



CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN

FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023
QUARTER FOUR
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

August 1, 2023

Stephanie Villafuerte
Child Protection Ombudsman

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Strategic Policy Initiatives

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (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 CPO is effectively and efficiently implementing practices to address system-wide issues impacting child protection systems, while also providing a high quality of service for individuals 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.

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:

- Outreach and Education: Educate the public and stakeholders about the CPO to ensure equitable access to services and to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Services and Programs: Continue to develop and strengthen efficient and effective CPO practices to better serve Colorado citizens.
- Public Policy: Continue to serve as a leader in advancing reforms to Colorado's child protection system.

Each SPI has corresponding strategies, critical processes, key activities, as well as key outcome(s) and metrics, that help demonstrate the CPO's performance towards achieving the SPI. These are detailed later in this document. Key takeaways from quarter four FY 2022-2023 include how the agency:

- Broke 1,000 cases for the first time in agency history, the CPO opened 1,119 cases in FY 2022-2023 – marking a 14% increase from FY 2021-2022. The agency's Q4 cases increased 30% from the same period last fiscal year with 300 opened. This increase included upticks of 283% for cases initiated by youth and 15% by caregivers.
- Hit unprecedented heights in outreach after implementing its new digital marketing strategy. Earning 37,232 digital impressions from youth, parents, caregivers and community members, targeted content raised awareness of the agency and its services among new audiences in all 64 counties across the state. In 11 days, CPO outreach materials garnered 73% more views than all agency content from March 2022 – March 2023.
- Continues to collaborate with legislators, stakeholders and people with lived experience in Colorado child protection systems to develop and promote evidence-based solutions to the systemic issues experienced by our clients, youth, families and others in communities across the state.

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 – OUTREACH AND EDUCATION: Educate the public and stakeholders about the CPO to ensure equitable access to services and to identify opportunities for improvement.

The CPO is statutorily required “to help educate the public 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 increase the public’s knowledge of the CPO’s services while concurrently learning how best to engage with various communities.

Strategy: Target communications and engagements to strengthen the CPO’s statewide presence and services.

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 –particularly populations which are overrepresented in the child protection system – will be key to promoting impactful, equitable reforms to Colorado’s child protection system.

Critical Process: Engage youth impacted by the child protection system to increase the number of youth who receive services directly from the CPO, promote equitable access to services and improve how the agency serves youth in Colorado.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Utilizing the results of youth surveys and working groups completed during Fiscal Year 2021-22, improve the CPO’s youth outreach materials and develop new materials and platforms to connect with youth in Colorado.
- 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.
- Continue to engage youth panels and facilitate discussions with youth groups to re-assess the agency’s materials and services.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Distribution of youth-specific written materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by

the number of sites in which materials are distributed.

- Engagement 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.

Q4 Performance

- **Utilize Results of Survey:** The Think of Us report commissioned by the CPO in FY 2021-2022 was used to design messaging and new design concepts for print materials and digital advertisements that directly target different youth populations. Feedback from youth was also used directly in creating new frequently-asked-questions for both print materials and the new CPO website.
- **Materials Distributed:** In its first-ever appearance at the Colorado Department of Higher Education Celebration of Educational Excellence (CDHE) Celebration of Educational Excellence Resource Fair, the CPO distributed print materials to current and former foster youth.
- **Outreach:** The CPO executed an 11-day digital marketing campaign that directly targeted individuals in Colorado Googling words or phrases similar to what a youth involved in Colorado's child protection systems would search for. This campaign resulted in 1,959 digital impressions and 48 clicks linking to the CPO website. At the CDHE Celebration of Educational Excellence, the CPO directly engaged current and former foster youth.
- **Engage Youth Panels:** In preparation for launching the Tori Shuler Youth Voice Program (YVP), the CPO met with Tori Shuler at Fostering Great Ideas to get her input on the formation of the program. The agency then met with the Office of the Colorado Child's Representative to learn more about its Lived Experts Action Panel (LEAP) program and explore opportunities for collaboration. The CPO later conducted a presentation on its services, YVP and opportunities for sharing stories through the media at a LEAP meeting. Additionally, the CPO met with AmeriCorps to learn more about its VISTA program and the potential for adding an agency internship for youth recently involved in Colorado child protection systems. An outline was developed for one of the program's first projects – the development of a multi-year, targeted youth outreach campaign in partnership with current and former youth involved in child protection systems. Further information is available in the CPO's FY 2023-2024 Performance Plan.
- **# of Sites Materials Distributed:** 1
- **# of Presentations:** 1
- **# Cases Initiated by Youth:** 23

