



CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN

**FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022
QUARTER FOUR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

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Fiscal Year 2021-22 Strategic Policy Initiatives

The CPO is pleased to share this Quarter Four 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-to-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 four performance evaluations are intended to summarize agencies' performance on SPI from April 1st through June 30th, the CPO is sharing information from January 1st through June 30th – effectively covering both the third and fourth 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 2021-22 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:

- Target communications and engagements to better educate and serve citizens and stakeholders.
- Implement practices that ensure efficient and effective CPO services.
- Establish the CPO as a leader on issues facing the child protection system.

Each SPI has corresponding *strategies, critical processes, key activities*, as well as *key outcome(s) and metrics*, which help demonstrate the CPO's performance towards achieving the SPI. These are detailed later in this document.

Key takeaways from quarter three and quarter four of FY 2021-22 include how the agency:

- Achieved the largest growth in caseload it has experienced since the agency's opening in 2010. During this record-breaking fiscal year, the CPO experienced a 15 percent increase in cases over the course of the fiscal year, as compared to the previous fiscal year.
- Shifted from in-person to virtual meetings with the public and stakeholders to support the CPO's outreach efforts.
- Connected one-to-one with 25 percent of Colorado's General Assembly to discuss legislation to improve the state's child protection system and provide education about the CPO's services so that legislators may better serve their constituents who have concerns about the child protection system.
- Identified the need to target outreach to Colorado's African American/Black, Hispanic and Asian communities.
- Increased staff's knowledge of diversity, equity and inclusion principles by providing structured trainings and facilitated conversations regarding civil rights, racial and socio-economic inequities, social justice and implicit bias.

¹ The CPO's enabling statutes can be found in C.R.S. §19-3.3-101 through §19-3.3-110.

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

- Increased its newsletter listserv subscribers by 4.4 percent.

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, legislators and stakeholders on issues facing the child protection system.

By communicating the challenges facing the child protection system, and making recommendations for improvement, the CPO continues to fulfill the role the legislature designated for it.

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

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Send newsletters to citizens, legislators and stakeholders highlighting issues and information identified by the CPO, access to the CPO’s services and a discussion of how Colorado’s child protection system impacts communities of color.
- Survey legislators about their interest, and their constituents’ interest, in child protection issues. Analyze survey data to develop and target communications.
- Provide a CPO orientation presentation to interested new members of the General Assembly during Quarter Two.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Increased awareness of child protection issues, as measured by the number of newsletters sent per quarter.
- Increased contact with legislators and/or their staff, as measured by the CPO’s community outreach spreadsheet.³

Quarter Three Updates:

- Newsletters sent: 1
- Contacts with legislators and/or their staff: 49 (Reflects the legislative meetings the CPO participated in during the quarter. Twenty-five of these were one-to-one meetings the CPO initiated with members of Colorado’s General Assembly. The CPO initiated these meetings to advance improvements to the state’s child protection system and to share information about the agency’s services so that legislators may better serve their constituents who have concerns about

³ Every month, CPO staff record community outreach activities for the CPO Board in a spreadsheet, detailing conferences, trainings, meetings, presentation and other engagements with child protection system stakeholders.

the child protection system.)

Quarter Four Updates:

- Newsletters sent: 3
- Contacts with legislators and/or their staff: 9 (Reflects the legislative meetings the CPO participated in during the quarter.)

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

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Attend stakeholder meetings related to child protection issues.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Continual CPO presence in stakeholder meetings, as measured by the CPO's community outreach spreadsheet.

Quarter Three Update:

- Stakeholder meetings attended: 144 (Reflects the external committees, general meetings and legislative meetings the CPO participated in during the quarter. These stakeholder engagements provided the CPO opportunities to learn about, and communicate issues that impact, the state's child protection system, and to advocate for practice, regulatory and legislative changes.)

Quarter Four Update:

- Stakeholder meetings attended: 78 (Reflects the external committees, general meetings and legislative meetings the CPO participated in during the quarter. These stakeholder engagements provided the CPO opportunities to learn about, and communicate issues that impact, the state's child protection system, and to advocate for practice, regulatory and legislative changes.)

