



CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN

**FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021
QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

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Child Protection Ombudsman**

Fiscal Year 2020-21 Strategic Policy Initiatives

The CPO is pleased to share this Quarter Two Performance Evaluation that tracks the agency's performance on its Strategic Policy Initiatives (SPI). SPI help to ensure that the Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) is effectively and efficiently implementing practices to address system-wide issues impacting the child protection system, while also providing a high quality of service for citizens seeking one-on-one assistance.¹ SPI are intended to guide the agency's work for multiple fiscal years. To create meaningful change, the CPO regularly updates SPI as the needs and resources of the agency expand, and as the field of child protection changes.

Though Quarter Two Performance Evaluations are intended to summarize agencies' performance on SPI from October 1st through December 31st, the CPO is sharing information from July 1st through December 31st – effectively covering both the first and second quarters of the Fiscal Year (FY). The CPO is overseen by the CPO Board and agency staff routinely provide public updates regarding the agency's performance during bi-monthly board meetings.² Due to the amount of reporting required of the agency, the CPO is meeting the requirements of C.R.S. §2-7-204 by publishing two quarterly evaluations per year; however, as indicated each report will present performance information regarding two quarters.

In its FY 2020-21 Performance Plan, the CPO identified three SPI to help guide the agency's work in the areas of communication and outreach, efficient and impactful practices, expanding expertise and promoting best practices. They include:

- Targeting communications and engagements to better educate and serve citizens and stakeholders.
- Implementing practices that ensure the CPO manages its caseload efficiently and effectively, allotting staff the necessary time and resources to research systemic concerns.
- Establishing the CPO as a leader in information gathering and dissemination as it relates to issues facing the child protection system.

Each SPI has corresponding *strategies*, *critical processes* and *key metrics* that help demonstrate the CPO's performance towards achieving the SPI. These are detailed later in this document.

Key takeaways from quarter one and quarter two of FY 2020-21 include how the agency:

- Expanded its presence across the state through robust outreach campaigns. Outreach campaigns are providing communities across Colorado and child-focused organizations – such as the Division of Youth Services (DYS), the Division of Child Welfare and county departments of human services – CPO service and contact information. Outreach efforts have impacted the CPO's caseloads, which have increased by 48 percent.³
- Established an ongoing staff development series that focuses on promoting staff's cultural competency. The CPO is committed to integrating the principals of diversity, equity and inclusion into its work to ensure robust services for all Coloradans.
- Streamlined operational practices to support staff working remotely. During the pandemic, CPO staff have leveraged technology to work without interruption to ensure the delivery of high-

¹ The CPO's statutory charge, including its powers and duties, can be found in C.R.S. §19-3.3-101 through 110.

² CPO Board meeting minutes can be accessed online at <https://coloradocpo.org/staff-board/>.

³ A comparison of caseload totals spanning two six-month time periods, one during the pandemic and one from the previous fiscal year, shows that the CPO's caseloads have increased 47.87 percent. The CPO reviewed case information to determine whether increases were due to COVID-19 impacts and determined that the focus of calls were not solely or predominately related to COVID-19.

quality service to children and families in Colorado.

The CPO is committed to establishing and tracking performance metrics. Please reach out to the CPO with any questions or for additional information.

SPI 1: TARGET COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS TO BETTER EDUCATE AND SERVE CITIZENS AND STAKEHOLDERS.

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, critical processes, key metrics and outcomes as ways to become more accessible to the public and improve the consistency in which it shares its work with citizens and stakeholders.

Strategy: Provide consistent, timely and informative communications to citizens and stakeholders on issues facing the child protection system.

Critical Process: Complete, publish and provide notices of CPO products in a timely fashion.⁴

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Ensure CPO products are placed on the CPO’s website in a timely manner.
- Develop a notification system to notify the public/stakeholders of new products released by the CPO (e.g., Mailchimp notification system).

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of notifications sent to the public/stakeholders.
- The CPO will track that it is posting products to the website in a timely manner.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

The global pandemic required the CPO to adjust several timelines, including two of its Special Initiatives. Though the projects were postponed, the majority of the CPO’s work products during quarter one and quarter two – such as blog posts and notices of public meetings – were published in accordance with internal timelines. To notify the public and stakeholders of new CPO work product, Mailchimp was used to email newsletters four times over the course of both quarters.