Critical Process: Engage child protection professionals, including but not limited to treatment and service providers, educators, medical providers, mental health professionals and the child protection legal community.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

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

- Provide educational opportunities to interested entities about the CPO’s services.
- Collect feedback from child protection professionals regarding issues impacting services and possible improvements to the CPO’s education materials and engagement opportunities.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Engagement with professionals/providers, as measured by the number of presentations completed per quarter.
- Increased services to child protection professionals, as measured by an increase in cases initiated by child protection professionals

Q4 Performance

- **Outreach:** At the CDHE Celebration of Educational Excellence, the CPO directly engaged other child protection agencies and stakeholders. Additionally during the quarter, the agency met directly with 14 agencies and organizations, including – the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Division of Youth Services, Department of Early Childhood, National Association of Counsel for Children, State Court Administrator’s Office, United States Ombudsman Association, Raise the Future, 13th Judicial District Attorneys’ Office, Denver Police Department, Kempe Center, Illuminate Colorado, Fostering Great Ideas, Office of the Child’s Representative and Office of the Respondent Parents’ Counsel. Distributing the remainder of the agency’s inventory of print materials, the CPO surveyed county agencies to gauge demand and found a desire for more posters, rack cards and one-pagers. In response, the CPO is developing a digital ordering platform to provide streamlined, on-demand printing and shipping for agencies and stakeholders. The agency also participated alongside other agencies and child protection stakeholders in Capitol tributes for Child Abuse Prevention Month and Foster Care Month.
- **Educational Opportunities:** The CPO provided a presentation on the Mandatory Reporting Task Force to the Helper Society.
- **Collect Feedback:** N/A
- **# Presentations/Engagements:** 9
- **# Cases Initiated by Professionals:** 60

Critical Process: Engage caregivers – including parents, relatives, foster parents, adoptive parents and kin – of children involved in the child protection system to help ensure all caregivers have equitable access to CPO services.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Develop and distribute caregiver-specific materials describing the CPO’s services to agencies, providers and communities serving caregivers.
- 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.
- Collect feedback from caregivers regarding issues impacting services and possible improvements to the CPO’s services and future engagement opportunities.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Distribution of caregiver-specific written materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by the number of sites in which materials are distributed.
- Engagement with caregivers 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.

Q4 Performance

- Caregiver-Specific Materials: The CPO met with the Office of the Respondent Parents’ Counsel to discuss effective messaging and new avenues for reaching birth parents involved in Colorado’s child protection systems. Feedback has been implemented into new design concepts for materials directly targeting this group of caregivers.
- Outreach: The CPO met with CDHS to discuss opportunities for collaboration in getting information on the agency’s services in the hands of kinship and foster families during the recruitment process and through retention efforts.
- Collect Feedback: N/A
- # of Sites Materials Distributed: N/A
- # of Presentations: N/A
- # Cases Initiated by Caregivers & Relatives: 191

Critical Process: Engage rural communities to ensure citizens across Colorado are informed of the CPO’s services and have equitable opportunities to inform the agency and improve practices.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- 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, non-profit community organizations and law enforcement.

- Collect feedback from rural communities about issues impacting child protection services in their areas, as well as possible improvements to the CPO's services and future engagement opportunities.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Engagement with rural communities, as measured by the number of presentations completed per quarter.
- The provision of services to those in rural communities, as measured by the number of cases initiated by those in rural communities.

