



# **CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN**

**FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026  
AGENCY SUMMARY & BUDGET REQUEST**

**November 1, 2024**

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Child Protection Ombudsman**

# OFFICE OF COLORADO'S CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN - BUDGET REQUEST FISCAL YEAR 2026

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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, is analyzing 19 directives concerning the procedures and effectiveness of Colorado’s child abuse and neglect mandatory reporting system and possible improvements. This task force will issue its final report and recommendations on January 1, 2025. 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, analyzed nine directives aimed at improving safeguards for children in out-of-home placement who have runaway behaviors. The Timothy Montoya Task Force issued its final report on October 1, 2024.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> See OCPO’s Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Youth from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement webpage for meeting materials, reports and recordings: <https://coloradocpo.org/special-initiative/montoya-task-force/>

## **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](http://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 2023-24**

Fiscal Year 2023-24 marked the fifth consecutive year the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) experienced an increase in the number of cases it received from citizens. In total we opened a record 1,250 cases – demonstrating an almost 12 percent increase compared to the previous fiscal year. Similar to previous years, there are several factors that the CPO attributes to this increase in cases. These include increased outreach and education efforts to child protection professionals and children and youth. However, this year, the CPO saw a significant increase in the number of cases involving clients who had previously worked with the CPO. During the fiscal year, 30 percent of the clients served by the CPO were repeat clients. We were extremely excited to see so many clients return and seek the services of the CPO. Additionally, the number of cases referred by the county departments of human services nearly doubled.

For the third consecutive year, we saw an increase in the number of cases brought to the agency by youth. During Fiscal Year 2023-24, we received a total of 92 cases from youth clients. Of the youth-initiated cases closed by the CPO, half of them involved youth currently residing in the Colorado Department of Human Services’ Division of Youth Services (DYS). More than half of the total cases opened during the past fiscal year were brought to us by families of children and youth involved with the child protection system. In particular, reports filed by mothers accounted for 43 percent – 407 cases – opened by the CPO. Some of the issues most frequently raised included youth safety in the DHS, foster homes and residential facilities. We also reviewed several cases that involved ensuring youth access to education, mental health services and helping parents access necessary and required services – such as adequate parenting time.

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 Fiscal Year 2022-23.<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman’s Fiscal Year 2023-24 Annual Report

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.

Additional highlights from Fiscal Year 2023-24 include:

**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 from Out-of-Home Placement through House Bill 22-1375. This task force was placed in the OCPO’s Policy Collaborative for Children & Families and met 12 times during Fiscal Year 2023-24. The task force has addressed a range of topics including ways to prevent youth from running from out-of-home placements to developing appropriate responses when they return. The OCPO has provided a great deal of research detailing how other states have approached similar issues in their states. Speakers from Texas and Vermont as well as local nonprofits such as Foster Source have shared their experiences and perspectives at task force meetings. In recent months, the task force’s focus has worked to finalize recommendations intended to develop standard, statewide programs to better serve these youth. On October 1, 2023, the task force issued its 2023 Interim Report, and its final report was published on October 1, 2024.<sup>3</sup>

**Mandatory Reporting Task Force** – With the passage of House Bill 22-1240, the Colorado General Assembly formed the Mandatory Reporting Task Force.<sup>4</sup> 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 Fiscal Year 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 was published and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on January 1, 2024. Its final report is due January 1, 2025.

**Addressing Transparency and Practice Concerns in Washington County** – During the summer of 2023, we notified the CDHS of serious child welfare practice concerns at the

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<sup>3</sup> See OCPO’s Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Youth from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement webpage for meeting materials, reports and recordings: <https://coloradocpo.org/special-initiative/montoya-task-force/>

<sup>4</sup> See OCPO’s Mandatory Reporting Task Force webpage for meeting materials, reports and recordings: <https://coloradocpo.org/special-initiative/mandatory-reporting-task-force/>

Washington County Department of Human Services (WCDHS). These concerns were the result of complaints filed with the CPO, alleging general and systemic practice concerns by the WCDHS. In total, we received eight complaints involving six distinct families and 10 children. The agency reviewed child welfare and court documentation in these cases and ultimately identified 64 potential violations of state regulation and law. These potential violations included concerns about WCDHS' ability to assess child safety concerns, develop appropriate interventions for families and attempts to keep families intact. The CPO urged CDHS to do a systemic review of WCDHS' practices including speaking with children and families directly about their experiences with the WCDHS practices. Six months later CDHS stated it did not identify any pervasive practice issues and refused to interview any children or families involved in the cases. While the CPO was disappointed by the quality of the CDHS' review, the CPO continues to monitor cases from Washington County to ensure children and families are receiving fair and quality services.