Additionally, in quarter one, the CPO provided county departments of human services individualized reports detailing the number of cases the CPO worked on and the resolution of each case. Departments shared that these reports are helpful and the CPO plans to continue providing these reports to ensure its work is continuously communicated to county departments.

The CPO is working to further complete, publish and provide notices of CPO products in a timely fashion and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

⁴ CPO products include any written reports or other publications detailing issues reviewed by the CPO. These may include recommendations for system improvement.

Critical Process: Communicate issues the CPO has identified to legislators by providing consistent and timely notices of the CPO’s findings and recommendations.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Send legislators a survey asking about their interest, and their constituents’ interest, in child protection issues.
- Analyze data regarding interests to develop and target communications.
- Provide a CPO orientation presentation for new members of the General Assembly during Quarter Two.
- Provide all legislators with a presentation detailing the CPO’s work, including issues identified by the CPO.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of engagements.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During both quarters, the CPO developed a survey for legislators. It was the CPO’s plan to disseminate the survey during quarter two; however, in response to the global pandemic, the General Assembly held an Extraordinary Session from November 30, 2020 through December 2, 2020 that required the CPO to postpone its dissemination. Additionally, at the end of quarter two, it was indicated that the First Regular Session of the Seventy-third General Assembly plans to convene on January 13, 2021 and then promptly recess until February 16, 2021. The CPO has identified the recess between mid-January and mid-February as a prime opportunity to contact legislators and therefore plans to disseminate the survey in quarter three. Once the survey is disseminated, the CPO will analyze data and follow-up with interested legislators to schedule orientation presentations. It is also anticipated that during quarter three and/or four the CPO will be able to present to interested legislators issues identified by the CPO, as the CPO is scheduled to present to the Joint Judiciary committee and is working to present to the Senate and House committees focused on health and human services.

The CPO is working to further communicate issues the CPO has identified to legislators and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

Critical Process: Communicate issues the CPO has identified to stakeholders and/or ensure CPO representation in stakeholder meetings.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Attend stakeholder meetings related to child protection issues.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The total number of CPO stakeholder meetings per quarter.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During both quarters, the CPO attended stakeholder meetings and ensured issues identified by the CPO were communicated to relevant stakeholders. Meetings were held virtually due to the global pandemic. During quarter one, CPO staff virtually attended 78 stakeholder meetings, comprising of:

- 3 CPO facilitated meetings;
- 29 external committee meetings; and
- 46 general meetings.

CPO facilitated meetings give the agency the opportunity to guide stakeholder conversations and raise questions, when applicable. External committees provide CPO staff an opportunity to learn more from stakeholders about their work, resources and needs. General meetings often include engaging specific members of state agencies and community organizations to discuss collaborations, CPO work products and/or to learn more from stakeholders about their work, resources and needs.

At this time, data to calculate the total number of meetings attended during quarter two is not available; however, it is anticipated that the data will be available by the end of January 2021. Additionally, in quarter two, the CPO developed a webinar that was sponsored by the United States Ombudsman Association and the American Bar Association to provide information to stakeholders about ombudsmen and their work, especially in response to COVID-19. Several members of Colorado's General Assembly attended the seminar, as did staff from county departments of human services.

The CPO is working to further communicate issues the CPO has identified to stakeholders and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

Strategy: Engage with communities to expand the CPO's statewide presence, to identify emerging issues in child protection and to develop community-specific services.

Critical Process: Engage directly with youth impacted by the child protection system to increase services provided directly to youth clients.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Distribute youth-specific materials describing the CPO's services to all agencies, providers and communities serving youth in out-of-home placements.
- Distribute youth-specific materials describing the CPO's services to all DYS youth centers.
- Complete outreach campaigns to increase the CPO's direct contact with youth clients, including those in DYS youth centers and out-of-home placements.
- Meet with youth in DYS youth centers, foster homes, group homes and residential facilities to survey how to best communicate with youths.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The total number of engagements (e.g., calls from youths, CPO visits, etc.).

