



CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN

**FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025
AGENCY SUMMARY & BUDGET REQUEST**

November 1, 2023

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Child Protection Ombudsman**

**OFFICE OF COLORADO’S CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN - BUDGET REQUEST
FISCAL YEAR 2025**

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Agency Overview

Background

The Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (OCPO) was established in June 2010, under Senate Bill 10-171. This legislation provided that the OCPO would operate as a program through a contract with a local non-profit agency, issued and managed by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS).

The program was created in response to the deaths of 12 children in Colorado who were known to child protection services. The deaths of these children in 2007 sparked an outcry by the public that there be greater oversight, accountability and transparency of Colorado's child protection system. The public demanded the state create a mechanism to examine the components of the state's child protection system, help citizens navigate the complexity of the system and provide recommendations on how to improve the system overall.

Years after its creation, legislators determined that the OCPO needed independence from the agencies it was designed to review. And on June 2, 2015, Senate Bill 15-204, Concerning the Independent Functioning of the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman, was signed into law. The new, independent OCPO opened in 2016.

Senate Bill 15-204 not only transformed the original "program" into a distinct and independent state agency, but it also created the first ever Child Protection Ombudsman Board (OCPO Board). Designed to ensure the accountability and transparency of the OCPO, the OCPO Board is required to oversee the Child Protection Ombudsman's performance and act as an advisory body.

Since its independence, the OCPO has worked consistently to keep its practices aligned with national standards. The OCPO is guided by standards set by organizations such as the United States Ombudsman Association and the American Bar Association. Using those standards, the OCPO works to provide a clear channel between Coloradans and the agencies and providers tasked with protecting children. Specifically, the OCPO independently gathers information, investigates complaints and provides recommendations to child protection agencies, providers and the state's legislature.

Further aligning the OCPO with national standards, House Bill 21-1272 was signed into law on June 24, 2021. The law allows the OCPO to be more responsive to citizens requesting a review of the circumstances surrounding a critical incident, such as a child fatality. Prior to its passage, the OCPO was unable to complete such reviews in a timely or robust manner. Additionally, House Bill 21-1272 created additional protections for the confidential information and documents reviewed by the CPO during a case.

In June 2021 and June 2022, the OCPO's duties and powers were expanded with the passage of House Bill 21-1313 and House Bill 22-1319. Intended to help unaccompanied immigrant children placed within Colorado's borders by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, these bills

permit the CPO to initiate reviews of the safety and well-being of such youth who are placed in state-licensed residential child care facilities, as well as monitor their care.

Also in June 2022, two task forces were established in the OCPO 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.

The OCPO, housed within the Colorado Judicial Branch, is located at the Ralph L. Carr Judicial Center in Denver. Colorado's current Child Protection Ombudsman is Stephanie Villafuerte. Child Protection Ombudsman Villafuerte was appointed in December 2015 by the OCPO Board and took office in January 2016.

Mission

We ensure Colorado child protection systems consistently, fairly and equitably deliver services to every child, youth and family across our state.

Case Support

- Guide youth, families and community members in navigating complex systems
- Review cases to ensure the highest attainable standards of care
- Work with people and agencies to resolve concerns and disputes at the ground level

Systems Change

- Engage communities across Colorado in addressing local and statewide problems
- Collaborate with stakeholders and lawmakers to improve services, policies and laws

Vision

Ensuring safety for Colorado's children today and envisioning a stronger child protection system for the future.

Major Agency Functions

Role of the OCPO

The OCPO was created to ensure the state's complex child protection system consistently provides high-quality services to every child, family and community in Colorado. The agency:

- Listens to people about their experience with, and concerns about, the state's child protection system.
- Researches concerns reported by any individual or entity about service delivery within Colorado's child protection system.
- Resolves issues by determining the best way to assist people. This may mean bridging communication barriers or mediating conflicts based on misunderstandings.
- Identifies trends where the child protection system's funding, resources or practices are not keeping up with the needs of children, youth and families.
- Makes public recommendations for child protection system improvements. This may mean working with lawmakers, professionals and other stakeholders to advance legislation and policies that have a lasting, positive impact on children, youth and families.

Responsibilities of the OCPO

The OCPO is responsible for responding to citizens' complaints concerning actions or inactions by child protection agencies that may adversely impact the safety, permanency or well-being of a child. Child protection agencies are those that receive public funds to protect or care for children. This includes but is not limited to law enforcement, mental health agencies, child welfare services and the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

The OCPO may self-initiate an independent and impartial investigation and ongoing review of the safety and well-being of an unaccompanied immigrant child who lives in a state-licensed residential child care facility and who is in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the federal Department of Health and Human Services as set forth in 8 U.S.C. sec. 1232 et seq. As part of this responsibility, the CPO may create and distribute outreach materials to state-licensed residential child care facilities and to individuals that have regular contact with unaccompanied immigrant children.

Additionally, the OCPO is responsible for informing on systemic changes to promote better outcomes for, and improve the safety and well-being of, children, youth and families receiving child protection services in Colorado. Being uniquely situated to gather and share information with state and non-state entities, the OCPO may issue recommendations to enhance the state's child protection system. The OCPO shares this and other information with the public by publishing reports and other content at www.coloradocpo.org.

Jurisdiction and Environment

Each year, the OCPO provides free and confidential services to hundreds of citizens who have questions and concerns about the state's child protection system. These citizens include parents, grandparents, kin, youth, medical professionals, lawyers, social workers, police officers and many others.

Citizens' questions and concerns often relate to specific program areas within the state's child protection system, including child welfare, juvenile justice and behavioral health. With access to

child protection records that are not otherwise available to the public, the OCPO is able to independently and objectively resolve citizens' questions and concerns while concurrently identifying systemic issues afflicting the child protection system.

The agency's enabling statutes are C.R.S. § 19-3.3-101 — 19-3.3-110. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 19-3.3-103, the OCPO has the authority to:

- Receive complaints concerning child protection services.
- Request, access, and review any information, records, or documents, including records of third parties, that the ombudsman deems necessary to conduct a thorough and independent review of a complaint.
- Independently and impartially investigate complaints.
- Seek resolution of complaints.
- Recommend changes and promote best practices to improve the state's child protection services.
- Educate the public concerning strengthening families and keeping children safe.
- Self-initiate an independent and impartial investigation and ongoing review of the safety and well-being of any unaccompanied immigrant child who lives in a state-licensed residential child care facility and is in federal custody.

The OCPO does not have the authority to:

- Investigate allegations of abuse and/or neglect.
- Interfere or intervene in any criminal or civil court proceeding.
- Testify in a court proceeding in which the CPO is not a party.
- Provide third-party records/documents acquired in the course of a case.
- Investigate complaints related to judges, magistrates, attorneys or guardians ad litem.
- Overturn any court order.
- Mandate the reversal of an agency/provider decision.
- Offer legal advice.

Recap of Fiscal Year 2022-23

During Fiscal Year 2022-23, the OCPO opened a record number of cases for the fourth consecutive fiscal year. The OCPO received 1,119 contacts from people seeking help during FY 2022-23.¹ This 14% annual increase not only reflects the growing role of the OCPO in supporting youth, families and communities but demonstrates the benefits of the agency's unprecedented outreach efforts and public policy initiatives. The OCPO also closed a record 1,083 cases during the fiscal year. Of the cases closed by the OCPO, two-thirds were opened by caregivers – 94% of which were birth parents, relatives or siblings to the children involved in the case. The largest area of growth in case closures was among those initiated by youth. The agency closed a total of 68 cases from youth which was a 74% jump from the previous fiscal year.

Of the cases closed by the OCPO during FY 2022-23, 30% involved concerns regarding how child welfare services handled reports of abuse and neglect. Access to services and personnel issues were the second and third-highest concerns – appearing in 21 and 19 percent of cases, respectively. Additionally, the OCPO continued working with the Devereux Colorado Unaccompanied Children's Service Program, to review the care provided to unaccompanied immigrant children and youth placed in licensed facilities in Colorado. However, on March 16, 2023, the OCPO was notified that Devereux was ending this program, citing concerns recruiting and retaining bilingual staff. The program discharged all clients by the end of March 2023.

Additional highlights from FY 2022-23 include:

Launch of Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Youth from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement – During the 2022 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly created the Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Youth from Running Away from Out-of-Home Care with House Bill 22-1375.² In September 2022, the OCPO's Policy Collaborative for Children & Families launched the task force to study why youth run from care and develop a consistent, prompt and effective response. Meeting seven times during FY 2022-23, the diverse 22-member group discussed the lived experiences of youth and professionals, system responses, runaway behaviors and predictors. Members also worked to address the insufficiency of quantitative data statewide, agency and facility protocols, practices in other states and the potential for a statewide response guide. The task force also commissioned focus groups through the University of Denver's Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab to provide first-hand perspectives from providers and youth in facilities. The task force's first-year status report was published and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on October 1, 2023.

¹ See Appendix A for Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman's Fiscal Year 2022-23 Annual Report

² See OCPO's Timothy Montoya Task Force webpage for meeting materials, reports and calendar:
<https://coloradocpo.org/special-initiative/montoya-task-force/>

Launch of Mandatory Reporting Task Force – With the passage of House Bill 22-1240, the Colorado General Assembly formed the Mandatory Reporting Task Force.³ The task force is charged with addressing 19 directives to consider the efficacy and equity of the state’s mandatory children abuse reporting law and its impact on children, families and professionals across the state. The 34-member task force was launched by the OCPO’s Policy Collaborative for Children & Families in December 2022 and met four times during FY 2022-23. Topics discussed during the fiscal year include concerns regarding the mandatory reporting law’s effectiveness, intentions of reporters, family services, the impact of race and ethnicity, lived experiences of youth and families and data collected during reporting. The task force’s first-year status report will be published and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on January 1, 2024.

Addressing Practice Concerns – Recognizing patterns in the experiences and concerns of individuals contacting the OCPO, the agency brought multiple practice concerns to the attention of state child protection agencies. For example, in June 2023, we delivered a letter to the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) after the OCPO was contacted by a client with concerns that the agency did not comply with state laws requiring public notice of unlicensed child care facilities providing improper child care. The OCPO alerted CDEC of its concerns after the OCPO’s review found that the agency may not have provided all required information on the Colorado Shines website. The CDEC responded immediately and addressed the OCPO’s concerns. Another letter was sent in June 2023 to the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) that detailed concerns with the practices and potential systemic bias by the Washington County Department of Human Services (WCDHS) in handling child welfare cases. Multiple cases opened by the OCPO concerned clients who allege their cases were negatively impacted by the actions of WCDHS. These concerns include allegations that the former director made derogatory statements about clients. The OCPO has requested that CDHS conduct an audit of the cases under the supervision of WCDHS’ former director and a review of notifications provided, if any, to families impacted by the actions of WCDHS. The OCPO is continuing to monitor this case and the CDHS’ response.

Identifying Systemic Issues – Appearing before members of Colorado’s Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee in June 2023, the OCPO detailed some issues impacting youth and families within the child welfare system. The OCPO outlined four primary areas of concern: (1) Insufficient monthly contacts from county agencies with the parents involved in their child welfare cases; (2) The absence of statewide ethical standards for caseworkers and any law or regulation to take adverse action against the certification of an individual who acts unethically or unlawfully; (3) The current safety tool used to assess the immediate safety of children

³ See OCPO’s Mandatory Reporting Task Force webpage for meeting materials, reports and calendar: <https://coloradocpo.org/special-initiative/mandatory-reporting-task-force/>

produces inconsistent results; and (4) Colorado's lack of law or regulation to ensure consistent and transparent standards regarding the quality of care provided to children and youth residing in residential treatment facilities.⁴ A series of recommendations for each issue was provided to the Committee. The OCPO has been involved in the drafting of several bills the Committee will consider moving forward on October 25, 2023.

Youth Outreach – Utilizing the youth focus groups and surveys facilitated by the OCPO during Fiscal Year 2021-22, the agency took unprecedented steps toward making youth with experience in Colorado's child protection system a central component of the agency's work. The agency designed new outreach campaigns based on the feedback the survey provided on existing agency materials. These concepts were then used in the agency's first digital marketing campaign with youth-related promotions reaching Colorado individuals who Googled words and phrases similar to what a youth seeking the OCPO's services would search for.

After securing funding for FY 2022-23, the OCPO began laying the foundation for the Tori Youth Voice Program, which will directly engage Colorado youth through focus groups, policy initiatives and special projects. Involving youth voice from the start of a policy initiative is a key priority for the OCPO. To continue developing the program, the OCPO met with Fostering Great Ideas, youth on the Lived Experts Action Panel, operated by the Office of the Colorado Child's Representative and AmeriCorps' Vista program. The agency will continue to develop this program.

⁴ See Appendix B for a copy of the memo the OCPO submitted to the Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee.

Going Forward

As is required under the Smart Measurement for Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent Government Reports Act (SMART Act C.R.S. § 2-7-204), the OCPO submitted its Fiscal Year 2023-24 Performance Plan (Plan) to the Gov. Jared Polis on July 1, 2023, and the Plan was posted online on July 1, 2023.⁵ The OCPO's Performance Plan contains the agency's strategic goals for FY 2023-24. These include expanding communication and engagement efforts, efficiently managing caseloads and research and establishing the CPO as a leader with respect to understanding child protection issues and best practices. Additionally, the Plan lists the specific strategies, processes, activities and metrics the CPO is using to help achieve these strategic goals. These efforts include monitoring demographic data to help expand services to youth populations that are overrepresented in the child protection system, including Black, Indigenous, Latino and youth of color.

Budget Status FY 2022-23

In June 2023, the CPO reverted \$59,692 to the General Fund from its program line. The factors that contributed to this were changes in staffing levels throughout the year which created vacancy savings. Specifically, the agency experienced multiple vacancies for the Client Services Analysts' positions and extended vacancies for two contract positions within the agency.

⁵ See Appendix C, Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman's Fiscal Year 2023-23 SMART Act Performance Plan

FY 2024-25 Decision Items

November 1, 2023

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY25	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)	\$ 434,046	\$ 434,046	\$ -	6.0
Total Program:	\$ 434,046	\$ 434,046	\$ -	6.0
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
RI-01 - Data Analyst FTE	\$ 118,880	\$ 118,880	\$ -	1.0
RI-02 - Sr. Client Services Analyst	\$ 118,685	\$ 118,685	\$ -	1.0
RI-03 - Administrative Office Specialist	\$ 100,181	\$ 100,181	\$ -	1.0
RI-04 - Information Technology	\$ 31,300	\$ 31,300	\$ -	0.0
RI-05 - Staff Training and Development	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -	0.0
RI-06 - Communications	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ -	0.0
Program Costs	\$ 434,046	\$ 434,046	\$ -	3.0

Budget Request Summary Fiscal Year 2024-25

RI-01 Data Analyst – \$118,880 annually and 1.0 FTE

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY25	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)	\$118,880	\$118,880	\$ -	1.0
Total Program:	\$ 118,880	\$ 118,880	\$ -	1.0
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
Program Costs	\$ 118,880	\$ 118,880	\$ -	1.0

Two critical components of the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman’s (OCPO) statutory charge are to “*educate the public concerning child maltreatment and the role of the community in strengthening families and keeping children safe,*”⁶ and “*recommend to the general assembly, the executive director, and any appropriate agency or entity statutory, budgetary, regulatory, and administrative changes, including systemic changes, to improve the safety of and promote better outcomes for children and families receiving child protection services in*

⁶ See C.R.S. §19-3.3-103(c)

Colorado.”⁷

The OCPO has a custom, internal database built on a Salesforce platform. Currently, the OCPO’s database holds data concerning 7,748 cases reviewed by the agency. The OCPO selected the Salesforce platform in part, for its robust reporting capabilities. Unfortunately, extracting reports and analyzing data sets requires a unique skill set from someone with expertise in this area. The OCPO staff do not have the bandwidth nor the expertise to do so.

Using this database, the OCPO’s Client Services Team obtains the following types of case information: client demographics, agencies involved in complaints, alleged law and regulatory violations, practice concerns and final OCPO case outcomes. The OCPO also tracks the nature and area of concern and monitors nearly 40 regional and statewide child protection trends. Examples of trends the OCPO has identified include: the lack of monthly contacts by caseworkers with parents and children, misuse of the Colorado Family Safety Assessment and Risk Tool, bias and discrimination by child protection professionals working with families, citizens’ lack of access to behavioral health care services, and restraint and seclusion of youth in facilities. It is vital that child protection professionals understand the nature of OCPO clients’ concerns but also the prevalence of these issues.