Strategy: Engage with communities to expand the CPO's statewide presence and to identify emerging issues in child protection.

The CPO will work to ensure that all communities in Colorado have equal access to CPO services and information. Expanding engagement with communities less familiar with the CPO's services – particularly populations which are overrepresented in the child protection system – will be key in creating impactful reform to all areas of Colorado's child protection system.

Critical Process: Engage with the CPO's listserv to determine which communities the CPO is contacting, how to increase the CPO's statewide presence and to identify emerging issues in the child protection system.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Survey the CPO's listserv to:
 - Identify who is and who is not part of the CPO's listserv;
 - Determine strategies to engage with underrepresented communities;
 - Gather feedback regarding awareness of CPO services;
 - Identify those interested in receiving additional materials; and
 - Identify emerging child protections issues.
- Share listserv with underrepresented communities.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Increased awareness of the CPO, as measured by an increase in the CPO’s listserv subscribers.
- The identification of emerging child protection issues, as indicated by survey results.

Quarter Three Updates:

- New listserv subscribers: 15 (Prior to the start of the quarter, the CPO had a total of 665 subscribers. The addition of 15 subscribers equates to a 2.3 percent increase of the CPO’s listserv.)
- Survey results: The CPO plans to develop a survey for its listserv during the next fiscal year.

Quarter Four Updates:

- New listserv subscribers: 14 (Prior to the start of the quarter, the CPO had a total of 680 subscribers. The addition of 14 subscribers equates to a 2.1 percent increase of the CPO’s listserv.)
- Survey results: The CPO plans to develop a survey for its listserv during the next fiscal year.

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

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Distribute youth-specific materials describing the CPO’s services to agencies, providers and communities serving youth in out-of-home placements.
- Complete outreach campaigns to increase the CPO’s direct contact with youth clients, including those in DYS youth centers and out-of-home placements. Discuss their experiences, needs and how the CPO may better serve them.
- Update the CPO’s internal database to allow CPO staff to track calls received by youth clients.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Increased distribution of youth-specific written materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by the number of materials distributed.
- Increased number of engagements with youth impacted by the child protection system, as measured by the number of presentations and/or focus groups hosted by the CPO.
- Increased services to youth, as measured by an increase in cases initiated by youth.

Quarter Three Updates:

- Materials distributed: During the quarter, the CPO promoted how the agency has youth-specific materials available on its website for download.
- Presentations/focus groups hosted: As a result of the global pandemic, the CPO has been working to develop new ways of engaging those involved in the state’s child protection system. During the quarter, the CPO created plans to engage youth with child protection system experience.
- Cases initiated by youth: 10

Quarter Four Updates:

- Materials distributed: 20 (Reflects the number of posters delivered to Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health. Additionally, during the quarter, the CPO promoted how the agency has youth-specific materials available on its website for download.)
- Presentations/focus groups hosted: 4 (Reflects virtual workshops the CPO coordinated with youth who have lived experience in Colorado’s child protection system. The workshops explored how the CPO can best engage and communicate with youth. A subcommittee of the CPO’s board is working to incorporate key takeaways from the workshops into the agency’s published content

and outreach plans.)

- Cases initiated by youth: 6

Critical Process: Engage parents, relatives or other caregivers of children involved in the child protection system – including biological parents, foster parents, adoptive parents – to increase CPO services provided to these clients.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Distribute parent-specific materials describing the CPO’s services to agencies, providers and communities serving parents, including foster parents, adoptive parents and parents of youth in DYS youth centers.
- Complete outreach campaigns to increase the CPO’s direct contact with parent clients, including foster parents, adoptive parents and parents of youth in DYS youth centers. Discuss their experiences, needs and how the CPO may better serve them.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Distribution of parent-specific written materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by the number of materials distributed.
- Number of engagements with parents impacted by the child protection system, as measured by the number of presentations and/or focus groups hosted by the CPO.
- Increased services to parents, relatives or other caregivers, as measured by an increase in cases initiated by parents, relatives or other caregivers.