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During both quarters, the CPO focused on engaging with youth in DYS' youth centers. The CPO ensured that the "blue phones" located in each center allow youth to call the CPO, directly and toll-free, to raise concerns. Additionally, the CPO delivered 260 informational posters – written in Spanish and English – to the Division of Youth Services Central Headquarters for staff to disseminate to each center. Digital copies of the posters were also posted to the DYS' website. The CPO also worked with the DYS to ensure student handbooks were updated to reflect how youth can contact the CPO and to ensure the CPO's contact information is available on each youth center's website. During quarter one, the CPO received four calls from youth in youth centers, and in quarter two it received 16.

Additionally, during quarter one, the CPO updated its website to provide youth in out-of-home placements or youth placed within youth centers information about the CPO, how to file a complaint and how complaints are resolved. Information was posted on a youth-specific webpage and includes an explanatory video. The webpage can be accessed at the following link: <https://coloradocpo.org/youth>.

The CPO is working to further engage directly with youth impacted by the child protection system and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

Critical Process: Identify and respond to the needs of youth populations throughout Colorado.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Analyze demographic data to identify youth populations that are overrepresented in all areas of the child protection system, including Black, Indigenous, Latino and youth of color.
- Engage youth in DYS youth centers to discuss their experiences, needs and how the CPO may better serve them.
- Engage youth in out-of-home placements to discuss their experiences, needs and how the CPO may better serve them.
- Complete outreach campaigns to distribute the CPO's Spanish materials to Spanish-speaking youths.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of meetings hosted.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During quarter one, the CPO analyzed data from the Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center and from the Division of Youth Services' Annual Report to identify youth populations that are overrepresented in Colorado's child protection system. The data reflected that Black and Latino populations are overrepresented and the CPO is developing strategies to best engage with these youth. As a starting point, the CPO had Spanish informational posters distributed to DYS' youth centers to help inform youth of CPO services.

During both quarters, the CPO engaged with youth through casework and the agency continues to develop plans for engaging youth in conversations outside of casework to learn more about their experiences.

The CPO is working to further identify and respond to the needs of youth populations throughout Colorado and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

Critical Process: Engage directly with parents – including foster parents, adoptive parents and parents of youth in DYS youth centers – to improve the services the CPO provides to parent clients.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Complete outreach campaigns to increase the CPO's direct contact with parent clients.
- Update listserv of agencies, providers and organizations that may help the CPO connect with parent clients.
- Distribute parent-specific materials describing the CPO's services to all agencies, providers and communities serving parents, including parents of youth in DYS youth centers.
- Provide educational opportunities to parents, or entities serving parents, about the CPO's services.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The total number of engagements (e.g., calls from parents, trainings, etc.).

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

Child Protection Ombudsman Villafuerte presented to the Colorado Department of Human Services' Family Voice Council in quarter one to share information about the agency and to learn more about strategies for engaging families. The CPO is working to further develop its parent-specific materials and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

Critical Process: Identify and respond to the needs of parents – including foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship providers and parents of youth in DYS youth centers – throughout Colorado.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Analyze demographic data to identify parent populations that are overrepresented in all areas of the child protection system, including Black, Indigenous, Latino and parents of color.
- Engage with parents of youths in DYS youth centers to discuss their experiences, needs and how the CPO may better serve them.
- Engage with parents of youth in out-of-home placements to discuss their experiences, needs and how the CPO may better serve them.
- Engage with foster parents, adoptive parents and kinship providers to discuss their experiences, needs and how the CPO may better serve them.
- Complete outreach campaigns to distribute the CPO's Spanish materials to Spanish-speaking parents.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of meetings hosted.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

The CPO has yet to begin this critical process and plans to complete key activities during quarters three and four.

Critical Process: Engage mandatory reporters, services providers, educators, medical providers, mental health professionals and the child protection legal community.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Complete outreach campaigns with four organizations/agencies/providers.
- Update listserv of organizations/agencies/providers.
- Provide educational opportunities to interested entities about the CPO's services.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The total number of engagements (e.g., calls from organizations/agencies/providers, campaigns, etc.).