The OCPO sits as a truly unique state entity, charged with serving as a resource for individuals concerned, frustrated or confused by the child protection services they are receiving. Given this distinct charge, the agency has a duty to monitor its case data on two fronts: (1) What does the OCPO’s data demonstrate about how the child protection system is serving all citizens including communities of color, people with disabilities and under-resourced communities; and (2) Are child protection services, and the OCPO, providing these populations with services that are improving their outcomes.

Currently, the OCPO struggles to inform agencies, stakeholders and the public about the many concerning issues that impact the child protection system. While the agency does provide general information in its annual report, the information is often based on anecdotal evidence and broad, high-level data from the OCPO’s internal database. A data analyst would be charged with developing a plan to build and implement an external reporting system. The OCPO envisions building a reporting system that can timely and consistently inform professionals working with children and family about gaps and needed improvements in the state’s child protection system.

In addition, to enhance the OCPO’s ability to report to external agencies and partners, the OCPO needs to build a system that also measures the effectiveness of its internal programs including developing quality assurance standards. The OCPO wants to analyze its data to ensure that it is serving Colorado citizens in the most efficient and effective way possible. To do this, the OCPO

⁷ See C.R.S. §19-3.3-103(e)

needs an expert who can identify what type of data best captures client experiences in the child protection system, including its experiences with the OCPO.

The OCPO contacted other independent agencies within the Colorado Judicial Branch (Judicial Branch) that employ a full-time position focused on data collection and analysis.⁸ The OCPO has modeled this position – and the correlating requested salary – based on these examples. In all examples reviewed by the OCPO, independent agencies utilize this position, in part, for reviewing internal data and developing quality assurance standards and protocols.

The OCPO is requesting \$118,880 (including PERA, Medicare, AED/SAED, and STD) and 1.0 FTE to hire a new full-time data analyst.

The OCPO is seeking an annual salary of \$86,496 for the position, which is comparable to similar positions in other independent agencies. This salary is necessary to attract applicants with experience collecting and analyzing complex data sets and developing systems for such work. This would also keep the salary comparable with other manager positions in the agency.

Impact if request is not granted: The OCPO will maintain its efforts to continue assessing internal and external data sets as workload and skillsets allow. However, the agency will not be able to consistently assess its data in the timely manner described above. The agency will also not be able to assess its own programming and effectiveness. Additionally, the OCPO will not be able to proactively monitor internal and external data sets for disproportional impacts to communities of color and systemic issues impacting the child protection system.

⁸ In researching this position, the OCPO contacted the Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel and the Office of the Alternative Defense Counsel.

PERSONAL SERVICES		Data Analyst FY25 Total	Year 2 Total (FY26)
Number of FTE per class title		1.00	1.00
Monthly base salary		\$ -	\$ -
Number of months charged in FY24-25		11	12
Salary		\$ 79,292	\$ 86,500
PERA (Staff, GF)	11.57%	\$ 9,174	\$ 10,008
Medicare (Staff, GF)	1.45%	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,254
Subtotal Base Salary/PERA/Medicare		\$ 89,615	\$ 97,762
SUBTOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES FTE		\$ 89,615 1.0	\$ 97,762 1.0
OPERATING			
Phone (staff)	\$ 450	\$ 450	\$ 450
Supplies (staff)	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
SUBTOTAL OPERATING	\$ 950	\$ 950	\$ 950
CAPITAL OUTLAY			
Office Furniture (staff)	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	
Computer/Software (staff)	\$ 4,360	\$ 4,360	\$ 400
SUBTOTAL CAPITAL OUTLAY:	\$ 9,360	\$ 9,360	\$ 400
SUBTOTAL:		\$ 99,925	\$ 99,112
CENTRAL APPROPRIATIONS			
Health/Life/Dental	\$ 11,500	\$ 10,542	\$ 11,500
Short-Term Disability	0.16%	\$ 127	\$ 138
Family Medical Leave	0.45%	\$ 357	\$ 389
AED*	5.00%	\$ 3,965	\$ 4,325
SAED*	5.00%	\$ 3,965	\$ 4,325
Central Appropriations Subtotal:		\$ 18,955	\$ 20,678
GRAND TOTAL ALL COSTS:		\$ 118,880	\$ 119,790

RI-02 Senior Client Services Analyst – \$118,685 annually and 1.0 FTE

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY25	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)	\$118,685	\$118,685	\$ -	1.0
Total Program:	\$ 118,685	\$ 118,685	\$ -	1.0
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
Program Costs	\$ 118,685	\$ 118,685	\$ -	1.0

The OCPO provides free and confidential services to hundreds of citizens each year who have urgent questions and concerns about the sufficiency of services provided to children and families by the state's child protection system.

These citizens include parents, grandparents, kin, youth, medical professionals, lawyers, social workers, police officers and many others. Citizens call with a variety of concerns including worries that a child's safety and well-being is not being properly addressed by local and state child protection agencies. Most citizens who contact the OCPO are often in crisis – often having attempted to maneuver various local and state agencies to resolve their problems. Often, by the time citizens contact the OCPO their concerns require timely review and delays can have a significant impact in their lives. As such citizens are often frustrated, upset and overwhelmed when they call.

The OCPO employs a highly qualified staff to field these calls. OCPO staff possess many years of experience in the child protection system, frequently as former caseworkers, and are knowledgeable about how the state's child welfare and behavioral health systems operate. They are also specially trained in mediation and de-escalation techniques so that they can work more effectively with clients in crisis.

In each case a client services analyst (CSA) completes the following:

- Requests and reviews any information, records or documents, including records of third parties, that are necessary to conduct a thorough and independent review of a case.
- Independently and impartially review cases.
- Seek resolution of cases by working directly with both clients and community agencies.
- Recommend changes and promote best practices to improve the state's child protection services.

Each case brought to the OCPO is unique and can involve a review of multiple state systems, services, laws and regulations. The OCPO prioritizes high-quality customer service in all its cases. It is not unusual for a CSA to spend several hours on the phone with a client to learn about their concerns and help them find solutions to their problems.

Caseload Increase

The OCPO's Client Services Team is comprised of the Director of Client Services, a Senior Client Services Analyst (SCSA) and five CSAs. The Director of Client Services directly supervises the SCSA, and three CSAs, while the SCSA supervises the remaining two CSAs. The citizen demand for the OCPO's services has grown consistently – and substantially – during the recent fiscal years. Since Fiscal Year 2018-19, the OCPO has seen an average increase of 18% during the past four years. During the past fiscal year, the OCPO opened a record number of cases – totaling 1,119 cases.

The increase in cases has occurred for three primary reasons, including increased referrals by local human service agencies, the passage of Senate Bill 23-210⁹ and the OCPO's increased public outreach efforts.

CPO CASE HISTORY	TOTAL # OF CASES
Fiscal Year 2022-23	1,119
Fiscal Year 2021-22	982
Fiscal Year 2020-21	852
Fiscal Year 2019-20	725
Fiscal Year 2018-19	575

With few exceptions, the OCPO aims to complete each case review within 60-business days.¹⁰ For CSAs to meet this mark, while also taking on new cases, the OCPO has determined that each CSA should carry an average caseload of 20 cases.

Currently, each CSA, the SCSA and the Director of Client Services are carrying an average of 40 cases. This is 20 cases more than the desired caseload. Operating at this capacity does not accommodate extended leave or vacancies for any of these positions. In the past, when the OCPO experienced a vacancy in any one of the CSA positions, caseloads for each of the remaining analysts reached 50 to 60 cases, creating a backlog that took months to resolve. In the past, this has created delays in the timeliness in which the OCPO may address clients' concerns.

The increase in cases also impacts the OCPO's ability to provide an adequate supervisory structure for the CSAs. Currently the Director of Client Services supervises three of the six CSA and the SCSA position, operates the program and carries a caseload. During the past two years, the OCPO has attempted to significantly decrease the Director of Client Services' caseload. Ideally, this would allow the position to focus on supervising the CSA team and running the

⁹ Senate [Bill 23-210](#) requires local human service departments to routinely provide clients with the OCPO's contact information and case procedures as an option to resolve disputes. This has increased the number of clients that know about the OCPO and who make outreach to the agency.

¹⁰ The OCPO contacts all clients within two-business days. The OCPO aims to complete each case review within 60-business days. However, the length of time that a case remains open is largely dependent upon the time it takes a government agency to respond to the OCPO's inquiries and questions on a case. It is not uncommon for an agency to take several weeks to provide information on a case and resolve it with the OCPO client.

program. However, this goal has not been achieved due to the rising number of cases and increase in cases involving complex, sensitive and multi-systemic issues.

Based on the growth experienced during previous fiscal years, the OCPO anticipates it will continue to see a steady increase in cases each year in the foreseeable future. The impact of these added cases, without a corresponding increase in personnel will cause service delays for Colorado citizens and will impact the CPO's ability to provide appropriate support and training to the CSA team.

The OCPO is requesting \$118,685 and 1.0 FTE for an additional SCSA position (including Medicare, AED/SAED and STD). This position would fall into the following category:

Probation Services Analyst II (R43486)¹¹

Salary Range: \$73,884 – \$79,752 – \$102,216

The CPO is requesting an annual salary of \$86,329. The OCPO is seeking a salary between the mid and high points of the salary range to keep this position consistent with the salary of the current SCSA.

The OCPO is requesting this senior position for two reasons: (1) To reduce case numbers for the Director of Client Services so this position may provide appropriate supervision to existing staff; and (2) To reduce the number of staff the Director of Client Services is required to provide daily supervision from four staff members to two. Duties for this position would include:

- Carry a full caseload while also providing support and ongoing training of CSAs.
- Provide supervision for two CSAs.
- Provide CSAs with advanced writing support by reviewing and editing their external-facing written product.
- Serve as a subject matter expert.
- Provide updates to the Director of Client Services regarding case processes and new state policies and procedures to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Provide input into CSA performance evaluations.
- Assist with preparation for quarterly and annual data reports as required.
- Support CSAs by assisting with research and database utilization.

Impact if request is not granted: Without an additional SCSA, the CPO will not be able to maintain caseloads of 20 for each CSA. This will result in cases remaining open longer and delayed service for citizens.

¹¹ See Appendix D for the Probation Services Analyst II Job Description

Additionally, the OCPO will be unable to ensure that the Director of the CSA team does not carry a full caseload. Requiring the Director of Client Services to carry a full caseload means that the OCPO's CSA program will lack sufficient oversight and consistency in practice which could negatively impact the overall quality of services provided to Colorado citizens. Additionally, it will impact the quality of training and supervision that can be provided to the other CSA's thereby impacting the OCPO's ability to recruit and retain employees.

		Client Services Analyst FY25 Total	Year 2 Total (FY26)
PERSONAL SERVICES			
Number of FTE per class title		1.00	1.00
Monthly base salary		\$ -	\$ -
Number of months charged in FY24-25		11	12
Salary		\$ 79,134	\$ 86,328
PERA (Staff, GF)	11.57%	\$ 9,156	\$ 9,988
Medicare (Staff, GF)	1.45%	\$ 1,147	\$ 1,252
Subtotal Base Salary/PERA/Medicare		\$ 89,437	\$ 97,568
SUBTOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES FTE		\$ 89,437 1.0	\$ 97,568 1.0
OPERATING			
Phone (staff)	\$ 450	\$ 450	\$ 450
Supplies (staff)	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
SUBTOTAL OPERATING	\$ 950	\$ 950	\$ 950
CAPITAL OUTLAY			
Office Furniture (staff)	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	
Computer/Software (staff)	\$ 4,360	\$ 4,360	\$ 400
SUBTOTAL CAPITAL OUTLAY:	\$ 9,360	\$ 9,360	\$ 400
SUBTOTAL:		\$ 99,747	\$ 98,918
CENTRAL APPROPRIATIONS			
Health/Life/Dental	\$ 11,500	\$ 10,542	\$ 11,500
Short-Term Disability	0.16%	\$ 127	\$ 138
Family Medical Leave	0.45%	\$ 356	\$ 388
AED*	5.00%	\$ 3,957	\$ 4,316
SAED*	5.00%	\$ 3,957	\$ 4,316
Central Appropriations Subtotal:		\$ 18,938	\$ 20,659
GRAND TOTAL ALL COSTS:		\$ 118,685	\$ 119,578

RI-03 Administrative Office Specialist – \$100,181 annually and 1.0 FTE

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY25	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)	\$100,181	\$100,181	\$ -	1.0
Total Program:	\$ 100,181	\$ 100,181	\$ -	1.0
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
Program Costs	\$ 100,181	\$ 100,181	\$ -	1.0

The OCPO requests 1 FTE administrative support person to streamline day-to-day business operations, enhance staff productivity and to allow staff members to focus on their core job responsibilities. The OCPO currently employs 1.0 FTE, a Director of Administrative Services. This position has grown from one which strictly handles ministerial tasks, to one whose responsibilities include operationalizing the OCPO's financial, accounting and human resource functions.

During the past seven years, the OCPO has grown in staff size from 3 FTEs to 12 FTEs and more than a dozen vendors and multiple contract positions. The volume of cases the agency receives has increased as has the number of systemic reviews. The OCPO has also increased the number of policy meetings that it hosts and facilitates for systemic policy projects. The OCPO's Director of Administrative Services has not only taken on more substantive duties, but also has absorbed this increased workload created by additional staff without corresponding resources for several years. The OCPO is requesting a full-time administrative office specialist to support the Director of Administrative Services position.

When the OCPO was first established, an administrative position was created to address day-to-day tasks such as answering phones, sorting mail, preparing correspondence, photocopying, making files, ordering office supplies and handling phone calls from the public. During recent fiscal years, this position has taken on tasks that are less administrative in nature and are more fully imbedded in the agency's core business functions – namely, facilitation of human resources and financial matters.

Compared to other state agencies, the OCPO is relatively small and does not employ staff specifically designated to perform budgetary, accounting and human resource functions. In the past, the OCPO had a memorandum of understanding with the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO) to provide support in these areas. However, the support provided by the SCAO was at a very high level. The OCPO was expected to handle all day-to-day work associated with these tasks. For example, while the SCAO provided the OCPO with human resource advice related to changes in employee benefit packages and discipline/termination matters, they did not handle

the recruitment, interviewing, on-boarding of new employees or administration of leave for employees. Additionally, while the SCAO provided accounting services to the OCPO, the OCPO handled all business transactions leading up to that point including negotiating vendor contracts, ensuring vendor contracts comply with SCAO fiscal requirements, documenting expenses in Quick Books, managing all expenses, ensuring payment and processing of all invoices, maintaining inventory lists and ensuring compliance with the OCPO's document retention policies.

The SCAO will cease providing all services to the OCPO in July 2024, and such assistance is anticipated to come from the newly created Administrative Services Unit for Independent Agencies (ASIA). However, the OCPO will continue to be responsible for all in-house administrative functions. For example, while it is envisioned that ASIA will provide payroll support, the OCPO will continue to be responsible for entering time, approving leave cases and working with staff. ASIA will serve as the conduit between this work and Judicial's systems. As such, this additional position is necessary to absorb the additional workload created by the increased number of staff and expansion of program areas. Additionally, this position will ensure that the Director of Administrative Services is no longer tasked with absorbing this workload and, instead, may focus on their specific job duties.

As the OCPO has grown – staff, financial and human resource needs have also increased. The OCPO needs an administrative support person for ministerial tasks including general program support, records management, correspondence, meeting and event coordination, travel and logistics management. Until now, the OCPO has been able to manage these administrative tasks by delegating them to various individuals. However, this model is no longer sustainable. Staff require assistance to complete their job responsibilities and allow for the greatest efficiency possible.

The OCPO is requesting \$100,181 and 1.0 FTE for an administrative office specialist (including Medicare, AED/SAED and STD). This position would fall into the following category:

Administrative Office Specialist II (R41804)¹²

Salary Range: \$50,232 – \$62,436 – \$74,640

The OCPO is requesting an annual salary of \$64,167. The OCPO is requesting a salary slightly above the midpoint so it may recruit applicants with at least one to two years' experience in a similar position.

Impact if Request not granted: The OCPO will be unable to provide OCPO staff with administrative support to complete their daily responsibilities. This will delay staff from

¹² See Appendix E for the Administrative Office Specialist II Job Description

completing tasks in a timely manner and will negatively impact the integrity and services delivered by the OCPO.