Quarter Three Updates:

- Materials distributed: During the quarter, the CPO promoted how the agency has parent-specific materials available on its website for download.
- Presentations/focus groups hosted: As a result of the global pandemic, the CPO has been working to develop new ways of engaging those involved in the state’s child protection system. During the quarter, the CPO examined on how best to use technology to further engage parents, relatives and other caregivers involved with the state’s child protection system.
- Cases initiated by parents, relatives or other caregivers: 187 (These cases contributed to the agency’s record-breaking caseload growth.)

Quarter Four Updates:

- Materials distributed: During the quarter, the CPO promoted how the agency has parent-specific materials available on its website for download.
- Presentations/focus groups hosted: As a result of the global pandemic, the CPO has been working to develop new ways of engaging those involved in the state’s child protection system. During the quarter, the CPO examined on how best to use technology to further engage parents, relatives and other caregivers involved with the state’s child protection system.
- Cases initiated by parents, relatives or other caregivers: 160 (These cases contributed to the agency’s record-breaking caseload growth.)

Critical Process: Engage mandatory reporters – including specific services providers, educators, medical providers and mental health professionals – and the child protection legal community to increase CPO services provided to these clients.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Complete outreach campaigns to at least four organizations/agencies/providers per year.

- Provide educational opportunities to interested entities about the CPO’s services.
- Update the CPO’s internal database to allow CPO staff to track calls received by mandatory reports and the child protection legal community.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Completed presentations to organizations/agencies/providers, as measured by the number of presentations completed per quarter.
- Increased services to mandatory reporters and the child protection legal community, as measured by an increase in cases initiated by mandatory reporters and the child protection legal community.

Quarter Three Updates:

- Presentations hosted: 2 (Reflects virtual stakeholder meetings the CPO co-hosted with state legislators regarding Colorado’s mandatory reporting law. During these meetings, the CPO connected with various mandatory reporters, such as those working in child protection, education, victim advocacy and healthcare.)
- Cases initiated by mandatory reporters and members of the child protection legal community: 16 (Due to data limitations, this number likely underrepresents the number of cases initiated by mandatory reporters and members of the child protection legal community.)

Quarter Four Updates:

- Presentations hosted: As a result of the global pandemic, the CPO has been working to develop new ways of engaging those involved in the state’s child protection system. During the quarter, the CPO examined on how best to use technology to further engage the state’s mandatory reporters and child protection legal community.
- Cases initiated by mandatory reporters and members of the child protection legal community: 17 (Due to data limitations, this number likely underrepresents the number of cases initiated by mandatory reporters and members of the child protection legal community.)

Critical Process: Engage rural communities to increase CPO services provided to clients in rural areas.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Complete outreach campaigns to at least two rural judicial districts per year. During the campaigns, engage with entities such as child welfare departments, court improvement programs, school districts, regional hospitals and law enforcement.
- Provide educational opportunities to interested entities about the CPO’s services.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Completed presentations to rural communities, as measured by the number of presentations completed per quarter.

Quarter Three Update:

- Presentations hosted: The CPO routinely engages rural communities while fulfilling its statutorily required out-of-town board meeting. However, per the advice of the agency’s Attorney General, the CPO has suspended its out-of-town board meetings during the global pandemic. During the quarter, the CPO connected one-to-one with several rural communities throughout the course of its casework and examined on how best to use technology to further its engagements.

Quarter Four Update:

- Presentations hosted: The CPO routinely engages rural communities while fulfilling its statutorily required out-of-town board meeting. However, per the advice of the agency’s Attorney General, the CPO has suspended its out-of-town board meetings during the global pandemic. During the quarter, the CPO connected one-to-one with several rural communities throughout the course of its casework and began developing virtual engagement opportunities for county commissioners, including commissioners in rural counties.

Strategy: Ensure the CPO is targeting communications and services to all of Colorado’s diverse communities.

Critical Process: Identify who the CPO is serving and compare this information to Colorado demographic data.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Collect and analyze client demographic data to determine which communities the CPO is serving.
- Pull and analyze child protection demographic data to identify populations that are represented throughout Colorado.
- Compare the percentage of populations the CPO is serving to the percentages of each demographic present in the child protection system to inform ongoing outreach campaigns.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Increase CPO service delivery to all involved in the child protection system, as measured by the number of cases initiated by demographic data.