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During quarter one, the CPO held an informational session with county child welfare departments and the Colorado Department of Human Services. The session was highly successful and the CPO plans to continue holding sessions quarterly.

During quarter two, the CPO presented to the Colorado Association of Family and Children's Agencies, sharing with out-of-home placement providers how they, or the youth under their care, can contact the CPO and available services. Additionally, the CPO engaged members of the child protection legal community – including members of the American Bar Association, county attorneys, the Office of the Child's Representative, the Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel and the Colorado Juvenile Defender Center – to share with them and their stakeholders information about the agency.

The CPO is working to further engage mandatory reporters, services providers, educators, medical providers, mental health professionals and the child protection legal community and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

Critical Process: Engage rural communities to improve and increase the services the CPO provides to clients in those areas.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- 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.
- Update listserv of agencies, providers and organizations.
- Provide educational opportunities to interested entities about the CPO’s services.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The total number of engagements.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

Prior to the pandemic, the CPO had planned on leveraging its out-of-town board meetings to complete in-person outreach to rural communities. However, due to the pandemic, the CPO cancelled all in-person meetings. The CPO is working to determine how best to engage rural communities during quarters three and four.

SPI 2: IMPLEMENT PRACTICES THAT ENSURE THE CPO MANAGES ITS CASELOAD EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY, ALLOTING STAFF THE NECESSARY TIME AND RESOURCES TO RESEARCH SYSTEMIC CONCERNS.

The CPO is statutorily required “to receive complaints concerning child protection services made by or on behalf of a child relating to any action, inaction, or decision of any public agency or any provider that receives public moneys that may adversely affect the safety, permanency, or well-being of the child.” See C.R.S. §19-3.3- 103(1)(a). Additionally, the CPO must work to recommend “systemic change to improve the safety of and promote better outcomes for children and families receiving protection services in Colorado.” See C.R.S. §19-3.3-130(2)(e). The CPO has identified the following strategies, critical processes, key metrics and outcomes as ways to help manage caseloads and improve its processes for identifying and issuing recommendations.

Strategy: Implement practices and procedures that will decrease the amount of Information/Resource Referrals and Assists are open and conversely increase the amount of time CPO staff dedicate to systemic issues affecting the child protection system.⁵

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

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

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

⁵ For more information about the CPO’s practices and procedures, please refer to the [Office of Colorado’s Child Protection Ombudsman Case Practices and Operating Procedures](#).

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of Information/Resource Referrals closed within 30 business days.
- The number of Assists closed within 60 business days.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During quarters one and two, the CPO successfully closed 100 percent of inquiries resulting in an Information/Resource Referral within 30 business days of receiving the inquiry. During quarter one, the CPO closed 40 percent of inquiries resulting in Assists within 60 business days of receiving the inquiry. A significant amount of these cases involved one county department's COVID-19 intake practices and each case required an extensive, individual review, which delayed case closings. During quarter two, the CPO closed 89 percent of inquiries resulting in Assists within 60 business days of receiving the inquiry.

Critical Process: Develop and execute a project management system to better allocate staff's time to ensure the timely completion of case management and Special Initiatives projects.⁶

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Assign staff to specific projects strategically to maximize work outputs.
- Ensure work products are produced on a consistent basis to mitigate backlog and overload.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Backlog and/or overload will be measured and monitored.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During quarter one, the CPO developed and executed an online project management system to better allocate staff's time and track progress on projects. Though the system has streamlined the way the CPO approaches its work, significant and sustained caseload increases have created a backlog in the CPO's workflow. The CPO has submitted to the Joint Budget Committee a budget proposal for FY 2021-22 seeking additional resources to increase the CPO's staffing levels.

Strategy: Ensure the CPO is continually analyzing pertinent data and demographic information to ensure its services are best serving children, youth and families in Colorado.

Critical Process: Ensure CPO staff are continually evaluating how they may better serve Colorado's diverse population.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Provide CPO staff with educational opportunities about ensuring equity in the delivery of CPO services to Colorado citizens.
- CPO staff will meet quarterly to analyze demographic information and CPO case data to identify issues disproportionality impacting communities of color.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The total number of educational opportunities attended.
- The total number of internal reviews.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During quarter two, all CPO staff attended a diversity, equity and inclusion presentation hosted by Nathifa

⁶ For more information about the CPO's Special Initiatives, please refer to the [Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman Case Practices and Operating Procedures](#).