		Admin Office Specialist FY25 Total	Year 2 Total (FY26)
PERSONAL SERVICES			
Number of FTE per class title		1.00	1.00
Monthly base salary		\$ -	\$ -
Number of months charged in FY24-25		11	12
Salary		\$ 64,167	\$ 70,000
PERA (Staff, GF)	11.57%	\$ 7,424	\$ 8,099
Medicare (Staff, GF)	1.45%	\$ 930	\$ 1,015
Subtotal Base Salary/PERA/Medicare		\$ 72,521	\$ 79,114
SUBTOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES		\$ 72,521	\$ 79,114
FTE		1.0	1.0
OPERATING			
Phone (staff)	\$ 450	\$ 450	\$ 450
Supplies (staff)	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
SUBTOTAL OPERATING	\$ 950	\$ 950	\$ 950
CAPITAL OUTLAY			
Office Furniture (staff)	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	
Computer/Software (staff)	\$ 4,360	\$ 4,360	\$ 400
SUBTOTAL CAPITAL OUTLAY:	\$ 9,360	\$ 9,360	\$ 400
SUBTOTAL:		\$ 82,831	\$ 80,464
CENTRAL APPROPRIATIONS			
Health/Life/Dental	\$ 11,500	\$ 10,542	\$ 11,500
Short-Term Disability	0.16%	\$ 103	\$ 112
Family Medical Leave	0.45%	\$ 289	\$ 315
AED*	5.00%	\$ 3,208	\$ 3,500
SAED*	5.00%	\$ 3,208	\$ 3,500
Central Appropriations Subtotal:		\$ 17,350	\$ 18,927
GRAND TOTAL ALL COSTS:		\$ 100,181	\$ 99,391

RI-04 – IT Upgrades and Support \$31,300 (\$14,000 one-time / \$17,300 annually)

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY25	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)	\$ 31,300	\$ 31,300	\$ -	0.0
Total Program:	\$ 31,300	\$ 31,300	\$ -	0.0
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
Program Costs	\$ 31,300	\$ 31,300	\$ -	0.0

The OCPO opened as an independent agency in the Judicial Branch in January 2016. At that time, as an independent agency, the OCPO established its own information technology (IT) systems. This included both the necessary hardware, software and IT support services. When the OCPO opened as an independent agency, the agency had a total of three employees. Currently, the OCPO has a total of 12 full-time employees. However, the agency has not addressed or updated its IT infrastructure or its support systems since 2016.

In addition to its increased staff, the OCPO has also substantially expanded its services and caseloads – nearly tripling the number of cases handled per year since 2016. This has required the OCPO to expand the internal systems and programs utilized by the agency. Most notably, the OCPO has developed a unique Salesforce database for its casework. One of the reasons the OCPO selected Salesforce as its database platform was the ability of the database to be continually updated to accommodate the needs of the agency and the cases being brought to the OCPO. To ensure the agency is responsive to the needs of citizens and the legislature, the OCPO is continually updating its database to better capture case data and streamline processes – such as uploading media files and supporting evidence.

Finally, like all state agencies, the OCPO had to drastically change its daily operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the utilization of online meeting platforms, cloud-based services and other programs that allow employees to work seamlessly while outside the office. While the OCPO has returned to a mandatory hybrid schedule – with employees splitting their time between the office and home – the agency continues to utilize these programs and systems. This also includes ensuring security measures are in place to protect agency data and information. Similar to most state agencies, maintaining a hybrid work schedule has become a key element in recruiting and retaining staff. As such, the OCPO has also worked to provide staff with an appropriate level of equipment in both their home and in-office settings.

The culminating impact of this increase in IT needs and support – combined with the outdated systems the OCPO is currently working on – is the agency's systems are operating in a precarious state. Many of the OCPO's crucial hardware systems are at, or nearing, the end of the expected

lifespan for such systems. Any interruption to the OCPO's IT systems will directly correlate with delays and impacts to the services the agency provides for more than a thousand citizens each year. As such, the CPO is requesting funding for two IT needs.

RI-04(A) Replace OCPO's Server – \$14,000 one-time

The OCPO's current server was installed when the agency opened as an independent agency in 2016. The OCPO has continued to operate with this server. However, the OCPO has been advised that, beginning in January 2023, the server is now exceeding its recommended lifespan. The OCPO's IT support vendor has recommended the agency prioritize obtaining a replacement server immediately.

Based on estimates received by the OCPO, the OCPO is requesting one-time funds of \$14,000 to replace its existing server. This amount will cover the purchase of a new server, installation of the server, the requisite switches and adapters and a five-year warranty for the server itself.

Impact if request is not granted: The OCPO will continue to operate on a server that has exceeded its recommended lifespan. This places the agency's operations at risk of delay and interruption if the server fails. Such an event will directly impact the services the OCPO provides to citizens who contact the agency.

RI-04(B) Adjust for IT Services Inflation – \$17,300 annually

Like its server, the OCPO has not substantially adjusted its IT support budget since becoming an independent agency. However, as stated above, the needs of the agency have changed significantly and the OCPO now requires additional, annual funds to ensure its IT systems are adequate to ensure the functionality and security of the OCPO. The requested funds break down into four general categories.

- ***Security Updates and Data Storage – \$3,300 annually***

The OCPO currently has security software and protocols in place for the agency. However, these security systems have not been substantially updated since 2016. The OCPO's IT support vendor has suggested the agency enhance its security and privacy protocols, including additional firewall systems, antivirus software and data encryption tools. The suggested security and privacy measures are far more advanced than what the agency is currently utilizing and may help to streamline some of the OCPO's internal processes. For example, the requested funds will not only protect the agency from outside threats, but it will also make it easier for the agency to back up files and quickly recover files in the event of an unexpected crash. The OCPO's IT

support vendor has recommended the agency prioritize additional security systems immediately.

The OCPO is requesting \$3,300 annually (\$275 per month) for enhanced security systems and correlating data storage.

- ***IT Support Expenses – \$6,000 annually***

As stated above, the OCPO has worked with the same IT support vendor – Computer Crews – since 2016. This vendor has continually worked with the agency to ensure the agency is receiving needed services at the most cost-effective rate possible. In fact, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic Computer Crews decreased the monthly rate it was charging the OCPO for unlimited helpdesk services. Maintaining this service is crucial as it allows employees to quickly resolve computer and technical issues at home or in the office – limiting the interruptions to the agency’s workflow. Computer Crews has continued to under charge the agency for IT services. Up until September 2023, the vendor was charging the agency to provide services for seven full-time employees but was actually providing services for 12 employees. Understandably, the vendor has notified the OCPO that it will need to increase the OCPO’s monthly charge to accommodate the full team.

During FY 2023-24, the OCPO did receive \$10,000 to restore its operating budget from the cuts entered during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the increase cited by Computer Crews exceeds what the OCPO was paying for IT support prior to the cut by \$6,000.

As such, the OCPO is requesting \$6,000 annually to accommodate an increase in IT support services.

- ***Equipment Replacement -- \$6,000 annually***

As stated above, the OCPO received \$10,000 to restore its operating line during the past fiscal year. A portion of those funds was used to replace outdated computers for staff. However, as the OCPO continues to assess its IT needs and operate as a hybrid workplace model, the agency has determined that it must implement a more effective system for replacing equipment regularly.

On average, it costs the OCPO approximately \$2,000 for a basic computer set up for employees that they may utilize at the office and at home. This figure – which accounts for the \$400 common policy – is enough to purchase a standard computer

and dock for an employee. The recommended lifespan of each set up is three years, not to exceed four years. Currently, the OCPO keeps each computer in rotation for at least four years. As a result, at any given time, approximately one-fourth of the OCPO staff are operating on computers at a higher risk of failing. Additionally, the OCPO has a limited number of back-up computers to handout in such an event.

As such, the OCPO is requesting \$6,000 annually to implement an equipment replacement program for the current 12 full-time employees of the agency. These funds will allow the OCPO to replace three computers each year to ensure all computers are operating within the suggested lifespan.

- ***Ongoing Updates to the OCPO Database – \$2,000 annually***

The OCPO is continually working to ensure its database properly serves the needs of the agency. Historically, the agency has worked to update tracking tools, data entry integration and additional entry fields that allow the OCPO to better capture the demographics about the clients its serves. The database is the single best tool for the agency to improve how it serves Colorado citizens. As such, the OCPO has prioritized updating the database as needed. However, these updates have historically been dependent on the agency experiencing vacancy savings. While the agency has experienced vacancy savings during the past three fiscal years, the OCPO does not want to be dependent on these funds to improve the database. The requested funds are to ensure the agency has a recurring budget to maintain the functionality and health of its database each year.

As such, the OCPO is requesting \$2,000 annually to ensure the agency is able to continue maintaining the health of its database and ensuring it serves the needs of the agency effectively.

Impact if request is not granted: The OCPO will continue making efforts to ensure that agency data is secure, and staff have adequate support and equipment. However, the agency will continue to operate without systems recommended by IT professionals and on equipment at risk of failing. Without upgrades, many of the OCPO's systems run the risk of becoming obsolete within the next two years. Any impacts to the functionality of the agency's IT systems will have a direct impact to the services provided to Colorado citizens.

<i>Information Technology</i>		Cost	FY25 Total	Year 2 Total (FY26)
Server Replacement		\$ 14,000	\$ 14,000	\$ -
IT Inflation Adjustments		\$ 17,300	\$ 17,300	\$ 7,000
TOTAL REQUEST:		\$ 31,300	\$ 31,300	\$ 7,000

RI-05 Staff Development and Training – \$50,000 annually

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY25	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -	0.0
Total Program:	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -	0.0
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
Program Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -	0.0

The expertise and skillsets of the OCPO's 12 employees are as vast as the scope of the OCPO's jurisdiction. The OCPO employs diverse professionals, including child welfare, communications and public policy experts. Each employee requires specialized and ongoing training to effectively carry out their respective duties. Additionally, like all employers, the OCPO recognizes the evolved expectations of the current workforce. Providing staff with recurring training, and professional development and growth, has become key to recruiting and retaining staff.

However, the OCPO does not have the necessary funding to ensure each staff member receives such training and development each year. Historically, the agency has relied on vacancy and surplus funds to provide training and development opportunities for staff. While precarious, the use of such funds has provided the OCPO with the confirmation that engaging staff in these development opportunities benefits the health of the agency and, more important, improves the services the agency provides citizens. For example, the OCPO experienced a substantial amount of vacancy savings during the past fiscal year. As such, the OCPO was able to send the majority of staff to the United States Ombudsman Association Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. During this conference, some staff were able to attend the New Ombudsman training and all staff were able to attend advance classes covering topics ranging from addressing the needs of clients in crisis, how to treat clients through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens and addressing secondary trauma. After returning from the conference all staff have started implementing these skill sets and using them to address internal practices and external casework.

Additionally, the OCPO has worked to ensure that customer service is a top priority, and this includes providing staff adequate training to ensure they are able to hear and identify each

client's concerns. To enhance this skillset, the OCPO ensures all client services analysts have an opportunity to attend a 40-hour course on mediation through the Colorado Bar Association. These and other trainings have helped to elevate staff and provide them with the necessary tools to thoroughly and compassionately address client needs. But each of these training courses has been contingent on surplus and vacancy funds. Ideally, the OCPO will operate at full capacity during future fiscal years. However, doing so will all but eliminate the training and development budget the agency currently has.

Based on past years, the OCPO has determined that an annual training budget of \$2,000 per employee – \$24,000 annually – would allow the agency to provide each employee to participate in one conference or multiple online training courses per year. As stated above, each position in the OCPO requires a different skillset, and many require continuing education to maintain various licenses. By establishing a dedicated training budget, the OCPO will be able to ensure staff are able to maintain the necessary skillsets to do their work and stay up to date in their relative fields.

Secondly, the OCPO was provided one-time funds of \$35,000 in FY 2023-24 to contract with a vendor for equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) consultation and support. These funds are dedicated to evaluating the OCPO's own practices, messaging, and actions, and determining if they are conducive to EDI principles. This work, however, is not accomplished in one year. In fact, to ensure the agency is truly considering EDI principles and ensuring it is serving citizens in an inclusive way, the OCPO must continue to provide staff with training regarding explicit and implicit bias and continue to evaluate its own practices. This recurring evaluation and training are necessary to ensure changes are implemented and the agency adheres to EDI principles on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, in its [FY 2023-24 Agency Summary and Budget Request](#), the OCPO noted that similar sized agencies currently employ full-time positions to monitor and carry out this work. In that request, the OCPO stated that it would need to evaluate if subsequent requests and staff would be needed. At this time, the OCPO has determined that \$26,000 in annual funding will allow the OCPO to continue this work, through the use of outside vendors and training. As the agency continues to grow and evaluate its practices, it will continue to assess if a full-time employee is appropriate in future years.

As such, the OCPO is seeking a total of \$50,000 annually for dedicated training funds and ongoing staff development. The agency will allocate approximately \$24,000 for staff training and \$26,000 to ongoing EDI assessment and development.

Impact if request is not granted: The OCPO will continue to dedicate vacancy and surplus funds to supporting staff development and training opportunities. It will also continue to independently work to implement EDI principles and evaluate agency practices. However, without additional, dedicated funding to these efforts, the agency will only be able to provide these services as resources and staff time allow. The agency may also struggle with recruitment and retention of employees seeking positions with more opportunity for skill development.

<i>Staff Development and Training</i>		FY25 Total	Year 2 Total (FY26)
Staff Development and Training		\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
TOTAL REQUEST:		\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000

RI-06 Communications Budget – \$15,000 annually

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY25	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ -	0.0
Total Program:	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ -	0.0
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
Program Costs	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ -	0.0

As stated above, the OCPO has a statutory duty to, “*educate the public concerning child maltreatment and the role of the community in strengthening families and keeping children safe.*”¹³ The agency has long recognized the importance of fulfilling this charge as it provides citizens, legislators and stakeholder partners with information about the issues identified by the OCPO. The agency also prioritizes connecting citizens with the OCPO’s services, which they are entitled to and should have knowledge of. As such, during the past five fiscal years, the OCPO has dedicated resources to a variety of methods to ensure the agency is clearly and consistently communicating with the public it serves. Most recently, the OCPO was provided with a .5 FTE to make its part-time Communications Coordinator a full-time position. (That position has now been named the Director of Public Affairs.) This position has been instrumental in assessing how the agency may continue its outreach to various populations in Colorado – most notably children, youth and communities of color.

During the past fiscal year, the OCPO has worked to determine where to best focus its communication efforts. The agency has initiated a number of outreach and education initiatives. The most successful of which were paid social media ads that allowed the OCPO to focus its efforts on connecting with certain populations and in-person community outreach events.

The OCPO utilized approximately \$1,400 in vacancy savings during the fourth quarter of FY 2022-23 to purchase a series of paid social media ads. This new outreach strategy allowed the agency to focus its efforts on reaching youth, caregivers and professionals in every region of the state. During the 11-day campaign, ads featuring information about the OCPO were viewed 37,232

¹³ See C.R.S. §19-3.3-103(c)

times. This represents a 73% increase in views, compared to all of the social media the agency completed between March 2022 and March 2023. During the five months following the ad campaign, the OCPO saw a significant increase in the number of cases brought to the agency each month. On average, the agency saw a 34.8 percent increase in cases brought to the OCPO during that five-month period, compared to the same period the year before. While the OCPO was able to utilize vacancy funds to pay for the ads during the past fiscal year, the agency cannot guarantee that it will have similar funding during future years.

Additionally, following the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency protocols, the OCPO has initiated in-person community outreach events. For example, the OCPO met with youth and community members, in-person, at two events this summer. Both events demonstrated the need for the agency to connect in person with citizens, agencies and providers. However, the agency does not have funds to ensure the agency participates in multiple in-person events each year.

As such, the OCPO is requesting \$15,000 annually to support its outreach and education initiatives through focused ad campaigns and in-person outreach events.

Impact if request is not granted: The OCPO will continue its efforts to find ways to connect with citizens and agencies. However, without dedicated funding, such efforts will be limited by available resources.