Q4 Performance

- **Outreach:** In an 11-day digital marketing campaign, the CPO for the first-time directly targeted people in small Colorado communities across every region of the state. Google Search Ads and LinkedIn promoted posts messaging directly to rural audiences earned the agency 20,577 digital impressions and 77 clicks linking back to its website. Additionally, the Ombudsman and CPO Board of Directors continue to plan a rural meeting and visits with local stakeholders for Q1 of FY 2023-2024.
- **Collect Feedback:** Following an analysis of the CPO's existing audience, it was determined that the agency needs to develop a multi-year, targeted outreach campaign to meaningfully engage and promote services to small communities in every region of the state.
- **# Presentations:** N/A (the CPO regularly engages with a statewide audience that includes stakeholders in rural communities)
- **# Cases Initiated in Rural – or small – Communities (County Pop. <70,000):** 39

Critical Process: Evaluate the CPO's listserv to determine which communities the CPO is engaging with and how to increase the CPO's statewide presence.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Survey the CPO's listserv to identify communities not included.
- Determine strategies to engage with underrepresented communities.
- Expand the listserv to include underrepresented communities.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Increased awareness of the CPO, as measured by an increase in the CPO's listserv subscribers.

Q4 Performance

- Survey: N/A
- Engage Underrepresented Communities: Following an analysis of the CPO's audience and current efforts in reaching communities of color and families with disabilities, it was determined that the agency must build partnerships with agencies serving these communities and collaboratively develop multiple outreach campaigns to reach each audience.
- Share Listserv: N/A
- # Newsletter Subscribers: 794

Critical Process: Engage legislators in the CPO's work.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Complete one outreach campaign to all legislators every year.
- Survey legislators about their interest, and their constituents' interest, in child protection issues.
- Analyze survey data to develop and target communications.
- Provide additional educational opportunities about the CPO's services to interested legislators.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Engagement with legislators, as measured by the number of meetings or other interactions between the CPO and legislators.

Q4 Performance

- **Outreach:** In the final five weeks of legislative session, the CPO provided testimony on HB 23-1027, HB 23-1132 and SB 23-210. Following session, the agency met with Sen. Rhonda Fields, Rep. Dafna Michaelson Jenet and Rep. Mary Young of the Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee to learn what the expectations were for the agency's presentation. In the committee's first meeting, the CPO presented to members on its role and four systemic issues facing Colorado child protection systems.
- **Survey:** N/A
- **Educational Opportunities:** N/A
- **# of Meetings/Interactions:** 8

Strategy: Provide consistent, timely and informative communications regarding the CPO's services, ongoing projects, ombudsman practice and findings.

Critical Process: Continue to develop effective methods for delivering and promoting the CPO's services and ongoing work.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Hire part-time Public Information Coordinator.
- Send newsletters that feature the CPO's most up-to-date efforts, findings and recommendations to citizens, legislators and stakeholders.
- Post CPO work products to the CPO's website and social media.
- Attend stakeholder meetings related to child protection issues.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Awareness of child protection issues, as measured by the number of newsletters sent per quarter.
- Continual CPO presence in stakeholder meetings, as measured by the CPO's community outreach spreadsheet.

Q4 Performance

- **Hire Part-Time Public Information Coordinator:** N/A
- **Send Newsletters:** Following the results of the Q3 survey of its listserv, the CPO paused the distribution of its newsletter to reevaluate how or if it will be utilized moving forward. This will be reflected in the agency's communications plan for FY 2023-2024.
- **Post CPO Work to Website/Social Media:** Following feedback from youth and stakeholders, and an internal audit of the CPO's website, it was determined that the agency's existing website structure was insufficient to effectively communicate the amount of content the agency has added since its development in 2019. The CPO contracted with Peak Creative to design a new website that provides greater accessibility and easier access to more information and resources.
- **Attend Stakeholder Meetings:** The CPO is engaged in numerous task forces, working groups, committees, commissions, policy review teams and recurring meeting groups across Colorado child protection systems.
- **# Newsletters Sent:** N/A
- **# Stakeholder Meetings Attended:** 46

Strategy: Apply principles of diversity, equity and inclusion to the CPO's communications.