**Identifying Systemic Issues in Child Protection** –State law requires the OCPO to review systemic concerns in the Colorado child protection system. During the past fiscal year, there were several instances in which the agency highlighted the systemic issues impacting how child protection services are being administered in Colorado. For example, we presented four key issues to Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee, which was seeking solutions to systemic barriers in providing care and protection for children in Colorado. The OCPO highlighted the impacts of poor communication with parents, lack of systems to monitor caseworker misconduct, the absence of a quality assurance system for residential facilities and inconsistency in how departments assess the safety and risk of children. This work has transitioned into multiple pieces of legislation and ongoing work to address these issues.

### **Youth Outreach**

- **Tori Shuler Youth Voice Collective** – The OCPO was excited to launch its Tori Shuler Youth Voice Collective program during the past fiscal year. This program is dedicated to helping us connect with children, youth and young adults who have experience with the child protection system in Colorado. The OCPO has continued to prioritize the experiences and expertise of children, youth and young adults in shaping its public policy initiatives and improving how it can deliver better services directly to this population. During its first year, we held more than a dozen listening and engagement sessions with youth. These sessions were dedicated to first, asking youth how we should approach establishing this program and, second, how the OCPO can inform its practices to better serve them. Based on the information gathered during its first year, the Collective will be expanding its outreach and engagement during Fiscal Year 2024-25. This will

include more in-person meetings, engagements in rural Colorado and youth-driven changes to the OCPO's outreach materials and connection points.

- Inaugural Youth Voice Event Celebration – On January 4, 2024, the OCPO was proud to partner with the Office of the Child's Representative and other state partners to host the first Foster Youth Voice Celebration. During the event 17 young people with lived experience in the foster care system were recognized for their leadership and advocacy in improving laws and policies in Colorado. More than 50 people attended the event, which included presentations by some of the young people being recognized. Judge Gail Meinster presented the young people with their certificates and the event was led by the mistress of ceremonies, Tori Shuler. Ms. Shuler was also recognized for her ongoing work and more than a decade of efforts to improve the foster care system in Colorado.

## **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 2024-25 Performance Plan (Plan) to the Gov. Jared Polis on July 1, 2024, and the Plan was posted online on July 1, 2024.<sup>5</sup> The OCPO's Performance Plan contains the agency's strategic goals for Fiscal Year 2024-25. These include expanding communication and engagement efforts, efficiently managing caseloads and research and establishing the OCPO 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 OCPO 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.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B, Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman's Fiscal Year 2024-25 SMART Act Performance Plan

**FY 2025-26 Decision Items**

**November 1, 2024**

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY26	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	FTE
<b>TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)</b>	<b>\$128,290</b>	<b>\$128,290</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Total Program:</b>				
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman				
R-01 Special Investigator FTE	\$78,290	\$78,290	\$ -	1.0
R-02 Legislative Policy Expert	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$ -	0.0
<b>Program Costs</b>	<b>\$128,290</b>	<b>\$128,290</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>1.0</b>

**Budget Request Summary Fiscal Year 2025-26**

**RI-01 Special Case Investigator – \$78,290 annually and 1.0 FTE**

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY26	Total Funds	General Fund	Cash Funds	General Fund FTE	Cash Fund FTE
<b>TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)</b>	<b>\$78,290</b>	<b>\$78,290</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total Program:</b>					
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman					
<b>Program Costs</b>	<b>\$78,290</b>	<b>\$78,290</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-</b>

The OCPO currently receives an annual allocation of \$48,191 for its special investigator program. These funds are used to hire a contract employee for a limited number of hours to handle special investigatory functions for complex OCPO cases. The OCPO is now at a point where a full-time FTE is necessary to meet the complex and increasing needs of the citizens served by the agency.

As such, the OCPO is seeking the funds necessary to close the gap between the \$48,191 and the desired base salary described below. The agency is also seeking the correlating funds necessary to establish a full-time position.

The requested funds and assumptions are detailed below.

**Total Request: 1.0 FTE and \$78,266.47 (annual)**

**Desired Base Salary = \$92,592**

**Comparable Position = Probation Services Analyst I: 66,912—79,752—92,592<sup>6</sup>**

**Needed Funds to Reach Base Salary = \$44,401**

**Calculations: \$92,592 - \$48,191 = \$44,401**

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 this system and resolves issues by working collaboratively with agencies to find resolutions for OCPO clients.