		FY25 Total	Year 2 Total (FY26)
Communications		\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
TOTAL REQUEST:		\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000

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FY 2024-25 Summary of Change Requests

Schedule 10

Request Name	Interagency Review	Requires Legislation	Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Cash Funds	Reappropriated	Federal
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Non-Prioritized Request

None	N/A	N/A	\$0	0.0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
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Prioritized Request

OCPO - R01 Data Analyst FTE	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$118,880	1.0	\$118,880	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R02 Sr. Client Services Analyst FTE	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$118,685	1.0	\$118,685	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R03 Administrative Office Specialist FTE	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$100,181	1.0	\$100,181	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R04 Information Technology	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$31,300	0.0	\$31,300	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R05 Staff Training and Development	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R06 Communications	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$15,000	0.0	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal Prioritized Request			\$434,046	\$3	\$434,046	\$0	\$0	\$0

Total for Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman			\$434,046	\$3	\$434,046	\$0	\$0	\$0
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FY 2024-25 Budget Request - 09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**Schedule 02**

	Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Cash Funds	Reappr	Federal
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FY 2021-22 Actual Expenditures

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$1,119,781	9.9	\$1,119,781	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total For: FY 2021-22 Actual Expenditures	\$1,119,781	9.9	\$1,119,781	\$0	\$0	\$0

FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditures

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$1,635,111	10.5	\$1,635,111	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total For: FY 2021-22 Actual Expenditures	\$1,635,111	10.5	\$1,635,111	\$0	\$0	\$0

2023-24 Initial Appropriation

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total For: FY 2023-24 Initial Appropriation	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0

FY 2024-25 Governor's Budget Request

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$2,498,136	15.0	\$2,498,136	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total For: FY 2024-25 Elected Official Request	\$2,498,136	15.0	\$2,498,136	\$0	\$0	\$0

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**Schedule 3A**

				Cash	Reappropriated	Federal
FY 2021-22 Actual Expenditures	Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Funds	Funds	Funds

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman,**Program Costs**

SB 21-205 Long Appropriations Bill	\$1,071,053	9.0	\$1,071,053	\$0	\$0	\$0
HB 21-1313 Child Protection Ombudsman and Immigrant Children	\$90,600	0.9	\$90,600	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2021-22 Final Appropriation	\$1,161,653	9.9	\$1,161,653	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2021-22 Final Expenditure Authority	\$1,161,653	9.9	\$1,161,653	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2021-22 Actual Expenditures	\$1,119,781	9.9	\$1,119,781	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2021-22 Reversion (Overexpenditure)	\$41,872	0.0	\$41,872	\$0	\$0	\$0

FY 2021-22 Personal Services Allocation	\$1,026,471	9.9	\$1,026,471	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2021-22 Total All Other Operating Allocation	\$93,311	0.0	\$93,311	\$0	\$0	\$0

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**Schedule 3B**

				Cash	Reappropriated	Federal
FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditures	Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Funds	Funds	Funds

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman,**Program Costs**

HB22-1329 Long Bill	\$1,355,945	10.5	\$1,355,945	\$0	\$0	\$0
HB22-1133 Family And Medical Leave Insurance Fund	(\$1,533)	0.0	(\$1,533)	\$0	\$0	\$0
HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters	\$97,500	0.0	\$97,500	\$0	\$0	\$0
HB22-1375 Child Residential Treatment And Runaway Youth	\$99,500	0.0	\$99,500	\$0	\$0	\$0
SB23-120 Judicial Department Supplemental	\$143,391	0.0	\$143,391	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2022-23 Final Appropriation	\$1,694,803	10.5	\$1,694,803	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2022-23 Final Expenditure Authority	\$1,694,803	10.5	\$1,694,803	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditures	\$1,635,111	10.5	\$1,635,111	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2022-23 Reversion (Overexpenditure)	\$59,692	0.0	\$59,692	\$0	\$0	\$0

<i>FY 2022-23 Personal Services Allocation</i>	<i>\$1,289,654</i>	<i>10.5</i>	<i>\$1,289,654</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>
<i>FY 2022-23 Total All Other Operating Allocation</i>	<i>\$345,456</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>\$345,456</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**Schedule 3C**

Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Cash Funds	Reappropriated Funds	Federal
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09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**Program Costs**

SB23-214 Long Bill	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2023-24 Initial Appropriation	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0

FY 2023-24 Personal Services Allocation	\$1,787,366	12.0	\$1,787,366	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2023-24 Total All Other Operating Allocation	\$383,486	0.0	\$383,486	\$0	\$0	\$0

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				Schedule 3D		
FY 2024-25 Budget Request	Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Cash Funds	Reappropriated Funds	Federal Funds

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman

Program Costs

FY 2024-25 Starting Base	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-01 Annualization FY24 R1 HR Support Services	(\$94,240)	0.0	(\$94,240)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-02 Annualization FY24 R2 Client Services Analyst	\$5,335	0.0	\$5,335	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-03 Annl FY24 R3 Community Engagement and Outreach	(\$33,433)	0.0	(\$33,433)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-04 Annualization HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters	(\$19,000)	0.0	(\$19,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-05 Annul HB22-1375 Child Residential Tx Runaway Yth	(\$70,042)	0.0	(\$70,042)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-06 Statewide Total Compensation Request	\$104,618	0.0	\$104,618	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2024-25 Base Request	\$2,064,090	12.0	\$2,064,090	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R01 Data Analyst FTE	\$118,880	1.0	\$118,880	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R02 Sr. Client Services Analyst FTE	\$118,685	1.0	\$118,685	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R03 Administrative Office Specialist FTE	\$100,181	1.0	\$100,181	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R04 Information Technology	\$31,300	0.0	\$31,300	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R05 Staff Training and Development	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO - R06 Communications	\$15,000	0.0	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2024-25 Elected Official Request	\$2,498,136	15.0	\$2,498,136	\$0	\$0	\$0
Personal Services Allocation	\$2,076,462	15.0	\$2,076,462	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total All Other Operating Allocation	\$421,674	0.0	\$421,674	\$0	\$0	\$0

Schedule 14B

Line Item Object Code Detail		FY 2021-22 Actual Expenditure	FTE	FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditure	FTE	FY 2023-24 Appropriation Budget	FTE	FY 2024-25 Gov Request Budget	FTE
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman									
<u>Personal Services - Employees</u>									
Object Group	Object Group Name								
FTE	Total FTE		9.9		10.5		12.0		15.0
1000	Total Employee Wages and Benefits	\$1,000,249		\$1,233,233		\$1,787,366		\$2,076,462	
Object Code	Object Name								
1000	Personal Services	\$0		\$0		\$1,787,366		\$2,076,462	
1120	Temporary Full-Time Wages	\$0		\$7,020		\$0		\$0	
1121	Temporary Part-Time Wages	\$0		\$36,348		\$0		\$0	
1210	Contractual Employee Regular Full-Time Wages	\$688,315		\$810,192		\$0		\$0	
1211	Contractual Employee Regular Part-Time Wages	\$22,654		\$26,609		\$0		\$0	
1230	Contractual Employee Overtime Wages	\$4,791		\$0		\$0		\$0	
1240	Contractual Employee Annual Leave Payments	\$5,174		\$9,508		\$0		\$0	
1340	Employee Cash Incentive Awards	\$10,500		\$18,000		\$0		\$0	
1510	Dental Insurance	\$4,104		\$5,252		\$0		\$0	
1511	Health Insurance	\$101,262		\$118,151		\$0		\$0	
1512	Life Insurance	\$861		\$1,027		\$0		\$0	
1513	Short-Term Disability	\$1,049		\$1,203		\$0		\$0	
1514	Statutory Personnel & Payroll System Vision Insurance	\$0		\$473		\$0		\$0	
1520	FICA-Medicare Contribution	\$10,180		\$12,748		\$0		\$0	
1522	PERA	\$76,272		\$99,535		\$0		\$0	
1524	PERA - AED	\$34,758		\$43,284		\$0		\$0	

Schedule 14B

Line Item Object Code Detail		FY 2021-22 Actual Expenditure	FTE	FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditure	FTE	FY 2023-24 Appropriation Budget	FTE	FY 2024-25 Gov Request Budget	FTE
1525	PERA - SAED	\$34,758		\$43,284		\$0		\$0	
1532	Unemployment Compensation	\$4,970		\$0		\$0		\$0	
1630	Contractual Employee Other Employee Benefits	\$600		\$600		\$0		\$0	
Personal Services - Contract Services									
Object Group	Object Group Name								
1100	Total Contract Services (Purchased Personal Services)	\$26,222		\$56,421		\$0		\$0	
Object Code	Object Name								
1920	Personal Services - Professional	\$21,522		\$45,030		\$0		\$0	
1935	Personal Services - Legal Services	\$0		\$77		\$0		\$0	
1960	Personal Services - Information Technology	\$4,700		\$11,314		\$0		\$0	
Subtotal All Personal Services		\$1,026,471	9.9	\$1,289,654	10.5	\$1,787,366	12.0	\$2,076,462	15.0
All Other Operating Expenditures									
Object Group	Object Group Name								
2000	Total Operating Expenses	\$90,730		\$333,797		\$383,486		\$421,674	
3000	Total Travel Expenses	\$2,581		\$11,660		\$0		\$0	
Object Code	Object Name								
2000	Operating Expense	\$0		\$0		\$383,486		\$421,674	
2160	Other Cleaning Services	\$0		\$375		\$0		\$0	
2231	Information Technology Maintenance	\$5,640		\$0		\$0		\$0	
2253	Rental of Equipment	\$2,201		\$2,318		\$0		\$0	
2510	In-State Travel	\$49		\$483		\$0		\$0	
2512	In-State Personal Travel Per Diem	\$62		\$18		\$0		\$0	

Schedule 14B

Line Item Object Code Detail		FY 2021-22		FY 2022-23		FY 2023-24		FY 2024-25	
		Actual	FTE	Actual	FTE	Appropriation	FTE	Gov Request	FTE
		Expenditure		Expenditure		Budget		Budget	
2513	In-State Personal Vehicle Reimbursement	\$15		\$84		\$0		\$0	
2520	In-State Travel/Non-Employee	\$0		\$67		\$0		\$0	
2530	Out-Of-State Travel	\$0		\$3,556		\$0		\$0	
2531	Out-Of-State Common Carrier Fares	\$2,455		\$6,882		\$0		\$0	
2532	Out-Of-State Personal Travel Per Diem	\$0		\$570		\$0		\$0	
2610	Advertising And Marketing	\$1,295		\$3,343		\$0		\$0	
2631	Communication Charges - Office Of Information Technology	\$1,224		\$1,939		\$0		\$0	
2641	Other Automated Data Processing Billings-Purchased Services	\$5,204		\$6,244		\$0		\$0	
2680	Printing And Reproduction Services	\$196		\$247		\$0		\$0	
2820	Purchased Services	\$34,499		\$261,536		\$0		\$0	
3110	Supplies & Materials	\$0		\$100		\$0		\$0	
3118	Food and Food Service Supplies	\$748		\$1,523		\$0		\$0	
3120	Books/Periodicals/Subscriptions	\$8,865		\$9,328		\$0		\$0	
3121	Office Supplies	\$4,214		\$4,287		\$0		\$0	
3123	Postage	\$152		\$196		\$0		\$0	
3128	Noncapitalizable Equipment	\$222		\$0		\$0		\$0	
3132	Noncapitalizable Furniture And Office Systems	\$3,883		\$961		\$0		\$0	
3140	Noncapitalizable Information Technology	\$9,506		\$18,254		\$0		\$0	
3145	Software Subscription	\$8,848		\$11,253		\$0		\$0	
4140	Dues And Memberships	\$2,324		\$2,362		\$0		\$0	
4220	Registration Fees	\$1,710		\$9,530		\$0		\$0	
Subtotal All Other Operating		\$93,311		\$345,456		\$383,486		\$421,674	
Total Line Item Expenditures		\$1,119,781	9.9	\$1,635,111	10.5	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,498,136	15.0

FY 2024-25 Budget Request Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman**Schedule 06**

Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Cash Funds	Reapprop.
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FY 2021-22 Special Bill Line Item Appropriations (Excludes Reg Supplemental Bills & LB Appr.)**HB 21-1313 Child Protection Ombudsman and Immigrant Children**

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$90,600	-	\$90,600	-	-
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Total -- HB 21-1313 Child Protection Ombudsman and Immigrant Children	\$90,600	-	\$90,600	-	-
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FY 2022-23 Special Bill Line Item Appropriations (Excludes Long Bill Appropriations)**HB22-1133 Family And Medical Leave Insurance Fund**

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	(\$1,533)	-	(\$1,533)	-	-
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HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$97,500	-	\$97,500	-	-
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HB22-1375 Child Residential Treatment And Runaway Youth

09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$99,500	-	\$99,500	-	-
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Total -- HB22-1133, HB22-1240, HB22-1375	\$195,467	-	\$195,467	-	-
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FY 2023-24 Special Bill Line Item Appropriations (Excludes Long Bill Appropriations)**None**

OCPO Salary Pots Request Template					
	TOTAL FUNDS/FTE FY 2024-25	GENERAL FUND	CASH FUNDS	REAPPROPRIATED FUNDS	FEDERAL FUNDS
I. Continuation Salary Base Sum of Filled FTE as of July 27, 2023 Salary X 12		FUND SPLITS - From Position-by-Position Tab			
	12.00	100.000%	0.000%	0.000%	0.0000%
	\$1,172,996	\$1,172,996	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA (Standard, Trooper, and Judicial Rates) at FY 2024-25 PERA Rates	\$135,716	\$135,716	\$0	\$0	\$0
Medicare @ 1.45%	\$17,008	\$17,008	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal Continuation Salary Base =	\$1,325,720	\$1,325,720	\$0	\$0	\$0
II. Salary Survey Adjustments					
System Maintenance Studies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Across the Board - Base Adjustment	\$35,190	\$35,190	\$0	\$0	\$0
Across the Board - Non-Base Adjustment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Movement to Statewide Minimum Wage - Base Adjustment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Step Increase - Base Adjustment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal - Salary Survey Adjustments	\$35,190	\$35,190	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA (Standard, Trooper, and Judicial Rates) at FY 2024-25 PERA Rates	\$ 4,072.00	\$4,072	\$0	\$0	\$0
Medicare @ 1.45%	\$ 510.00	\$510	\$0	\$0	\$0
Request Subtotal =	\$39,772	\$39,772	\$0	\$0	\$0
III. Merit Pay Adjustments					
Merit Pay - Base Adjustments	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Merit Pay - Non-Base Adjustments	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal - Merit Pay Adjustments	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA (Standard, Trooper, and Judicial Rates) at FY 2024-25 PERA Rates	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Medicare @ 1.45%	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Request Subtotal =	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
IV. Shift Differential					
FY 2022-23 ACTUAL EXPENDITURES for All Occupational Groups	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Actual and Adjustments @ 100%	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA (Standard, Trooper, and Judicial Rates) at Current PERA Rates	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Medicare @ 1.45%	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Request Subtotal =	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
V. Revised Salary Basis for Remaining Request Subtotals					
Total Continuation Salary Base, Adjustments, Performance Pay & Shift	\$1,208,186	\$1,208,186	\$0	\$0	\$0
VI. Amortization Equalization Disbursement (AED)					
Revised Salary Basis * 5.00%	\$60,409	60,409	-	-	-
VII. Supplemental AED (SAED)					
Revised Salary Basis * 5.00%	\$60,409	60,409	-	-	-
VIII. Short-term Disability					
Revised Salary Basis * 0.15%	\$1,812	1,812	-	-	-
IX. Health, Life, and Dental					
Funding Request	\$198,217	198,217	-	-	-
X. Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program Premiums					
	\$5,437	\$5,437	\$0	\$0	\$0
		100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

OCPO Salary Pots Request Summary

Common Policy Line Item	FY 2023-24 Appropriation	GF	CF	RF	FF
Salary Survey	\$61,291	\$61,291			
Merit Pay	\$0	\$0			
PERA Direct Distribution	\$0	\$0			
Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program	\$0	\$0			
Shift	\$0	\$0			
AED	\$52,118	\$52,118			
SAED	\$52,118	\$52,118			
Short-term Disability	\$1,564	\$1,564			
Health, Life and Dental	\$155,638	\$155,638			
TOTAL	\$322,729	\$322,729	\$0	\$0	\$0
Common Policy Line Item	FY 2024-25 Total Request	GF	CF	RF	FF
Salary Survey	\$39,772	\$39,772	\$0	\$0	\$0
Merit Pay	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA Direct Distribution	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program	\$5,437	\$5,437	\$0	\$0	\$0
Shift	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
AED	\$60,409	\$60,409	\$0	\$0	\$0
SAED	\$60,409	\$60,409	\$0	\$0	\$0
Short-term Disability	\$1,812	\$1,812	\$0	\$0	\$0
Health, Life and Dental	\$198,217	\$198,217	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$366,056	\$366,056	\$0	\$0	\$0
Common Policy Line Item	FY 2024-25 Incremental	GF	CF	RF	FF
Salary Survey	\$39,772	\$39,772	\$0	\$0	\$0
Merit Pay	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA Direct Distribution	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program	\$5,437	\$5,437	\$0	\$0	\$0
Shift	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
AED	\$8,291	\$8,291	\$0	\$0	\$0
SAED	\$8,291	\$8,291	\$0	\$0	\$0
Short-term Disability	\$248	\$248	\$0	\$0	\$0
Health, Life and Dental	\$42,579	\$42,579	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$104,618	\$104,618	\$0	\$0	\$0

Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman FTE Detail

Object Code 1110,1121,1130,1210,1211, 1230	FY2021-22		FY2022-23	
	Total Funds	FTE	Total Funds	FTE
Position Detail:				
Ombudsman (pos. #85001)	135,192	1.0	146,208	1.0
Deputy Ombudsman (pos. #85002)	104,330	1.0	112,830	1.0
Director of Administrative Services (pos. #85003)	74,936	1.0	80,717	1.0
Client Services Analyst (pos. #85004)	59,629	1.0	51,439	1.0
Director of Client Services (pos. #85005)	79,025	1.0	90,219	1.0
Director of Legislative Services (pos. #85006)	76,503	1.0	53,398	1.0
Senior Analyst (pos. #85007)	69,829	1.0	75,492	1.0
Client Services Analyst (pos. #85008)	60,081	1.0	44,504	1.0
Client Services Analyst (pos. #85009)	58,867	1.0	70,548	1.0
Client Services Analyst (pos. #85010)	16,718	0.9	66,381	1.0
Public Information Coordinator (pos. #85011)	-	0.0	45,062	0.5
Contract Analyst (pos. #85012)	-	0.0	36,348	0.0
Contract HR Services (pos. #85013)	-	0.0	7,020	0.0
Total Full-Time/Part-Time Wages	735,111	9.9	880,168	10.5

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Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman: Long-Range Financial Plan

November 1, 2023

1. Introduction

Mission

We ensure Colorado child protection systems consistently, fairly and equitably deliver services to every child, youth and family across our state.