Miller of the University of Colorado's School of Public Health. Additionally, CPO staff established an ongoing staff development series that is scheduled to begin in quarter three that will focus on promoting staff's cultural competency. These monthly sessions will provide staff an opportunity to continue discussing the principals of diversity, equity and inclusion and ways to promote them in the CPO's work.

During both quarters, the CPO began exploring how it can gather data to analyze demographic information. It was determined that the CPO will need to develop a system to gather demographic data, as it is not currently being collected. The CPO is working to further develop its ability to analyze demographic information and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

SPI 3: ESTABLISH THE CPO AS A LEADER IN INFORMATION GATHERING AND DISSEMINATION AS IT RELATES TO ISSUES FACING 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 ensure the CPO is maintaining a quality of work that will drive change within the child protection system and sharing information in a timely manner, the agency must ensure its processes are streamlined and efficient, and that recommendations are being considered and/or implemented.

Strategy: Identify systemic issues that are pertinent to improving the child protection system.

Critical Process: Determine the potential impact of a proposed Special Initiative.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Determine if a proposed Special Initiative will provide substantive educational content to help inform the public and/or stakeholders.
- Determine if a proposed Special Initiative will systemically change practice statewide.
- Determine if a proposed Special Initiative will systemically change systems statewide.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of Special Initiative projects proposed versus those completed.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

As part of the project management system the CPO developed and executed during quarter one, the CPO published a template for staff to help them in the development of Special Initiative ideas. The goal of the template is to help staff determine whether a Special Initiative will: (1) provide substantive educational content to help inform the public and/or stakeholders, (2) systematically change practice statewide, and (3) systemically change systems statewide. Due to the caseload backlog, no Special Initiative projects were proposed during quarters one or two. The CPO is working to develop a new Special Initiative agenda and will be using the template to advance projects during quarters three and four.

Strategy: Allocate agency and staff resources appropriately to ensure Special Initiatives completion and timely impacts.

Critical Process: Develop and execute a project management system to better allocate staff's time to ensure the timely completion of case management and Special Initiatives projects.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Assign staff to specific projects strategically to maximize work outputs.
- Ensure work products are produced on a consistent basis to mitigate backlog and overload.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Backlog and/or overload will be measured and monitored.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During quarter one, the CPO developed and executed an online project management system to better allocate staff's time and track progress on projects. Though the system has streamlined the way the CPO approaches its work, significant and sustained caseload increases have created a backlog in the CPO's workflow. The CPO has submitted to the Joint Budget Committee a budget proposal for FY 2021-22 seeking additional resources to increase the CPO's staffing levels.

Strategy: Ensure the public and/or stakeholders receive notice of Special Initiatives launches and outcomes.

Critical Process: Complete, publish and provide notices of CPO products in a timely fashion.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Ensure CPO products are placed on the CPO's website in a timely manner.
- Develop a notification system to notify the public/stakeholders of new products released by the CPO (e.g., Mailchimp notification system).

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of notifications sent to the public/stakeholders.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

Due to caseload backlog, the CPO did not publish Special Initiative work products during quarter one or two. However, through its casework the CPO identified how COVID-19 is impacting some of Colorado's children, youth and families. The CPO published blog posts, hosted stakeholder meetings and presented to audiences about these issues.

The CPO is working to further complete, publish and provide notices of CPO products in a timely fashion and aims to continue working on key activities during quarters three and four.

Strategy: Track and analyze recommendations to monitor CPO's impacts and progress.

Critical Process: Track the uptake and implementation of recommendations.

Key Activities for FY 2020-21:

- Determine whether recommendations are being acknowledged and/or implemented.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The number of recommendations acknowledged and/or implemented.

Quarter One and Quarter Two Updates:

During both quarters, the Deputy Child Protection Ombudsman coordinated with partners to get updates on each of the recommendations the CPO issued since the 2017-18 fiscal year. The Deputy Child Protection Ombudsman is working on ways to communicate this information with the public.

Conclusion

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