no updates from Quarter Two regarding this critical process.

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO has translated text featured in its literature and is working to create brochures in Spanish. Once completed, the Spanish brochures will be distributed to all county human services departments as well as other agencies and organizations.

Quarter Two: The CPO has no updates from Quarter Two regarding this critical process.

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 protection 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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: During Quarter One, the CPO started the process of hiring a part-time child protection systems analyst. This position is intended to ensure all child protection systems analysts and the deputy ombudsman have caseloads that are manageable, and staff are able to effectively and efficiently close inquiries that result in a systems navigation or a resource referral.

Quarter Two: Since the start of Fiscal Year 2017-2018, a total of 68 cases have resulted in the CPO providing the service of systems navigation or resource referral. A review of those cases found that 13 percent – nine cases – were closed more than 10 business days after the inquiry was received. The average time those nine cases were opened was 27 business days.

During Quarter Two, the CPO's newest systems analyst was hired and has assumed part of the CPO's caseload. Kristin Pietsch joined the CPO staff on November 1, 2017.

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.)

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: The CPO has implemented a tracking system for all investigation reports. Using this new system, CPO staff may track when a case is being researched, when the report is being drafted and edited and deadlines for the report's completion and release dates.

Quarter Two: Since the start of Fiscal Year 2017-2018, the CPO has closed 120 investigations. In total, eleven cases were closed beyond the 60-business day deadline and without an investigative briefing. (Investigative briefings were issued for two cases – 2017-2571 and 2017-2630 – which were closed beyond the 60-business day deadline.) The average length of a case open beyond the 60-business day deadline was 66 business days.

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: CPO staff have implemented weekly case staffing meetings. Every week, child protection systems analysts present their new cases to the Ombudsman. During those meetings, the

CPO staff will note and discuss any reoccurring trends or issues that warrant further study or investigation.

Quarter Two: The CPO has continued to hold case staffings. During Quarter Two, the CPO's case staffings became more structured to ensure cases were discussed and analyzed thoroughly and efficiently. While data analysis was not completed during Quarter Two, the CPO plans to incorporate these discussions into the weekly case staffings during Quarter Three. On January 24, the CPO will discuss what data should be routinely analyzed by staff.

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 2016-2017, 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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: During Quarter One, the CPO started the process of hiring a part-time child protection systems analyst.

Quarter Two: During Quarter Two, the CPO hired a part-time child protection systems analyst. Kristin Pietsch started at the CPO on November 1, 2017. The CPO's current caseload was redistributed and the CPO is monitoring the effectiveness of that distribution. During Quarter Three, the CPO will determine whether the current distribution of cases is sufficient in ensuring all cases – individual and systemic – are completed thoroughly and within the CPO's deadlines.

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 DYS will aid in outreach efforts and identifying systemic issues within this area.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: Child Protection Systems Analyst, Caroline Parker, joined the CPO staff full-time on August 1, 2017. Since that date, Ms. Parker has focused her efforts on studying the Division of Youth Services (DYS), completing outreach and researching potential systemic issues. During Quarter One, Ms. Parker held or scheduled half a dozen outreach meetings with representatives of organizations and agencies/providers within this area.

Quarter Two: Child Protection Systems Analyst, Caroline Parker, started the fiscal year with a focus on the DHS. During October 2017, the workload of this analyst was diverted to cover a major systemic investigation into licensed residential child care facilities (RCCFs). There are more than 230 licensed facilities in Colorado. This analyst will now be dedicated to pursuing complaints in this area leaving a lack of staff to address DHS issues. The CPO has been aware for many months that youth in DHS experience a variety of problems, including improper discipline and inadequate care including mental health treatment. Stakeholders indicated the CPO would be best suited to investigate more than two dozen cases involving such issues. However, with Ms. Parker's attention diverted to RCCFs in Colorado, the CPO has been unable to take on these cases. As a result, the CPO has submitted a budget amendment to its funding request for Fiscal Year 2018-2019. The amendment requests one FTE who would be dedicated to investigation issues within the DHS. This position is in addition to the two FTE the CPO requested in its original Budget Request.

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.

Status: ONGOING

Quarter One: Beginning July 1, 2017, the CPO started assigning each recommendation it issues a unique identification number. Each recommendation is also posted to the CPO's website. The CPO will continue monitoring these systems and adjust as necessary. During Quarter Two, the CPO will reach out to agencies/providers for input on efficient methods for tracking recommendations and proper ways of releasing those results. The CPO will also create an internal system that will allow CPO staff to log and track recommendations.

Quarter Two: The CPO has continued to assess how to best coordinate with stakeholders regarding this Critical Process. Currently, the CPO plans to discuss this issue with its Board to determine whether a working group should be formed to discuss the CPO's authority and role in following up on recommendations it issues to agencies and providers.

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.