Quarter Three Update:

- Cases initiated: The CPO began collecting demographic data, including clients’ race and ethnicity, starting in quarter two of the fiscal year. Using this data, the CPO calculated the percentage of its clients by race and ethnicity categories. The CPO then compared this data to the percentage of youth involved in the state’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems to identify the communities the CPO needs to increase its outreach to. The communities the CPO identified as needing to increase its outreach to includes African American/Black, Asian and Hispanic. The data in the table below demonstrates the gap between the percentage of CPO clients by these race/ethnicity categories and the percentage of youth involved in Colorado’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The data serves as a baseline to help the CPO determine whether the number of cases initiated by clients of specific races and ethnicities are increasing over time.

Percentage of cases initiated by race/ethnicity (Q3)		Percentage of youth involved in Colorado's child welfare and juvenile justice systems by race/ethnicity*	
African American/Black	7%	African American/Black	11 - 22%
Asian	0%	Asian	1 - 2%
Hispanic	12%	Hispanic	38 - 39%

**Calculated using data from 2018-2019.*

Quarter Four Update:

- Cases initiated: During the quarter, the CPO compared the percentage of cases initiated by clients who are African American/Black, Asian and Hispanic during quarter three to those initiated during quarter four. The CPO saw a decrease in the number of cases initiated by Hispanics, and no change in the number of cases initiated by African American/Blacks and Asians. The CPO will continue its outreach to

these communities during the next fiscal year.

Percentage of CPO clients by race/ethnicity (Q4)		Difference Q3 to Q4
African American/Black	7%	0%
Asian	0%	0%
Hispanic	10%	-16.6%

SPI 2: IMPLEMENT PRACTICES THAT ENSURE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE CPO SERVICES.

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). The CPO has identified the following strategies, critical processes, key metrics and outcomes as ways to help ensure efficient and effective CPO services.

Strategy: *Implement practices and procedures that support CPO staff.*

The high demand for CPO services requires staff to be efficient in contacting citizens, identifying their concerns and determining what is necessary to help citizens resolve their inquiry. Ensuring CPO staff are supported will, in turn, ensure the CPO is providing services in an efficient and effective manner. The Critical Processes below, combined with the CPO’s policies outlined in the CPO’s Case Practices and Operating Procedures, will help the CPO provide all citizens quality services.⁴

Critical Process: Gather feedback from CPO clients to ensure quality services for citizens.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Develop a post-case-closure survey.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- An understanding of the opportunities and strengths, as demonstrated by the survey data.

Quarter Three Update:

- Survey data: N/A (During the quarter, the CPO explored options to develop a post-case-closure survey. The CPO determined to update this critical process next fiscal year.)

Quarter Four Update:

- Survey data: N/A (The CPO determined to update this critical process next fiscal year.)

⁴ 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](#).

Strategy: Ensure the CPO is continually applying a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to its services.

Critical Process: Provide ongoing CPO staff education on diversity, equity and inclusion to help staff best serve Coloradans.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Provide CPO staff with diversity, equity and inclusion educational opportunities.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The total number of educational opportunities attended, as measured by the CPO’s community outreach spreadsheet.

Quarter Three Update:

- Educational opportunities attended: 2 (During the quarter, the CPO contracted with experts on diversity, equity and inclusion to provide training on these principles. These trainings included discussions about civil rights, racial and socio-economic inequities, social justice and implicit bias.)

Quarter Four Update:

- Educational opportunities attended: 5 (During the quarter, the CPO’s staff received training on diversity, equity and inclusion best practices. These trainings included discussions about civil rights, racial and socio-economic inequities, social justice and implicit bias.)

SPI 3: ESTABLISH THE CPO AS A LEADER ON ISSUES FACING THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM.