Case Support

- Guide youth, families and community members in navigating complex systems
- Review cases to ensure the highest attainable standards of care
- Work with people and agencies to resolve concerns and disputes at the ground level

Systems Change

- Engage communities across Colorado in addressing local and statewide problems
- Collaborate with stakeholders and lawmakers to improve services, policies and laws

Vision

Ensuring safety for Colorado's children today and envisioning a stronger child protection system for the future.

Major Agency Functions

Role of the CPO

The Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (OCPO) was created to ensure the state's complex child protection system consistently provides high-quality services to every child, family and community in Colorado. The agency:

- Listens to people about their experience with, and concerns about, the state's child protection system.
- Researches concerns reported by any individual or entity about service delivery within Colorado's child protection system.

- Resolves issues by determining the best way to assist people. This may mean bridging communication barriers or mediating conflicts based on misunderstandings.
- Identifies trends where the child protection system's funding, resources or practices are not keeping up with the needs of children, youth and families.
- Makes public recommendations for child protection system improvements. This may mean working with lawmakers, professionals and other stakeholders to advance legislation and policies that have a lasting, positive impact on children, youth and families.

Responsibilities of the OCPO

The OCPO is responsible for responding to citizens' complaints concerning actions or inactions by child protection agencies that may adversely impact the safety, permanency or well-being of a child. Child protection agencies are those that receive public funds to protect or care for children. This includes but is not limited to law enforcement, mental health agencies, child welfare services and the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

The OCPO may self-initiate an independent and impartial investigation and ongoing review of the safety and well-being of an unaccompanied immigrant child who lives in a state-licensed residential child care facility and who is in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the federal Department of Health and Human Services as set forth in 8 U.S.C. sec. 1232 et seq. As part of this responsibility, the OCPO may create and distribute outreach materials to state-licensed residential child care facilities and to individuals that have regular contact with unaccompanied immigrant children.

Additionally, the OCPO is responsible for informing on systemic changes to promote better outcomes for, and improve the safety and well-being of, children, youth and families receiving child protection services in Colorado. Being uniquely situated to gather and share information with state and non-state entities, the OCPO may issue recommendations to enhance the state's child protection system. The OCPO shares this and other information with the public by publishing reports and other content at www.coloradocpo.org.

Jurisdiction and Environment

Each year, the OCPO provides free and confidential services to hundreds of citizens who have questions and concerns about the state's child protection system. These citizens include parents, grandparents, kin, youth, medical professionals, lawyers, social workers, police officers and many others.

Citizens' questions and concerns often relate to specific program areas within the state's child protection system, including child welfare, juvenile justice and behavioral health. With access to child protection records that are not otherwise available to the public, the OCPO is able to

independently and objectively resolve citizens' questions and concerns while concurrently identifying systemic issues afflicting the child protection system.

The agency's enabling statutes are C.R.S. § 19-3.3-101 — 19-3.3-110. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 19-3.3-103, the OCPO has the authority to:

- Receive complaints concerning child protection services.
- Request, access, and review any information, records, or documents, including records of third parties, that the ombudsman deems necessary to conduct a thorough and independent review of a complaint.
- Independently and impartially investigate complaints.
- Seek resolution of complaints.
- Recommend changes and promote best practices to improve the state's child protection services.
- Educate the public concerning strengthening families and keeping children safe.
- Self-initiate an independent and impartial investigation and ongoing review of the safety and well-being of any unaccompanied immigrant child who lives in a state-licensed residential child care facility and is in federal custody.

The OCPO does not have the authority to:

- Investigate allegations of abuse and/or neglect.
- Interfere or intervene in any criminal or civil court proceeding.
- Testify in a court proceeding in which the CPO is not a party.
- Provide third-party records/documents acquired in the course of a case.
- Investigate complaints related to judges, magistrates, attorneys or guardians ad litem.
- Overturn any court order.
- Mandate the reversal of an agency/provider decision.
- Offer legal advice.

OCPO Key Performance Goals

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: *Raise awareness of the OCPO to ensure every youth and family across Colorado has equitable access to the agency's services..*

The OCPO 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 OCPO has identified the following strategies, critical processes, key metrics and outcomes as ways to increase the public's knowledge of the OCPO's services while concurrently learning

how best to engage with various communities. The OCPO has identified the following processes as ways to increase the public's knowledge of the OCPO's services while concurrently learning how best to engage with various communities:

- Promote awareness of the OCPO among youth impacted by child protection systems to increase equitable access to services for all youth.
- Promote awareness of the OCPO among caregivers – including parents, relatives, foster parents and kin – of children and youth involved in the child protection system to increase equitable access to services for all types of caregivers in every Colorado community.
- Promote awareness of the OCPO among communities of color to increase equitable access to services for youth and families disproportionately involved in Colorado's child protection systems.
- Promote awareness of the OCPO among rural communities to increase equitable access to services for every community, county and region in Colorado.
- Promote awareness of the OCPO among child protection professionals, including but not limited to treatment and service providers, educators, medical providers, mental health professionals and the child protection legal community.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS: *Continue to develop and strengthen efficient and effective OCPO practices to better serve Colorado citizens.*

The OCPO 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 OCPO 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 OCPO has identified the following processes as ways to help ensure efficient and effective OCPO services:

- Provide OCPO staff with ongoing training and education.
- Develop inclusive processes, systems and communications that reflect principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Develop and implement a unique, research-informed process for reviewing critical incidents in Colorado to improve and advance child protection systems.

SYSTEMS CHANGE: *Collaborate with youth, caregivers, stakeholders and policymakers to advance improvements to child protection services, policies and laws for every community in Colorado.*

The OCPO 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 OCPO 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 OCPO must produce high-quality work in a timely manner while building strong partnerships with others working within the state’s child protection system. The OCPO has identified the following processes 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:

- Communicate findings, trending data and systemic issues to stakeholders, policymakers and the public.
- Engage youth, caregivers, policymakers, stakeholders and communities in improving Colorado child protection systems through the OCPO Policy Collaborative for Children & Families.
- Serve as an independent, neutral and objective resource for legislators on child protection issues.

2. Financial Structure

The OCPO is funded entirely by moneys allocated by the Joint Budget Committee from the General Fund.

Fiscal Year	Total Funds	General Fund
FY 2018-19	\$1,024,898	\$1,024,898
FY 2019-20	\$994,028	\$994,028
FY 2020-21	\$961,637	\$961,637
FY 2021-22	\$1,071,053	\$1,071,053
FY 2022-23	\$1,355,945	\$1,355,945
FY 2023-24	\$2,141,793	\$2,141,793

3. Financial Forecast

During the past four fiscal years, the OCPO has seen an average 18% increase in the total number of cases brought to the agency each year. The agency anticipates continuing this growth during future fiscal years. Additionally, as the OCPO continues to emphasize outreach to stakeholders outside child welfare, the agency anticipates that an increasing number of calls will continue to involve multiple systems and complex issues.

The CPO case totals for the past five fiscal years are:

- Fiscal Year 2017-18 = 611
- Fiscal Year 2018-19 = 575
- Fiscal Year 2019-20 = 725
- Fiscal Year 2020-21 = 852
- Fiscal Year 2021-22 = 982
- Fiscal Year 2022-23 = 1,119

The OCPO anticipates this trend will continue. This could result in the agency opening as many as 1,320 cases during Fiscal Year 2023-24. With this continuing increase in cases and systemic work, the OCPO will continue the need to ensure the agency is appropriately staffed to ensure caseloads remain manageable and the agency is able to timely address systemic issues impacting child protection services.

- **FY 2025-26** – The OCPO anticipates it will need 1 FTE for an additional Client Services Analyst (CSA) position. This position will be necessary to continue absorbing the increase in caseloads to ensure CSAs are able to thoroughly and timely address concerns and questions presented by clients. The agency also anticipates it will require additional administrative support, if the OCPO is provided the FTE requested in its Fiscal year 2024-25 request.
- **FY 2026-27** – The OCPO anticipates its budget will be static.
- **FY 2027-28** – If cases continue to rise at the current rate, the OCPO may require an additional FTE for a Client Services Analyst and Public Policy Analyst
- **FY 2028-29** – The CPO anticipates its budget will be static.
- **FY 2029-30** – The CPO anticipates its budget will be static.

4. Anticipated Funding Decreases

None of the CPO's programs are currently funded with federal dollars, gifts, grants or donations.

Appendix A



OFFICE *of* COLORADO'S CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN



ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2022-23

LISTEN

INVESTIGATE

RESOLVE

IDENTIFY TRENDS

LASTING CHANGE

LETTER FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

Dear friends and community partners,

I am honored to present the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman's Fiscal Year 2022-23 Annual Report. The Colorado General Assembly created the CPO to provide a unique service to the citizens of Colorado. Unlike any other agency in the state, the CPO is specifically designed to serve as an impartial, free and creative resource for the children, families and professionals involved with the child protection system. Our charge is broad. In addition to helping citizens one-on-one address their concerns and questions, this agency is also tasked with studying and improving systemic issues impacting children and families in Colorado. While this agency has only existed in its current form for seven years, the demand for our services continues to grow and our impact continues to reach new depths.

The CPO transitioned into an independent state agency only seven years ago. Since that transition, we have grown from three employees to 11 full-time employees, two contract positions and multiple program areas. This growth has been necessary to meet the steady increase in the number of cases coming into the CPO, as well as the increasing systemic projects and programs brought to the CPO. In fact, the CPO had its fourth consecutive record-setting year. During the past fiscal year, the CPO opened an unprecedented 1,119 cases – a 14 percent increase from the previous year and 94 percent increase from the agency's first fiscal year as an independent agency.

During this fiscal year, in addition to continuing the agency's focus on customer service, we have continued to prioritize our outreach to youth in Colorado. The CPO was contacted by youth a record 72 times during FY 2022-23. Additionally, we have obtained funding and assistance to expand our direct youth outreach efforts and we will continue to work with youth directly and community partners to ensure youth in Colorado who need our services are easily able to access them. We have also continued to expand and refine our work to address questions and concerns regarding systems that closely interact with the child welfare system, including behavioral health services, residential services, early childhood services and others. Much of this work is highlighted in this report.

Our ability to dig into more than 1,000 cases a year gives us a lens into the child protection system that no other state agency has. Through this lens, we are able to identify issues impacting how services are delivered. Through our position in state government, we are able to take innovative and inclusive approaches to addressing such concerns. The CPO's Policy Collaborative for Children & Families has continued to serve as a unique space in Colorado to address long-standing issues. This year we were proud to house the Mandatory Reporting Task Force (established through House Bill 22-1240) and the Timonhy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Youth from Running from Out-of-Home Placements (established through House Bill 22-1375). These multidisciplinary task forces are each composed of dozens of stakeholders and will address a collective 28 directives—each with the potential to reform and/or improve practices that have existed for decades. These two task forces are emblematic of our dedication to fostering inclusive and smart conversations regarding child protection in Colorado.

The CPO's success is due to the efforts and ingenuity of a strong and diverse team, and the continued support and guidance of the CPO Advisory Board. As we reflect on the past fiscal year—and look forward to the work ahead—we know there is much to be done. However, we are confident that we will continue to refine our skills and expand our reach so that every citizen who contacts this agency receives thorough and thoughtful services.

Sincerely,

STEPHANIE VILLAFUERTE

Stephanie Villafuerte

Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman



CONTINUED GROWTH

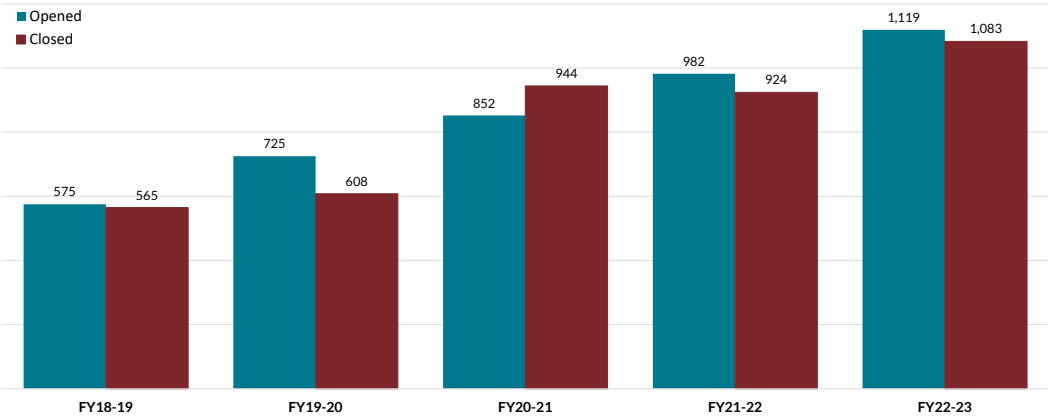
CPO CASES IN FY 2022-2023

Opening a record number of cases for the fourth consecutive year, our agency received 1,119 contacts from people seeking help during Fiscal Year 2022-23. This 14 percent annual increase not only reflects the growing role of the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) in supporting youth, families and communities but demonstrates the benefits of our unprecedented outreach efforts and public policy initiatives. We also closed a record 1,083 cases during the fiscal year, marking a 17 percent increase compared to the previous fiscal year. Of the cases closed by our agency, two-thirds were opened by caregivers—94 percent of which were birth parents, relatives or siblings to the children involved in the case. The largest area of growth in case closures was among those initiated by youth. Our agency closed a total of 68 cases from youth which was a 74 percent jump from the previous fiscal year.