Critical Process: Identify whether the CPO is serving all the states' racial/ethnic groups to develop targeted outreach campaigns.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Collect and analyze client racial/ethnic demographic data to determine which communities the CPO is serving.
- Pull and analyze child protection racial/ethnic 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.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Increased services to various racial/ethnic communities, as measured by the number of cases initiated by various racial/ethnic groups.

Q4 Performance

- **Collect/Analyze/Compare Data:** Using data collected with the newly-implemented method for tracking, the CPO began to analyze statewide data on race and ethnicity of clients in comparison to the state's overall population, youth population and demographics of families involved in Colorado's child protection systems. This information will be reported on in the agency's FY 2023-2024 Annual Report.
- **# Cases Initiated by People Identifying as Caucasian (FY22-23):** 233
- **# Cases Initiated by People Identifying as Hispanic or Latino/e (FY22-23):** 282
- **# Cases Initiated by People Identifying as Black/African-American (FY22-23):** 30
- **# Cases Initiated by People Identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native (FY22-23):** 9
- **# Cases Initiated by People Identifying as Asian (FY22-23):** 2

Critical Process: Develop inclusive processes, systems and communications that reflect principles of diversity, equity and inclusion to share the CPO's services with all of Colorado's diverse communities.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Using the independent assessment from Vincent Strategies that was completed in Fiscal Year 2021-22, amend outreach and education materials to reflect the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion identified by the agency.
- Based on the independent assessment, update the CPO's website to reflect the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion identified by the agency.
- Using the independent assessment, develop and implement an inclusive outreach and education campaign to demonstrate the CPO's commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion principles in the child protection system.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Updated CPO outreach and education materials, as determined by the feedback provided by the independent assessment.
- Publication of new materials on the CPO's website.

Q4 Performance

- **Amend Outreach Materials:** The CPO contracted with Barefoot PR to design diverse family icons reflecting youth and families of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities and cultures which will be used to create more inclusive print and digital outreach materials in Q1 of FY 2023-2024.
- **Update Website:** Content and imagery on the CPO's redesigned website accurately reflects its values around diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Outreach:** Receiving funding in FY 2023-2024 for an EDI specialist, the CPO will work in collaboration with this consultant to develop multiple outreach campaigns directly targeting youth, families and communities that are disproportionately involved in Colorado child protection systems.

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

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

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

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

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Increased use of the CPO as a resource for child protection information, as measured by the number of opportunities offered by the CPO.

Q4 Performance

- **Offering Opportunities:** The CPO offers members of the public an opportunity to have their voice heard in both the Timothy Montoya Task Force and Mandatory Reporting Task Force which are both open to the public and include a period for public comment. The CPO also regularly meets with stakeholders, policymakers and members of the public to discuss concerns and issues with child protection.
- **# of Opportunities for Engagement:** 6

SPI 2 – SERVICES AND PROGRAMS: Continue to develop and strengthen efficient and effective CPO practices to better serve Colorado citizens.

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 delivers a wide variety of services pursuant to its statute. These include one-on-one services for clients who contact the agency with concerns or questions regarding the child protection system, reviewing critical incidents – such as child fatalities – and monitoring the safety and well-being of unaccompanied immigrant children residing in state-licensed facilities.

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

Strategy: Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for 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.¹

Critical Process: Provide CPO staff ongoing training and education.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Have CPO staff attend ongoing training - for various subjects to support ongoing program development and primary functions of the agency. Training subjects include, customer services, negotiation and mediation strategies, child welfare policy and practice, ombudsman theory and practice, equity, diversity and inclusion, and other applicable child protection issues.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

¹ 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](#).

- The total number of trainings and educational opportunities attended, as measured by the CPO's community outreach spreadsheet.²

Q4 Performance

- Attend Ongoing Training: CPO staff members have participated in several trainings around diversity, equity and inclusion, collaborative safety, accounting and finance, artificial intelligence and management.
- # Trainings Attended: 15

Strategy: Apply principles of equity, diversity and inclusion to the CPO's services.