The OCPO seeks to make its part-time contract investigator into a permanent full-time position to respond to higher and more complex caseloads. Additionally, the OCPO requires additional investigatory hours to secure records that are no longer being released by the CDHS, records that are essential for the OCPO to carry out its statutory duties.

The OCPO is requesting funds to establish the position at the top tier of the Probation Services Analyst I (PSA I) pay range. Currently OCPO uses the Probation Services Analyst I as the comparable position for its client services analysts' positions. While this position incorporates some of the job duties of the agency's CSA positions, it differs substantially because it requires additional, more complex skills that are required for gathering facts and evidence and preparing summary reports in cases. This position is crucial in ensuring the OCPO maintains its access to records necessary to fulfill the agency's core statutory charge. This role is described in detail below. To effectively fulfill this need, the agency must be able to recruit and retain an individual with experience and connections in this field. The OCPO reviewed comparable investigator positions in other agencies and found that the top tier of the PSA I pay range is most appropriate to do this. <sup>7 8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See FY 24 Judicial Compensation Plan

[https://www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/file/Administration/HR/Compensation\\_and\\_Benefits/FY24%20Comp%20Plan%20Updated%20752023.pdf](https://www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/file/Administration/HR/Compensation_and_Benefits/FY24%20Comp%20Plan%20Updated%20752023.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Department of Law Financial Fraud Investigator

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/colorado/jobs/newprint/1685265>

<sup>8</sup> Department of Law Criminal Investigator II

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/colorado/jobs/newprint/4209328>

To effectively carry out its work in an objective fashion, the OCPO independently reviews records from a variety of entities depending on the nature of the investigation. Pursuant to C.R.S. 19.3.3-303, the OCPO is legally entitled to receive records from the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), county human service agencies, and the Division of Youth Services. In cases of child fatalities, near fatalities and egregious incidents the CPO is entitled to receive records from coroner's offices, law enforcement agencies, hospitals, courts and vital statistic records.

Unfortunately, the CDHS has taken the position that the OCPO is no longer entitled to its records except in narrowly defined circumstances. Prior to this new interpretation the OCPO received records from the CDHS for years without incident. The net impact is that the CDHS has halted the OCPO's ability to get records that are necessary to investigate citizens' individual and systemic concerns.

In response to citizens' concerns, the OCPO recently requested records from the CDHS to determine the extent to which case worker falsification of client files is a problem in Colorado. This information is critical to ensure that families are treated fairly and to determine if there is a systemic problem that needs to be resolved through policy or law change. The CDHS' refused to provide these records. (See: *Two Colorado Agencies Are Fighting Over Information. Now one is Charging the Other \$30-per-hour Research Fee*, <https://coloradosun.com/2024/07/23/child-ombudsman-information-battle/>)

As a result of the CDHS' position the OCPO requires additional investigator hours to secure these records and others in the future. Rather than securing records from a single source, the OCPO will be required to draft and issue records requests to dozens of individual agencies to secure the same information. The OCPO will be unable to absorb this work given existing workloads and staffing levels.

In addition to the above, the OCPO needs additional hours to investigate increasingly complex cases. Fiscal Year 2023-24 marked the fifth consecutive year the OCPO experienced an increase in the number of cases it received from citizens. In total the OCPO opened 1,250 cases in Fiscal Year 2023-24, which is a 12% increase over the previous fiscal year.

In Fiscal Year 2023-24, the OCPO quickly exceeded the amount of time that was available under our contract with our part-time contract investigator. As such the OCPO was unable to thoroughly investigate more complicated cases.

There are numerous examples of the complex cases that the OCPO handles on a frequent basis. Below is a sample of these cases and the type of work that is involved.

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## **Use of Restraints in DYS Youth Centers**

In Fiscal Year 2023-24, the CPO investigated numerous incidents in which youth suffered severe injuries while residing in youth centers operated by the Colorado Department of Human Services - Division of Youth Services (DYS). These cases required investigative resources to secure DYS surveillance videos, critical incident reports, witness interviews, medical documentation and analysis of quality assurance reviews. The OCPO spent over 60 hours investigating these complaints and developing formal recommendations for improvement.<sup>9</sup>

## **Child Welfare Practice in Washington County, CO**

These eight cases spanned nearly two years and required 80 hours of investigative work. The OCPO received eight complaints that involved six distinct families and 10 children. In each instance, OCPO clients alleged that children and their families were harmed by inadequate child welfare practice that occurred in this jurisdiction.