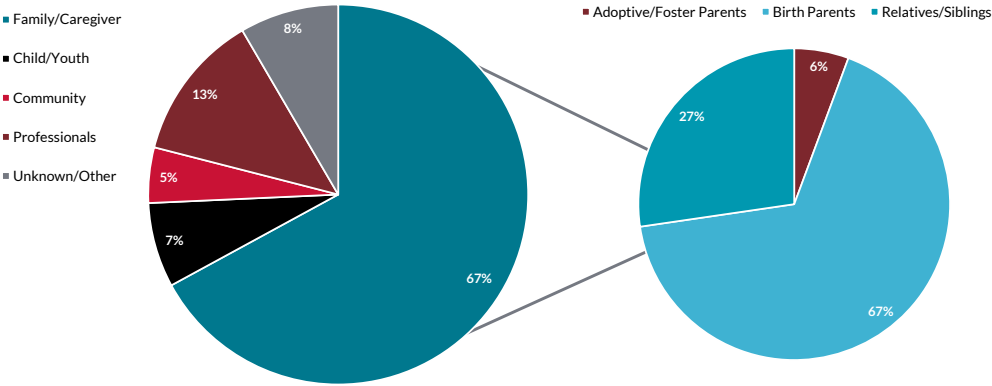
Of the cases closed by our agency in FY 2022-23, 30 percent involved concerns regarding how child welfare services handled reports of abuse and neglect. Access to services and personnel issues were the second and third-highest concerns—appearing in 21 and 19 percent of cases, respectively. Additionally, the CPO continued working with the Devereux Colorado Unaccompanied Children’s Service Program, to review the care provided to unaccompanied immigrant children placed in licensed facilities in Colorado. However, on March 16, 2023, the CPO was notified that Devereux was ending this program, citing concerns recruiting and retaining bilingual staff. The program discharged all clients by the end of March 2023.

CPO CASE HISTORY	TOTAL # OF CASES
Fiscal Year 2022-23	1,119
Fiscal Year 2021-22	982
Fiscal Year 2020-21	852
Fiscal Year 2019-20	725
Fiscal Year 2018-19	575
Fiscal Year 2017-18	611
Fiscal Year 2016-17	577

CASES BY FISCAL YEAR



RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD



CASE HIGHLIGHTS



Case #1

The CPO was contacted by a youth who was residing in foster care. The youth shared concerns that her 17-year-old foster sister was not allowed to drive herself or her five siblings around due to Colorado's young driver laws. The youth explained that drivers under 18 in Colorado cannot drive with more than one passenger in the car unless the passengers are members of the driver's immediate family. The youth was told that, as a youth in foster care, she didn't count as part of the immediate family, which made her feel excluded from the family. The CPO researched the law and spoke with a representative from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). CDOT clarified that foster siblings are considered immediate family. The CPO shared this information with the youth and made sure to clarify that if her foster parents had certain rules regarding who she may drive in the car with, those need to be followed. The youth was happy to hear that CDOT included youth in foster care in the definition of family and the youth said that she was thankful for the CPO's help. The youth's foster mother reported that they were excited to learn this information and the youth's experience advocating for herself was positive. The CPO also provided contact information for Project Foster Power if the youth would like to explore other advocacy opportunities.

Case #2



A citizen contacted the CPO with concerns that a county department of human services did not properly notify the judge overseeing the child's court case. The citizen was concerned the judge was not providing important child safety and parent information throughout the child welfare case. This included information about the circumstances in the foster home where the child was living. Without this information, the citizen alleged, the judge was not able to make informed decisions regarding the child's care. The CPO reviewed relevant documentation and identified concerns regarding the level of detail provided in court reports. The reports did not contain information about new referrals of abuse or neglect. The CPO also identified that the county department did not address safety concerns with the foster home and had additional questions as to why the foster home's certification history was irregular. The CPO facilitated a meeting with the county department who affirmed the CPO's concerns. Regarding the lack of information on about new referrals in the foster home, the agency stated it had received guidance from their legal counsel that sharing information could breach the confidentiality of the foster care providers. The county department also shared that they agreed that they did not address safety concerns in the foster home timely. They reported that this was because they believed it was the responsibility of a neighboring county department, because this is where the family lived.



CASE HIGHLIGHTS



Case #3

During December 2022, the CPO was contacted by a young adult who had been placed in a residential child care facility (RCCF) and group home as a youth. The young adult stated they needed a letter to verify they had been in foster care to obtain education benefits. The young adult said that the county department involved in her case, told her it would take up to 30 days to get the letter. Unfortunately, the young adult was running up against a deadline to submit her materials. The CPO contacted the county department, who responded immediately and stated that they were unable to locate the documentation showing the young adult was ever in foster care. The CPO facilitated communication between the young adult and the county department, and it was determined that although they were placed in an RCCF and later a group home, they were never in the county department's custody. The county department did complete child welfare assessments regarding the young adult and their family, and there was a juvenile delinquency case through the courts, but there was neither an ongoing child welfare case nor a dependency and neglect case. It appeared that the young adult had been placed through Medicaid or private pay. The CPO explained this information to the young adult, and the county department said they would also call them the same day. Although the county department was not able to provide the requested documentation, they were quick to refer the young adult to a community resource that provides support to individuals who have previous experience with juvenile delinquency courts.



Case #4

A grandmother caring for her grandchildren contacted the CPO with concerns that the county department handling her grandchildren's child welfare case, was not providing her with financial reimbursements needed to help care for the children. The grandmother explained that when the child welfare case was opened and the children were placed with her, the county department agreed to help fund child care expenses. However, the grandmother stated that her efforts during the past several months to obtain the reimbursements were unsuccessful. The CPO contacted the county department to learn about the agreement and the steps they'd taken to provide financial assistance. The county department was initially unable to confirm that they had agreed to provide such reimbursements. However, after several requests from the CPO, the agency agreed to meet with the employee who originally worked with the grandmother. That employee confirmed that an agreement was made with the grandmother to provide her with reimbursement for child care costs. The CPO continued to monitor the case and was able to confirm the assistance was provided. In total, the county department provided the grandmother with approximately \$5,300, which allowed the grandmother to catch up on past-due bills and ensure that the children had their needs met. The grandmother shared with the CPO, "I know this would never have happened if it not for your intervention. I am truly grateful for all of your assistance."



...I am truly grateful for all of your assistance.



FISCAL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS



Launch of Timothy Montoya Task Force

During the 2022 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly created the Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Youth from Running from Out-of-Home Placement with House Bill 22-1375. In September 2022, the Policy Collaborative for Children & Families launched the task force to study why youth run from care and develop a consistent, prompt and effective response. Meeting seven times during FY 2022-23, the diverse 22-member group discussed the lived experiences of youth and professionals, system responses, runaway behaviors and predictors. Members have also worked to address the insufficiency of quantitative data statewide, agency and facility protocols, practices in other states and the potential for a statewide response guide. The task force also commissioned focus groups through the University of Denver's Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab to provide first-hand perspectives from providers and youth in facilities. The task force's first-year report will be published and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on October 1, 2023.



Launch of Mandatory Reporting Task Force

With the passage of House Bill 22-1240 during the 2022 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly formed the Mandatory Reporting Task Force. The task force is charged with addressing 19 directives to consider the efficacy and equity of the state's mandatory child abuse reporting law and its impact on children, families and professionals across the state. The 34-member task force was launched by the Policy Collaborative for Children & Families in December 2022 and met four times during FY 2022-23. Topics discussed thus far by the group include concerns around mandatory reporting, the law's effectiveness, intentions of reporters, family services, the impact of race and ethnicity, lived experiences of youth and families, and data collected during reporting. The task force's first-year report will be published and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on January 1, 2024.



Addressing Practice Concerns

Recognizing patterns in the experiences and concerns of individuals contacting our agency, we brought multiple practice concerns to the attention of state child protection agencies. For example, in June 2023, we delivered a letter to the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) after the CPO was contacted by a client with concerns that the agency did not comply with state laws requiring public notice of unlicensed child care facilities providing improper child care. The CPO alerted CDEC of its concerns after the CPO's review found that the agency may not have provided all required information on the Colorado Shines website. The CDEC responded immediately and addressed the CPO's concerns. Another letter was sent in June 2023 to the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) that detailed concerns with the practices and potential systemic bias by the Washington County Department of Human Services (WCDHS) in handling child welfare cases. Multiple cases opened by the CPO concerned clients who allege their cases were negatively impacted by the actions of WCDHS. These concerns include allegations that the former director made derogatory statements about clients. The CPO has requested that CDHS conduct an audit of the cases under the supervision of the WCDHS' former director and a review of notifications provided, if any, to families impacted by the actions of WCDHS. The CPO is continuing to monitor this case and the CDHS' response.



Identifying Systemic Issues

Appearing before members of the Colorado General Assembly in June 2023, our agency brought four systemic issues facing youth and families to the attention of the Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee. The CPO outlined four primary areas of concern: (1) Insufficient monthly contacts from county agencies with the parents involved in their child welfare cases; (2) The absence of statewide ethical standards for caseworkers and any law or regulation to take adverse action against an individual who acts unethically or unlawfully; (3) The current safety tool used to assess the immediate safety of children produces inconsistent results; and (4) Colorado's lack of law or regulation to ensure consistent and transparent standards regarding the quality of care provided to children and youth residing in residential treatment facilities. A series of recommendations for each issue was also provided as potential paths forward for the committee to consider.

Connecting with the Community

Our agency's expanded outreach capacity, resources and strategy have opened up new opportunities for engaging youth, families, populations overrepresented in child protection systems, rural communities, professionals and stakeholders across Colorado and beyond.



Youth Outreach

Utilizing the youth focus groups and surveys facilitated by the CPO during FY 2021-22, our agency took unprecedented steps towards making youth with experience in Colorado's child protection systems a central component of our work. We designed new outreach campaigns based on the feedback the survey provided on existing agency materials. These concepts were then used in our first digital marketing campaign with youth-related promotions reaching Colorado individuals Googling words and phrases similar to what a youth seeking our services would search for.

After securing funding for FY 2022-23, we began laying the foundation for the Tori Shuler Youth Voice Program (YVP) which will directly engage Colorado youth through focus groups, policy initiatives and special projects. Involving youth voice from the start of a policy initiative is a key priority for the CPO. To continue developing the YVP, we met with Tori Shuler at Fostering Great Ideas, youth on the Lived Experts Action Panel (LEAP) operated by the Office of the Colorado Child's Representative and AmeriCorps' VISTA program. We will continue to develop this program throughout FY 2023-24.



Targeting Communications and Increasing Accessibility

The CPO serves diverse clients with unique concerns and circumstances. In recognizing this diversity, and after auditing the agency's communication practices and materials, our agency developed a new outreach strategy to connect with youth, caregivers, professionals and communities with messaging, mediums and information specific to these diverse groups. This included our 11-day digital marketing campaign that reached youth, caregivers and professionals in every region of the state. To increase inclusion in our outreach materials, we commissioned the design of new family icons reflecting youth and families of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities and cultures. We also began to improve the accessibility of both our print and digital marketing assets by reducing the complexity of text to recommended grade levels and developing a new website that is compliant with current accessibility standards such as color contrast.



National Presence

The CPO is widely recognized by ombudsman offices and child protection stakeholders across the United States as an innovative leader in this work. During FY 2022-23, we were invited to participate in critical conversations—nationally and globally—as well as provide consultation to other states seeking to use our agency as a model. Ombudsman Stephanie Villafuerte conducted presentations at the Kempe Center's International Virtual Conference, Global Oneness Summit and the United States Ombudsman Association Conference. Deputy Ombudsman Jordan Steffen also presented to the West Virginia Foster Care Ombudsman Office, New Mexico General Assembly and other states working to establish children and family ombuds offices. Additionally, Director of Client Services Amanda Pennington provided insight on our agency's work at the American Bar Association / Kids in Need of Defense Unaccompanied Immigrant Children's Service Provider Training.



ADVISORY BOARD

The CPO Advisory Board is an independent, nonpartisan board of 12 members. Four members are appointed from each branch of government and all members serve for a period of four years. Each position on the Board requires a certain set of experience or expertise. The Board was established to provide a mechanism of oversight for the Child Protection Ombudsman, however, its role is much broader. The CPO team routinely relies on the expertise of its Board to expand and guide its work. Members have decades of experience and include child welfare professionals, judges, doctors, attorneys, county commissioners, human service directors, foster parents and advocates.

ABOUT

OUR MISSION

We ensure Colorado child protection systems consistently, fairly and equitably deliver services to every child, youth and family across our state.

CASE SUPPORT

- Guide youth, families and community members in navigating complex systems
- Review cases to ensure the highest attainable standards of care
- Work with people and agencies to resolve concerns and disputes at the ground level

SYSTEMS CHANGE

- Engage communities across Colorado in addressing local and statewide problems
- Collaborate with stakeholders and lawmakers to improve services, policies and laws

CPO STAFF

Stephanie Villafuerte, *Child Protection Ombudsman*

Jordan Steffen, *Deputy Ombudsman*

Karen Nielsen, *Director of Administrative Services*

Amanda Pennington, *Director of Client Services*

Michael W. Teague, *Director of Public Affairs*

Claire Hooker, *Senior Client Services Analyst*

Brittany Cornelius, *Client Services Analyst*

Abbey Koch, *Client Services Analyst*

Tiffany Lewis, *Client Services Analyst*

Wendy Oldenbrook, *Client Services Analyst*

Meredith Sullivan, *Client Services Analyst*

CPO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ann Roan, *Board Chair*

Benjamin Rounsborg

Hon. Amanda Hopkins

Hon. Kenneth Plotz

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Judith Martinez, *Vice Chair*

April Lane

Aaron Miltenberger

Jerene Petersen

Senate President Appointment

Charles Tedesco

Senate Minority Appointment

Wendy Buxton-Andrade

Speaker of the House Appointment

Dr. Coral Steffey

House Minority Leader Appointment

Brian Bernhard



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Sign up for our newsletter and read our latest blog posts at coloradocpo.org

Appendix B



Introduction

Every year, the Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) reviews more than 1,000 cases, each of which are brought to the agency by citizens with a concern, frustration or question regarding the state's child welfare system. By design, the CPO is charged with independently assessing these concerns and helping citizens gain clarity regarding these systems.¹ Unlike any other agency in Colorado, the CPO is uniquely positioned in state government to impartially study the child welfare system, through the perspective of the people it impacts.

Since its inception as an independent agency, the CPO has received thousands of cases from parents, youth, siblings, extended family and professionals connected to child welfare systems. Those cases have revealed systemic issues impacting the safety and well-being of children and families in Colorado. They have also highlighted a pervasive erosion of the public trust in child welfare systems in the state.

While the CPO is charged with looking at all entities that serve children and families in Colorado, this committee has specifically requested information regarding issues with how child welfare services are administered in the state.² During the past seven years, the CPO has identified, studied and reported on many of these issues. As such, the CPO is providing four issues currently impacting the child welfare system in Colorado. The CPO has provided a summary of each issue and possible legislative solutions for the committee's consideration.

ISSUE #1: Colorado must find more effective and creative methods to support county departments to ensure that parents involved in child welfare cases receive required monthly face-to-face contacts with caseworkers.

Every month, less than half of all parents involved in child welfare cases in Colorado receive the required monthly face-to-face contacts with child welfare services. Since its inception, one of the most consistent concerns the CPO hears from parents with open cases – including parents whose children have been removed from their care – is that they are not receiving regular contact with child welfare services. Current state data shows that difficulty maintaining such contact is a pervasive issue.

Why It's Important

Inconsistent or insufficient communications with parents or other caregivers can delay the administration of services for children and families, delay needed safety assessments for children and, in some cases, delay the proper return of a child to their parent's care.

After a child welfare case is opened, state regulations require child welfare services to make and document monthly efforts to meet with all parents face-to-face.³ Current data from the Colorado

¹ See C.R.S. §19-3.3-101 to 111

² See C.R.S. §10-3.3-102(1)(a)(III). The CPO does not have authority to review the actions of attorneys or judges. In pertinent part, the CPO's enabling statute states the CPO shall "refer any complaints relating to the judicial department and judicial proceedings, including but not limited to complaints concerning the conduct of judicial officers or attorneys of record, judicial determination, and court processes and procedures to the appropriate entity or agency within the judicial department."

³ See 12 CCR 2509-3, 7.204 – Case Contact Requirements

Department of Human Services (CDHS) shows that compliance with this rule has not exceeded 47% during the past five years.⁴ This means that during the past five years, less than half of Colorado parents involved in child welfare cases have been contacted face-to-face the required amount.⁵ A closer review of that data shows that, during the past year, some child welfare departments have dropped as low as 10% compliance with this rule. Some child welfare departments are as high as 84%. The standard set by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Administration for Children and Families is that 41% of all parents involved in child welfare cases will receive a monthly face-to-face contact effort by county departments.⁶

The CPO is acutely aware that the child welfare system – both in Colorado and nationally – is struggling to retain and recruit a qualified workforce. Such difficulties inevitably have significant impacts on the delivery of services to children and families. In reviewing these cases, the CPO has found that many county child welfare departments share the CPO's concern that contacts are not occurring as frequently as needed or required. They have routinely cited a consistent lack of support and resources as one reason this issue persists.