Critical Process: Provide CPO staff ongoing training and education on diversity, equity and inclusion to inform staff of the disproportionate impact of the child welfare system on communities of color, under-resourced communities and people with disabilities.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Provide CPO staff with ongoing diversity, equity and inclusion educational opportunities so they may work to address and recognize biases within the child protection system and how those biases impact clients' experiences and outcome.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Development of an EDI Strategic Implementation Plan.
- The total number of educational opportunities attended, as measured by the CPO's community outreach spreadsheet.

Q4 Performance

- Attend Ongoing Training: CPO staff members have been provided with several DEI trainings on topics such as bias reduction, ableism and tribal children and families.
- # DEI Trainings Attended: 6

² Every month, CPO staff record community outreach activities for the CPO Board in a spreadsheet, detailing conferences, trainings, meetings, presentations and other engagements with child protection system stakeholders.

Strategy: Continue to develop the CPO's unaccompanied immigrant children's program – established by C.R.S. § 19-3.3- 103(1)(a.5)(I) – to better review and monitor the safety and well-being of unaccompanied immigrant children.

Critical Process: Engage unaccompanied immigrant children residing in state-licensed care that are in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement and professionals that serve them.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Distribute youth-specific materials, in appropriate dialects and languages, describing the CPO's services.
- Complete quarterly visits to qualifying residential child care facilities to meet with youth and observe operations and care.
- Respond directly to any complaints the CPO receives from unaccompanied immigrant children residing in state care.
- Facilitate quarterly meetings with child protection professionals that work with unaccompanied immigrant children to build relationships, discuss concerns and/or CPO observations.
- Provide educational opportunities to interested entities about the CPO's services.
- Develop outreach materials for child protection professionals that work with unaccompanied immigrant children that outline the CPO's services and jurisdiction.
- Respond directly to any complaints the CPO receives regarding unaccompanied immigrant children residing in state care.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Increased knowledge of the CPO's services, as measured by the distribution of youth-specific written materials in relevant languages.
- Monitor the safety and well-being of unaccompanied immigrant children, as measured by the number of visits to residential child care facilities that serve unaccompanied immigrant children.
- The provision of services to unaccompanied immigrant children, as measured by the number of cases initiated by unaccompanied immigrant children.
- Engagement with child protection professionals that work with unaccompanied immigrant children, as measured by the number of meetings completed per quarter.
- The provision of services to child protection professionals that work with unaccompanied immigrant children, as measured by the number of cases initiated by child protection professionals that work with unaccompanied immigrant children.

Q4 Performance

On March 16, 2023, the CPO was notified that the Devereux Colorado Unaccompanied Children's Services Program, also known as the Unaccompanied Immigrant Children (UIC) program would be closing. The facility cited concerns with recruiting and retaining bilingual staff, which impacted the facility's ability to meet the requirements of the Office of Refugee Resettlement grant. The facility shared the plan to transition the youth into other appropriate programs. The UIC program discharged all clients by the end of March 2023.

The CPO continues to monitor how the UIC population is served by Colorado facilities.

Strategy: Continue to develop the CPO's process and procedures for reviewing egregious abuse or neglect, near fatalities or fatalities of a child, as established by C.R.S. § 19-3.3- 103(1)(a)(I)(A).

Critical Process: Develop and implement a unique, research-informed process for reviewing critical incidents in Colorado to improve and advance child protection systems.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Facilitate an objective, multidisciplinary review of qualifying critical incident using Safety Science to identify areas of the child protection system that can improve.
- Draft and distribute public-facing reports.
- Assess possible improvements to the CPO's process for reviewing critical incidents in Colorado.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Increased knowledge of how the state's child protection system is currently working on a systemic level and the identification of recommendations to improve the system, as measured by the number of reviews performed using Safety Science.³

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

Q4 Performance

- Facilitate a Review: Two cases closed in Q4.
- Draft/Distribute Report: Sent a public letter to agencies involved in reviews in Q4.
- Assess Possible Improvements: N/A
- # Reviews: N/A

SPI 3 – PUBLIC POLICY: Continue to serve as a leader in advancing reforms to Colorado’s child protection system.