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). 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: Identify systemic child protection issues from CPO data to alert citizens, legislators and stakeholders to emerging or reoccurring issues.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Quarterly analyze trends within CPO data to identify any themes/topics/issues that are emergent or reoccurring.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- The identification of child protection issues, as demonstrated in trend data.

Quarter Three Update:

- Child protection issues identified in trend data: 2 (During the quarter, child custody and substance use were the two most prominent topics encountered in the CPO’s cases. The CPO is actively monitoring issues related to these topics and is examining cases closely to identify areas where systemic changes to Colorado’s child protection system may be warranted.)

Quarter Four Update:

- Child protection issues identified in trend data: 2 (During the quarter, child custody and visitation were the two most prominent topics encountered in the CPO's cases. The CPO is actively monitoring issues related to these topics and is examining cases closely to identify areas where systemic changes to Colorado's child protection system may be warranted.)

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

The CPO has a statutory responsibility to maintain an accountable and transparent agency. Tracking and reporting the outcomes of its recommendations will provide a strong gauge for determining the CPO's impact in reforming the child protection system.

Critical Process: Track the uptake and implementation of recommendations.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Determine whether recommendations are being acknowledged and/or implemented by agencies.
- Ask agencies how they are using CPO work products.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- To have a deeper understanding of how the CPO's recommendations are changing the state's child protection system, as measured by the number of recommendations acknowledged and/or implemented.

Quarter Three Update:

- Recommendations acknowledged/implemented: The CPO continuously monitors the impacts of its recommendations on the child protection system. During the quarter, the CPO dedicated agency resources to advance and monitor the implementation of recommendations made in its [2017 investigation of the state's adoption assistance program](#), [2019 investigation of residential child care facilities](#), [2021 child fatality issue brief](#) and [2021 mandatory reporting issue brief](#). The agency worked with departments of human/social services and other stakeholders to discuss needed regulatory changes related to adoption assistance and residential child care facilities, including regulations related to Institutional Abuse. Additionally, the CPO collaborated with members of Colorado's General Assembly to advance legislation to address issues impacting the state's residential child care facilities and mandatory reporting system. As a result of the CPO's recommendations, several stakeholder meetings were held throughout the quarter to advance positive changes to the state's child protection system.

Quarter Four Update:

- Recommendations acknowledged/implemented: The CPO continues to monitor the impacts of all its recommendations on the child protection system. During the quarter, the CPO dedicated agency resources to monitor the implementation of recommendations made in its [2017 investigation of the state's adoption assistance program](#), [2019 investigation of residential child care facilities](#), [2021 child fatality issue brief](#) and [2021 mandatory reporting issue brief](#). The agency worked with departments of human/social services and other stakeholders to discuss needed regulatory changes related to adoption assistance and residential child care facilities, including regulations related to Institutional Abuse. Additionally, the CPO collaborated with members of Colorado's General Assembly to advance legislation to address issues impacting the state's residential child care facilities and mandatory reporting system. As a result of the CPO's recommendations, several stakeholder meetings were held throughout the quarter to advance

positive changes to the state's child protection system.

Strategy: *Encourage citizens and stakeholders to use the CPO as a resource to improve the child protection system.*

Critical Process: Offer ongoing opportunities for citizens, legislators and stakeholders to engage in the CPO's system work.

Key Activities for FY 2021-22:

- Develop opportunities for citizens, legislators and stakeholder to engage in the CPO's work by continually offering information regarding CPO projects, initiatives, legislative efforts, etc.

Key Metrics and Outcome(s):

- Increased use of the CPO as a resource for child protection information, as measured by the number of contacts the CPO receives from citizens, legislators and stakeholders.

Quarter Three Update:

- Contacts from citizens, legislators and stakeholders for systems work information: 13 (Reflects the number of legislators who reached out to the CPO with inquiries related to the state's child protection system, as well as the number of citizens and stakeholders who directly engaged with the CPO on its legislative priorities.)

Quarter Four Update:

- Contacts from citizens, legislators and stakeholders for systems work information: 13 (Reflects the number of legislators who reached out to the CPO with inquiries related to the state's child protection system, as well as the number of citizens and stakeholders who directly engaged with the CPO on its legislative priorities.)

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.