Without regular contact with child welfare services, parents are not able discuss key elements of ongoing cases, such as parenting time decisions and issues related to treatment plans. Conversely, without making monthly contact with parents, there is no ability to observe the home to determine whether it is safe for children. The cumulative effects of these missed contacts, in many cases, impedes a parent's ability to comply with case requirements. It also delays the return of children to their parents and homes. But failing to attempt to make monthly face-to-face contacts with families also poses a significant risk to the physical safety and well-being of children who remain in their homes.

For example, the CPO received a call from a relative of a sibling group who remained in the care of their mother during an open child welfare case. The children's relatives worried for the safety of the children, stating that the children's mother was suffering with mental health issues, using illegal substances and that the children were being physically abused by the mother's boyfriend. The CPO's review of the case found that the mother was not contacted face-to-face for 13 of 22 months – almost half of the time the case was opened.

It should be noted that, in many cases reviewed by the CPO, court filings do not reflect this deficit. As a result, judges are making decisions regarding the placement of children and treatment plans for caregivers, without knowledge that required contacts were not made.

Potential Solutions

1. Develop legislation to convene a public-facing working group within the Colorado Supreme Court Improvement Program. This group should assess current compliance rates with monthly face-to-face requirements and the impacts on child welfare cases, judicial decision making and children and families. This group should also consider alternative methods and models to increase face-to-face contact with parents.

⁴ This figure is based on available C-Stat data provided by the CDHS' Results Oriented Management System. C-Stat measures key areas of county child welfare department performance, including monthly contacts with parents. The figure above is an average of all county human services departments monthly face-to-face contacts with parents. It should be noted that some county departments exceed 47% compliance each month and others were dramatically below this rate.

⁵ This data takes into consideration parents who do not reside in Colorado, are incarcerated for longer than two years, and those whose whereabouts are unknown.

⁶ See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families' Colorado Child and Family Services Reviews Final Report 2017

ISSUE #2: Colorado needs to support strong and effective caseworkers by creating standards that ensure caseworkers who act unethically or unlawfully are not able to continue providing child welfare services to children and families.

Colorado currently has no law or regulation regarding adverse action against child welfare employee's certification and no requirements that clients or departments are notified of verified, gross misconduct. Seven years ago, the CPO first raised its concerns about the lack of clarity – and correlating law and regulation – regarding the certification of child welfare employees in Colorado. The current system lacks clarity regarding whether CDHS or county departments are responsible for seeking revocation of child welfare certifications. Colorado currently lacks any process to take adverse action against an employee's certification in instances in which the employee violates state law, regulation or other areas of ethical concern. The impact of this gap is that, unless an employee is criminally charged, there is no way to know whether a child welfare employee has violated regulations or ethical standards. As such, their certification to work with children remains in place and they are able to move from county to county undetected.

Why It's Important

Without a mechanism to take adverse action against a child welfare employee's certification, there is no effective way to ensure Colorado children and families are served by qualified individuals who maintain industry standards.

Since 2015, the CPO has identified four incidents in which child welfare workers have been criminally charged with falsifying records in the state child welfare database.⁷ The majority of these false records indicated the employee had seen a child and/or assessed their safety when they had not. In at least one of the cases above, the employee was rehired by another county department prior to criminal action being taken. To be clear, these cases represent a small minority of child welfare employees in Colorado. And yet, the impacts of these cases permeate through the entire system and erode the public's trust in the very individuals charged with keeping them safe.

In Colorado, there is no mechanism in the state to take adverse action against a child welfare employee's certification after it is received through the Colorado Child Welfare Training Academy. This deficit makes it nearly impossible for county departments hiring child welfare employees to determine whether an employee has a history of misconduct or concerning practice.

County human services departments may take direct personnel action when an employee violates county and state regulations or commits a criminal act. But they have no mechanism to take adverse action against the certification of a child welfare employee. There is also no standard statewide policy for investigating such incidents. As such, instances of misconduct are handled dozens of different ways. Equally important, the children and families involved in these cases are not aware of the misconduct and potential impacts to their cases and other county departments are unaware of incidents when hiring employees.

Employers should be provided with more information regarding the individuals trusted to assess the safety and well-being of Colorado children. Additionally, children and families should have meaningful

⁷ See "[Denver caseworker charged with falsifying records in fatality case](#)" published in The Denver Post on January 22, 2015; "[Jefferson County caseworker admits falsifying child abuse records](#)" published in The Denver Post on January 9, 2018; "[Moffat County caseworker accused of fabricating child abuse, neglect investigations has been charged with forgery](#)" published in The Colorado Sun on March 30, 2022; and "[Former Arapahoe County social worker failed to properly investigate child abuse cases, state audit finds](#)" published on 9News's website on September 26, 2022.

access to information about the standard required of each child welfare employee working with them and proper notification when verified misconduct may have impacted their case. By allowing child welfare employees to maintain a certification regardless of performance, ethical violation or possible criminal activity Colorado is putting children and families at risk.

Potential Solutions

1. Develop laws and applicable regulations regarding the following:
 - a. Processes for seeking adverse action against child welfare certifications;
 - b. Standard and required notification practices for clients and county departments for when a certification is revoked for cause;
 - c. Required development of a statewide, standard policy for investigating cases of alleged misconduct;
 - d. Required development of a statewide, standard code of ethics for child welfare employees; and
 - e. Development of a public-facing database showing the certification status for all child welfare employees administering services.

ISSUE #3: The current safety tool used by child welfare services to assess the immediate safety of children has never been validated and does not produce consistent results.

The Colorado Family Safety Assessment Tool is the accepted safety tool for child welfare services in Colorado. However, since its inception in 1999, the tool has never been validated. Reviews by national and state professionals have found that the safety tool continues to be utilized inconsistently by child welfare services. The safety tool is a crucial step in assessing the initial needs of a family, the immediate safety of children and, in most cases, whether a child will be removed from their home.

Why It's Important

Unable to yield consistent results, Colorado's unvalidated safety tool creates the potential for bias that may impact decisions made in child welfare cases.

The safety tool includes details of current danger and harm to children, parent functioning and strengths, child vulnerabilities and efforts that have or can be made to mitigate safety concerns. When there is current and impending danger to a child, child welfare services must make the decision to either create a safety plan with the family or remove the child from the caregivers and obtain custody of the child. The safety tool is intended to provide an objective and consistent tool to ensure that decisions affecting child safety are made appropriately. Despite its intended use, the safety tool is used subjectively and inconsistently.

Concerns regarding the use of the safety tool have long been raised by the CPO, as well as others monitoring its use. The first review of the tool took place 15 years after its inception.⁸ That review included a study by Colorado State University's Social Research Center (CSU).⁹ In that report, CSU was able to validate the state's Colorado Family **Risk** Assessment Tool – which is distinct from the safety tool. CSU found that the risk tool could be used consistently by child welfare services. However, CSU could not do the same for the **safety** tool. The CPO is unaware of any additional efforts to validate the use of this tool. During 2016 to 2018, CDHS worked to update regulations surrounding the use of the

⁸ See Colorado Office of Children Youth & Families Division of Child Welfare Services: 2020 Colorado Program Improvement Plan, In Response to the 2017 Child and Family Services Review, Official Submission May 27, 2019

⁹ See Colorado State University College of Health and Human Sciences' School of Social Work: Colorado Family Safety and Risk Assessments: Validation and Revisions, Final Submission January 16, 2014

safety tool and provide additional training to all child welfare employees.¹⁰ However, concerns with the use of the safety tool were again noted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2017. In the federal performance improvement plan for Colorado child welfare services, the state's application of the safety assessment included it as an 'area needing improvement' in the state's performance improvement plan.

To date, there has been no additional formal review by the state to ensure that the tool is being consistently utilized as designed.

The CPO routinely reviews cases in which the use of the safety tool is at issue. These cases have revealed systemic impacts, including:

- Safety planning and monitoring were insufficient to manage child safety;
- Safety plans were not created, completed appropriately or communicated to families;
- Safety services that were needed were not provided; and
- Safety plans created were not with the ability of the family to complete.

CPO case reviews have identified that there is a lack of understanding in how to apply basic principles of safety planning and how to create safety plans that were appropriate and met the needs of the family.

The impact is that a child may be removed from their caregivers without cause. Conversely, a child may not be removed from a home when valid safety concerns exist.

Potential Solutions

1. Commission a third-party audit of the state's safety tool to include an analysis of the use, efficacy and reliability of the current tool, as well as possible alternative models. The final report shall be provided to the Colorado General Assembly and child welfare stakeholders.

ISSUE #4: Colorado currently has no laws or regulations ensuring consistent and transparent standards regarding the quality of care provided to children and youth residing in residential treatment facilities.

Following the high-profile closure of the El Pueblo Boys & Girls Ranch in 2017, the CPO identified the need for increased and consistent monitoring of residential treatment programs at the state-level. This included recommendations to develop standardized procedures for monitoring licensed facilities and creating more transparency regarding the conditions, services and outcomes in residential treatment programs. However, none of these recommendations have been implemented.

Why It's Important

Families rely on residential treatment programs, however, the state's monitoring system for these facilities is leaving some youth in potentially unsafe conditions.

Colorado's state-licensed residential treatment facilities offer critically important services to some of the state's most high-needs children, including those with severe behavioral health and psychiatric needs. However, Colorado currently lacks a system of quality assurance standards and a collaborative model of quality improvement in which providers and oversight agencies may ensure that such

¹⁰ See Colorado Office of Children Youth & Families Division of Child Welfare Services: 2020 Colorado Program Improvement Plan, In Response to the 2017 Child and Family Services Review, Official Submission May 27, 2019

facilities meet consistent standards. Currently, there is no standard quality assurance system in place for residential child care facilities licensed by CDHS. Additionally, there is no public-facing system that provides caregivers with information about the facilities children and youth are being placed in.

During the past several years, several state-licensed placements have been the focus of the CPO and local media.¹¹ During 2017, the El Pueblo Boys & Girls Ranch, a center for youth with severe behavioral and psychiatric needs closed. The year preceding its closure, the facility was the subject of dozens of complaints regarding the safety and well-being of the children and youth who were residing there. The CPO reviewed the circumstances surrounding the facilities closure for more than a year, including the complex systems and multiple actors tasked with ensuring the children and youth were receiving quality treatment and care. The CPO published its report and summary of its findings and recommendations for improvement in 2019.¹² Since the publication of its report, the CPO has continuously monitored residential child care facilities, studied the laws and regulations that guide them and engaged families that have been impacted by them. However, many of the recommendations contained in that report have not been implemented, including a recommendation to develop systems that improve the transparency surrounding the conditions and services provided in residential child care facilities.

In 2020, the CPO was notified about the death of 12-year-old Timothy Montoya, which ultimately served as yet another example of why Colorado needs quality assurance and accountability systems for state-licensed facilities. In response to Timothy's death, House Bill 22-1375 established the Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement, which is tasked with addressing and reducing the number of children and youth who run away from care.¹³ However, the portion of HB 22-1375 that would have solidified the first steps in implementing a quality assurance and accountability system for state-licensed facilities was severed from the bill.¹⁴ As such, the CPO believes that legislation – specifically the provisions originally drafted in HB 22-1375 – are needed to ensure that a system is not only developed, but that it is developed by a broad range of individuals with personal and professional expertise.

Potential Solutions

1. Introduce legislation to develop quality assurance and accountability systems for state-licensed facilities, including a public-facing database that allows parents, caregivers and county departments to access information about the ongoing performance of such facilities.

¹¹ See [“Families kept in the dark about children’s safety in Colorado’s child welfare system”](#) published in The Colorado Sun on May 19, 2021; [“With bites, bruises and low pay, caretakers for Colorado’s troubled youth say there’s not enough staff to keep kids – and each other – safe”](#) published in The Colorado Sun on May 18, 2021; and [“Advocates to push for overhaul of Colorado’s youth residential centers – and they’re looking to Florida for help”](#) published in The Colorado Sun on December 29, 2021

¹² See Office of Colorado’s Child Protection Ombudsman: [Investigation Report, Case ID 2017-2736](#), published August 12, 2019

¹³ See [Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement](#)

¹⁴ See introduced version of [House Bill 12-1375](#)

Appendix C



CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN

**FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024
PERFORMANCE PLAN**

July 1, 2023

**Stephanie Villafuerte
Child Protection Ombudsman**

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Agency Overview

Background

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) was established in June 2010, under Senate Bill 10-171. This legislation provided that the CPO would operate as a program through a contract with a local non-profit agency, issued and managed by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS).

The program was created in response to the deaths of 12 children in Colorado who were known to child protection services. The deaths of these children in 2007 sparked an outcry by the public that there be greater oversight, accountability and transparency of Colorado's child protection system. The public demanded the state create a mechanism to examine the components of the state's child protection system, help citizens navigate the complexity of the system and provide recommendations on how to improve the system overall.

Years after its creation, legislators determined that the CPO needed independence from the agencies it was designed to review. And on June 2, 2015, Senate Bill 15-204, Concerning the Independent Functioning of the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman, was signed into law. The new, independent CPO opened in 2016.

Senate Bill 15-204 not only transformed the original "program" into a distinct and independent state agency, but it also created the first ever Child Protection Ombudsman Board (CPO Board). Designed to ensure the accountability and transparency of the CPO, the CPO Board is required to oversee the Child Protection Ombudsman's performance and act as an advisory body.

Since its independence, the CPO has worked consistently to keep its practices aligned with national standards. The CPO is guided by standards set by organizations such as the United States Ombudsman Association and the American Bar Association. Using those standards, the CPO works to provide a clear channel between Coloradans and the agencies and providers tasked with protecting children. Specifically, the CPO independently gathers information, investigates complaints and provides recommendations to child protection agencies, providers and the state's legislature.

Further aligning the CPO with national standards, House Bill 21-1272 was signed into law on June 24, 2021. The law allows the CPO to be more responsive to citizens requesting a review of the circumstances surrounding a critical incident, such as a child fatality. Prior to its passage, the CPO was unable to complete such reviews in a timely or robust manner. Additionally, House Bill 21-1272 created additional protections for the confidential information and documents reviewed by the CPO during a case.

In June 2021 and June 2022, the CPO's duties and powers were expanded with the passage of House Bill 21-1313 and House Bill 22-1319. Intended to help unaccompanied immigrant children placed

within Colorado's borders by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, these bills permit the CPO to initiate reviews of the safety and well-being of such youth who are placed in state-licensed residential child care facilities, as well as monitor their care.

Also 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.

The CPO, housed within the Colorado Judicial Branch, is located at the Ralph L. Carr Judicial Center in Denver. Colorado's current Child Protection Ombudsman is Stephanie Villafuerte. Child Protection Ombudsman Villafuerte was appointed in December 2015 by the CPO Board and took office in January 2016.

Mission

We ensure Colorado child protection systems consistently, fairly and equitably deliver services to every child, youth and family across our state.

Case Support

- Guide youth, families and community members in navigating complex systems
- Review cases to ensure the highest attainable standards of care
- Work with people and agencies to help resolve concerns and disputes at the ground level

Systems Change

- Engage communities across Colorado in addressing local and statewide problems
- Collaborate with stakeholders and lawmakers to improve services, policies and laws

Vision

Child protection systems that effectively serve every youth, family and community in Colorado.

Major Agency Functions

Role of the CPO

The CPO was created to ensure the state's complex child protection system consistently provides high-quality services to every child, family and community in Colorado. The agency:

- Listens to people about their experience with, and concerns about, the state's child

protection system.

- Researches concerns reported by any individual or entity about service delivery within Colorado's child protection system.
- Resolves issues by determining the best way to assist people. This may mean bridging communication barriers or mediating conflicts based on misunderstandings.
- Identifies trends where the child protection system's funding, resources or practices are not keeping up with the needs of children, youth and families.
- Makes public recommendations for child protection system improvements. This may mean working with lawmakers, professionals and other stakeholders to advance legislation and policies that have a lasting, positive impact on children, youth and families.

Responsibilities of the CPO

The CPO is responsible for responding to citizens' complaints concerning actions or inactions by child protection agencies that may adversely impact the safety, permanency or well-being of a child. Child protection agencies are those that receive public funds to protect or care for children. This includes but is not limited to law enforcement, mental health agencies, child welfare services and the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

The CPO may self-initiate an independent and impartial investigation and ongoing review of the safety and well-being of an unaccompanied immigrant child who lives in a state-licensed residential child care facility and who is in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the federal Department of Health and Human Services as set forth in 8 U.S.C. sec. 1232 et seq. As part of this responsibility, the CPO may create and distribute outreach materials to state-licensed residential child care facilities and to individuals that have regular contact with unaccompanied immigrant children.