The CPO is statutorily required “to recommend...systemic changes, 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). Additionally, the CPO must “...promote best practices and effective programs relating to a publicly funded child protection system and to work collaboratively...regarding improvement of processes.” See C.R.S. § 19-3.3-103(2)(d).

To promote positive systemic changes, best practices and effective programs, the CPO must produce high-quality work in a timely manner while building strong partnerships with others working within the state’s child protection system. The CPO has identified the following strategies, critical processes, key metrics and outcomes as ways to encourage collaboration, identify areas of the child protection system in need of improvement, efficiently communicate its findings and ensure recommendations are being considered and/or implemented.

Strategy: Identify and/or support systemic improvements to the child protection system

Critical Process: Analyze CPO data to identify systemic child protection issues.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

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

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

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

Q4 Performance

- **Analyze Trends & Identify Issues:** While the CPO has identified a number of trends through client concerns and data that will be reported on in FY 2023-2024, four critical issues facing child protection systems were prioritized for presenting to the Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee.

Critical Process: Facilitate and support stakeholder engagement through the CPO’s Public Policy Advancement Center.

In June 2022, two task forces were established in the CPO through the passage of House Bill 22-1240 and House Bill 22-1375. Each is designed to objectively examine issues that are critical to improving the state’s child protection system and are comprised of members with diverse experience and knowledge.

The Mandatory Reporting Task Force, established by House Bill 22-1240, will analyze 19 directives concerning the procedures and effectiveness of Colorado’s child abuse and neglect mandatory reporting system and possible improvements. The Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-Of-Home Placement (Timothy Montoya Task Force), established by House Bill 22-1375, will analyze nine directives aimed at improving safeguards for children in out-of-home placement who have runaway behaviors.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Convene and facilitate the Mandatory Reporting Task Force, as established by C.R.S. § 19-3304.2.
- Convene and facilitate the Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-Of-Home Placement, as established by C.R.S. § 19-3.3- 111.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- The completion of task force reports, as delineated in Colorado state law.

Q4 Performance

- **Facilitate Timothy Montoya Task Force:** The CPO hosted three meetings in Q4 of the Timothy Montoya Task Force, as required by statute.
- **Facilitate Mandatory Report Task Force:** The CPO has hosted two meetings in Q4 of the Mandatory Reporting Task Force, as required by statute.
- **Task Force Reports:** The first reports for both task forces are due in FY 2023-2024.

Strategy: Provide consistent, timely and informative communications regarding the CPO's public policy efforts, which may include findings and recommendations.

Critical Process: Communicate the CPO's efforts, findings and recommendations to the public, legislators and stakeholders.

Key Activities

FY 2022-2023

- Send newsletters that feature the CPO's most up-to-date efforts, findings and recommendations to citizens, legislators and stakeholders.
- Post CPO work products to the CPO's website and social media.
- Attend stakeholder meetings related to child protection issues.

FY 2023-2024

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Awareness of child protection issues, as measured by the number of newsletters sent per quarter.
- Continual CPO presence in stakeholder meetings, as measured by the CPO's community outreach spreadsheet.

Q4 Performance

- Send Newsletters: Following the results of the Q3 survey of its listserv, the CPO paused the distribution of its newsletter to reevaluate how or if it will be utilized moving forward. This will be reflected in the agency's communications plan for FY 2023-2024.
- Post CPO Work to Website/Social Media: Following feedback from youth and stakeholders, and an internal audit of the CPO's website, it was determined that the agency's existing website structure was insufficient to effectively communicate the amount of content the agency has added since its development in 2019. The CPO contracted with Peak Creative to design a new website that provides greater accessibility and easier access to more information and resources.
- Attend Stakeholder Meetings: The CPO is engaged in numerous task forces, working groups, committees, commissions, policy review teams and recurring meeting groups across Colorado child protection systems.
- # Newsletters Sent: N/A
- # Stakeholder Meetings Attended: 46

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.