Additionally, the CPO is responsible for informing on systemic changes to promote better outcomes for, and improve the safety and well-being of, children, youth and families receiving child protection services in Colorado. Being uniquely situated to gather and share information with state and non-state entities, the CPO may issue recommendations to enhance the state's child protection system. The CPO shares this and other information with the public by publishing reports and other content at www.coloradocpo.org.

Jurisdiction and Environment

Each year, the CPO provides free and confidential services to hundreds of citizens who have questions and concerns about the state's child protection system. These citizens include parents, grandparents, kin, youth, medical professionals, lawyers, social workers, police officers and many others.

Citizens' questions and concerns often relate to specific program areas within the state's child protection system, including child welfare, juvenile justice and behavioral health. With access to child

protection records that are not otherwise available to the public, the CPO is able to independently and objectively resolve citizens' questions and concerns while concurrently identifying systemic issues afflicting the child protection system.

The agency's enabling statutes are C.R.S. § 19-3.3-101 – 19-3.3-110. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 19-3.3-103, the CPO has the authority to:

- Receive complaints concerning child protection services.
- Request, access, and review any information, records, or documents, including records of third parties, that the ombudsman deems necessary to conduct a thorough and independent review of a complaint.
- Independently and impartially investigate complaints.
- Seek resolution of complaints.
- Recommend changes and promote best practices to improve the state's child protection services.
- Educate the public concerning strengthening families and keeping children safe.
- Self-initiate an independent and impartial investigation and ongoing review of the safety and well-being of any unaccompanied immigrant child who lives in a state-licensed residential child care facility and is in federal custody.

The CPO does not have the authority to:

- Investigate allegations of abuse and/or neglect.
- Interfere or intervene in any criminal or civil court proceeding.
- Testify in a court proceeding in which the CPO is not a party.
- Provide third-party records/documents acquired in the course of a case.
- Investigate complaints related to judges, magistrates, attorneys or guardians ad litem.
- Overturn any court order.
- Mandate the reversal of an agency/provider decision.
- Offer legal advice.

Summary of Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Quarters 3 Performance Evaluation

During Quarter 3 (Q3) of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23, the CPO worked on three Strategic Policy Initiatives (SPI) to advance the agency's work in the areas of communication and outreach, efficient and impactful practices, expanding expertise and promoting best practices. They included:

- 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.

To access the CPO's full length Q2 Performance Evaluation, please click [here](#) or visit the website of the Colorado Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting.

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Performance Plan

Strategic Policy Initiatives

SPI 1: COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Raise awareness of the CPO to ensure every youth and family across Colorado has equitable access to the agency's services.

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 – is key to promoting impactful, equitable reforms to Colorado's child protection system.

Critical Process: Promote awareness of the CPO among youth impacted by child protection systems to increase equitable access to services for all youth.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

- In partnership with former Colorado youth who experienced child protection systems, develop a multi-year youth outreach campaign that raises awareness of the CPO and its services for youth.
- Utilizing youth focus groups and research from previous fiscal years, design new digital and print promotional materials that directly target youth who are involved in Colorado's child protection systems.
- Promote the agency's services for youth through digital content and distributing printed materials to agencies, providers and communities serving youth in out-of-home placements.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Development of a CPO Youth Outreach Campaign strategic plan, including a fiscal analysis of projected costs for implementation and maintenance.
- Distribution of new youth promotional materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by digital impressions and the number of sites in which printed materials are distributed.
- Increased services to youth, as measured by an increase in cases initiated by youth.

Critical Process: Promote awareness of the CPO among caregivers – including parents, relatives, foster parents and kin – of children involved in the child protection system to increase equitable access to services for all types of caregivers in every Colorado community.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

- In collaboration with caregivers with lived experience with child protection systems and various caregiver-serving agencies, develop targeted, multi-year outreach campaigns that raise awareness of the CPO and its services specific to different types of caregivers.
- Design new digital and print outreach materials that directly target different types of caregivers of children involved in Colorado's child protection systems.
- Promote the agency's services for caregivers through digital content and distributing printed materials to agencies, providers and communities serving caregivers.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Development of a CPO Caregiver Outreach Campaign strategic plan, including a fiscal analysis of projected costs for implementation and maintenance.
- Distribution of new caregiver promotional materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by digital impressions and the number of sites in which printed materials are distributed.
- Increased services to parents, relatives or other caregivers, as measured by an increase in cases initiated by parents, relatives or other caregivers.

Critical Process: Promote awareness of the CPO among communities of color to increase equitable access to services for youth and families disproportionately involved in Colorado's child protection systems.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

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

- In collaboration with a contracted equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) specialist, develop targeted, multi-year outreach campaigns that raise awareness of the CPO and its services among communities disproportionately impacted by Colorado child protection systems.
- Promote the agency's services by engaging with and distributing printed materials to agencies, providers and stakeholders serving communities of color.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Development of a CPO Outreach Campaign strategic plan that directly targets communities disproportionately impacted by Colorado child protection systems, including a fiscal analysis of projected costs for implementation and maintenance.
- Distribution of CPO promotional materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by the number of sites in which printed materials are distributed.
- Publicly available race and ethnicity data comparing CPO clients to the Colorado overall population, youth population and demographics of youth and families involved in child protection systems.
- Increased services to communities of color that are disproportionately involved in child protection systems, as measured by an increase in cases from people identifying as belonging to those communities.

Critical Process: Promote awareness of the CPO among rural communities to increase equitable access to services for every community, county and region in Colorado.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

- Collect and analyze client location data to determine which communities the CPO is serving and what specific issues people are experiencing.
- In collaboration with rural stakeholders, develop a multi-year strategy to raise awareness of the CPO and its services in specific communities, counties and regions of the state.
- Design new digital and print outreach materials that directly target non-metro communities and regions around the state.
- Promote the CPO's services for rural communities through direct engagement, digital content and distributing printed materials to non-metro agencies, providers and communities.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Publicly available regional data comparing CPO clients to a multi-county region's overall population, youth population and number of youth and families involved in child protection systems.
- Development of a multi-year rural outreach strategy, including a fiscal analysis of projected costs for implementation and maintenance.
- Outreach with agencies, providers and stakeholders in counties with a population under 70,000 residents, as measured by the number of engagements completed per quarter.
- Outreach with agencies, providers and stakeholders in every region of the state, as measured by the number of engagements completed in each region.
- Distribution of new rural promotional materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by digital impressions and the number of sites in which printed materials are distributed.
- The provision of services to those in rural communities, as measured by the number of cases initiated in rural counties.

Critical Process: Promote awareness of the CPO among 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 2023-2024

- In collaboration with agencies and professional groups, design new digital and print promotional materials that directly target different types of child protection professionals.
- Directly engage child protection professionals and entities interested in the CPO's services through meetings, trainings and educational opportunities.
- Promote the CPO's services for child protection professionals through digital content and distributing printed materials to non-metro agencies, providers and communities.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Outreach with professionals/providers, as measured by the number of engagements completed per quarter.
- Distribution of new professional promotional materials, in both English and Spanish, as measured by digital impressions and the number of sites in which printed materials are distributed.
- Increased services to child protection professionals, as measured by an increase in cases initiated by child protection professionals.

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 2023-2024

- 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 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- The total number of trainings and educational opportunities attended, as measured by the CPO’s

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](#).

community outreach spreadsheet.²

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

Critical Process: Develop inclusive processes, systems and communications that reflect principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

- Contract with an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) specialist to evaluate the CPO's internal culture, processes and business landscape.
- Provide CPO staff with ongoing EDI educational opportunities.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

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

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 2023-2024

- Facilitate an objective, multidisciplinary review of qualifying critical incidents to identify areas of the child protection system that can improve.
- Draft and distribute public facing report describing findings from reviews.
- Assess possible improvements to the CPO's process for reviewing critical incidents in Colorado.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

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.

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 qualifying cases received by the agency.

SPI 3 – SYSTEMS CHANGE: Collaborate with youth, caregivers, stakeholders and policymakers to advance improvements to child protection services, policies and laws for every community in Colorado.

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

Critical Process: Communicate findings, trending data and systemic issues to stakeholders, policymakers and the public.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

- Produce quarterly reports on CPO data to local and statewide stakeholders and policymakers.
- Publish and distribute CPO publications that educate the public, stakeholders and policymakers on trending issues with Colorado’s child protection systems.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Stakeholder and policymaker awareness of child protection issues, as measured by the number of publications distributed.
- Public awareness of child protection issues, as measured by digital impressions and/or media engagements per quarter.

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

Critical Process: Engage youth, caregivers, policymakers, stakeholders and communities in improving Colorado child protection systems through the CPO Policy Collaborative for Children & Families.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

- Facilitate the Mandatory Reporting Task Force, as established by C.R.S. § 19-3-304.2.
- 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.
- Launch the Tori Shuler Youth Voice Program and engage current and former youth with lived experience in Colorado child protection systems through focus groups, initiatives and special projects.
- Educate and engage caregivers, policymakers and other child protection stakeholders in discussions around child protection issues and ideas for improvement.
- Participate in multidisciplinary task forces addressing child protection issues.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Publication of the statutorily required Mandatory Reporting Task Force Interim Report.
- Publication of the statutorily required Timothy Montoya Task Force Interim Report.
- Engagements with youth on systemic change, as measured by the number of current and former youth engaged through the Tori Shuler Youth Voice Program.
- Education and engagement of caregivers, policymakers and other child protection stakeholders, as measured by the number of caregivers, policymakers and child protection stakeholders engaged.
- Participation in stakeholding, as measured by the number of stakeholder, task force, working group and statute review meetings attended.

Critical Process: Serve as an independent, neutral and objective resource for legislators on child protection issues.

Key Activities

FY 2023-2024

- Survey every member of the Colorado General Assembly about their concerns, and the concerns of their constituents', regarding child protection systems and issues.
- Using survey data, directly engage legislators that express an interest in learning more about child protection systems or collaborating on policy solutions to trending issues.
- Provide testimony in front of General Assembly committees on select bills with an impact to child safety and/or child protection systems.
- Serve as an independent, neutral and objective resource for the Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee.

FY 2024-2025

- Key activities are completed yearly.

FY 2025-2026

- Key activities are completed yearly.

Key Outcome(s) and Metrics

- Legislator concerns and interest in child protection issues, as measured by the number of General Assembly survey responses.
- Engagement with legislators, as measured by the number of meetings or other interactions between the CPO and legislators.
- Engagement with the Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee, as measured by the number of presentations to the committee.

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.

Appendix D

Probation Services Analyst II

Probation Services Analyst II Job Description

Job Title: Probation Services Analyst II

Job Code: R43486

Job Series: Probation Services Analyst

FLSA Status: Exempt

OCC Group: Professional Services (PS)

Signature of the State Court Administrator approval available on file in the Human Resources Division.

General Statement Of Duties: Manages specific programs or serves as project leader in the Division of Probation Services to develop improved managerial procedures and practices in the Colorado Judicial Department's probation business.

Distinguishing Factors: The Probation Services Analyst II position is distinguished from other classifications due to the responsibility of leading an ongoing program or project which must consume 50% or more of the employee's time. Leading programs or projects includes assigning tasks, monitoring progress and work flow, checking the product, scheduling work, and establishing work standards. Provides indirect supervision of field staff and may directly supervise up to 2.99 staff. Supervision is received from a Probation Services Analyst III, a Probation Services Analyst IV, Division Director or an Administrator.

Essential Functions Of the Position: Plans, administers, and implements state wide probation programs and projects. Serves as project leader for the development, implementation and maintenance of new policies and procedures within the state probation system; develops training for new policies and procedures.

Reviews and evaluates organizational policies, practices, structure, functions, programs, work methods, resources, relationships between various probation departments and management, and program performance; increases efficiency and effectiveness of state probation systems.

Identifies problems within various probation departments of the state system; offers recommendations and implements solutions; compares estimates and trend projections through the application of mathematical or statistical methods.

Compiles and analyzes information collected; verifies accuracy of information; identifies issues and problems; formulates recommendations that will encourage change within the state probation system.

Drafts rules, administrative recommendations, Chief Justice Directives.

Prepares reports, schedules, forms, procedures and directives based upon research and evaluation of issues and problems.

Analyzes proposed legislation, judicial processes, and procedures for possible impact on the probation business.

Establishes response procedures designed to address internal and external requests for information.

Some positions may prepare grant proposals, monitor grant funds, and prepare grant completion reports.

Attends meetings and training as required.

Performs other duties as assigned.

**Supervisor
Responsibilities:**

Responsible for one's own work product and may provide guidance, assistance, or mentorship to less knowledgeable or experienced coworkers, volunteers, or interns. This may include scheduling of work, instructing in work methods, and reviewing work products. May provide input into the hiring and discipline/termination processes. May have input into performance evaluation process.

**Minimum
Education:**

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree and four years of management analysis experience in statistical or economic analysis, office systems, methods and procedures, work measurement, forms design,

program planning or other related fields. Additional work experience in these or other related fields may be substituted on a year for year basis for the required formal education.

OR

One year of experience as a Probation Services Analyst I in the Colorado Judicial Department.

Physical Demands: While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to talk or hear. The employee frequently is required to use hands and fingers and reach with hands and arms. The employee is occasionally required to stand and reach with hands and arms. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 10 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, peripheral vision, and ability to adjust focus.

Work Environment: The noise level in the work environment is usually quiet. This position is subject to varying and unpredictable situations; may handle emergency or crisis situations; is subject to many interruptions; may handle multiple calls and inquiries simultaneously; and may occasionally handle absentee replacement on short notice.

Appendix E

Administrative Office Specialist II

Administrative Office Specialist II Job Description

Job Title: Administrative Office Specialist II
Job Code: R41804
Job Series: Administrative Specialist
FLSA Status: Exempt
OCC Group: Professional Services (PS)

Signature of the State Court Administrator approval available on file in the Human Resources Division.

General Statement Of Duties: Provides administrative support to a judicial district or probation department or division.

Distinguishing Factors: The Administrative Office Specialist II is distinguished from other classifications due to providing the full range of job functions related to the administrative support of the judicial district, probation department or division.

Essential Functions Of the Position: Provides general accounting and fiscal functions for the division including, but not limited to: processing invoices and vouchers, preparing monthly expenditure reports, budget monitoring and compiling year-end summaries.

Provides Human Resources functions for the division including but not limited to: employee file management, payroll processing including balancing leave accruals, contract administration, benefit liaison, recruitment functions, performance appraisal distribution and collection.

Conducts new employee orientations to ensure employees gain an understanding of benefit plans and enrollment provisions. Counsels employees (and potential employees/applicants) on plan provisions so that individuals can make informed benefit decisions.

Assists employee's regarding benefits, payroll, FMLA, disability and Worker's Compensation issues, etc.

Provide clerical support. Composes and types correspondence and other documents from rough draft to copy.

Assist in the development and/or communication of administrative policies, directives, rules and regulations.

Functions as liaison for the division to resolve concerns and complaints from the public and employees.

Compiles statistical data and helps provide analysis for planning purposes. May be asked to present findings, provide input and participate in projects to forecast and monitor budgets.

May prepare requests for proposals, assist in vendor selection, and coordinate acquisition.

Provides purchasing/procurement for the division including ITS coordination for computers/phone systems. Track inventory of supplies.

Provide back up IT Techs for computer, audio visual, phone, sound system and FTR needs.

Day to day management of facilities including maintenance, coordination with county staff on needs and help with construction projects.

Conducts or participates in special projects and committees.

May organize and schedule meetings, events, and travel arrangements.

Attends meetings and training as required.

Performs other duties as assigned.

**Supervisor
Responsibilities:**

Responsible for one's own work product and may provide assistance, or explain work instructions to less knowledgeable or experienced coworkers.

**Minimum
Education:**

Bachelor's degree (B.S. or B.A.) in business, public or court administration from a four-year accredited college or university and one year of office administrative experience

OR

Three years of related office or clerical experience required.

Physical Demands: While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to walk. The employee frequently is required to stand; sit; reach with hands and arms; and perform repetitive motions with wrists, hands, and fingers; stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl; and talk or hear. The employee is occasionally required to climb or balance. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 25 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, color vision, and ability to adjust focus.

**Work
Environment:**

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is occasionally exposed to moving mechanical parts and high precarious places. Occasionally handles emergency or crisis situations; frequently subject to interruptions, and multiple calls and inquiries. The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.