The CPO reviewed child welfare and court documentation, relevant rules and law. Based upon this work, the CPO identified 64 potential violations of state regulation and law. These potential violations highlighted several areas of concern with child welfare practice including its failure to assess child safety using required child welfare tools, communicate with parents and children as required by state regulations and ensure families were provided appropriate service plans that are necessary for treatment and care.<sup>10</sup>

## **Child Fatalities**

In Fiscal Year 2023-24, the OCPO investigated several cases regarding the inadequacies of child fatality investigations by both law enforcement and county departments of human services in jurisdictions across the state. These cases often present incredibly complex situations with multiple system involvement. The OCPO has spent over 80 hours per case gathering autopsy and medical records, department of human services records and records from multiple law enforcement agencies.<sup>11</sup>

A full-time investigator would increase the OCPO's capacity to secure much needed records and to conduct independent individual and systemic investigations on behalf of children, youth and families. Tasks that an investigator would accomplish include:

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<sup>9</sup> OCPO cases closed in Fiscal Year 2023-24 regarding the use of restraints in DYS youth centers: 7561, 7609, 7638, 7724, 7727, 7881, 8150, 8276, 8315, 8330, 8435, 8638. A copy of the OCPO's recommendations can be found at: <https://coloradocpo.org/special-initiative/surveillance-within-the-division-of-youth-services/>

<sup>10</sup> OCPO Cases: 6373, 6813, 6844, 6966, 7022, 7036, 7361, 7357.

<sup>11</sup> OCPO Cases: 6236, 7298, 7398, 7480, 7785

- Issuing records requests, securing records and summarizing corresponding data and information.
- Securing audio and video recordings, law enforcement records, autopsy and hospital records.
- Gathering facts by conducting site visits and interviewing witnesses.

**Impact if not Granted**

The OCPO will be unable to secure records to conduct full-scale independent investigations. Additionally, the OCPO will be unable to adequately address cases for children and youth who are victims of child fatalities, near-fatalities and egregious incidents and those youth who live in secure DYS and residential treatment facilities.

<b>RI-01 - Special Investigator FTE</b>			
		<b>Investigator Year 1</b>	<b>Total Year 2</b>
<b><i>PERSONAL SERVICES</i></b>			
Number of FTE per class title		<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Monthly base salary		<b>\$4,163</b>	\$ -
Number of months charged in FY25-26		<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
Salary		\$49,956	\$49,956
PERA (Staff, GF)	<b>11.61%</b>	\$5,800	\$5,800
Medicare (Staff, GF)	<b>1.45%</b>	\$724	\$724
Central Appropriations		\$11,500	\$ -
Operating		\$950	\$950
Capital Outlay		\$9,360	\$330
<b>Total Personal Services</b>		<b>\$78,290</b>	<b>\$56,480</b>

**RI-02 Legislative Policy Support – \$50,000 annually**

Summary of Incremental Funding Change for FY26	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>General Fund FTE</b>	<b>Cash Fund FTE</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUEST (All Lines)</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total Program:</b>					
Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$ -	-	-
Program Costs	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$ -	-	-

The OCPO is an independent state agency housed within the Colorado State Judicial Department. By design, the OCPO serves as an objective, neutral problem solver that helps citizens navigate a complex child protection system and helps them resolve their problems in an expert and timely manner. The OCPO conducts its work through informal alternative dispute resolution processes that allow the agency to help citizens in the most direct, collaborative and immediate way possible.

Pursuant to C.R.S. 19-3.3-103(2), the OCPO is also responsible for making systemic recommendations, when appropriate, to the Colorado General Assembly and others, for statutory, budgetary, regulatory and administrative changes to improve the safety of and promote better outcomes for children and families receiving child protection services in Colorado.

Each year the General Assembly contemplates over a dozen bills that substantially impact Colorado children, youth and families in the child protection system. Given the OCPO's duty to improve outcomes for youth and families in the child protection system, the OCPO tracks and analyzes these bills each year. It is also common for the OCPO to be asked by legislators to provide an analysis of the policy impact that such bills might have for Colorado children and families. For the past several years the OCPO has worked closely with members of the Colorado General Assembly to provide neutral and objective research on a variety of subjects including child abuse fatalities, outcomes for foster youth, adoption assistance, Colorado risk and safety assessment tools, child welfare case worker certification, lack of quality assurance outcomes in residential behavioral health treatment centers, lack of behavioral health care for youth and physical mistreatment of youth in residential treatment facilities and in the Division of Youth Services.

Given the fast-paced nature of the legislative session, this requires the OCPO to provide high quality information within a short time frame. To complete this task, OCPO staff research state law and regulations, national trends and other policy resources to advise on these topics. Because the OCPO is required to be objective and neutral, the agency takes care to provide a thorough landscape analysis that contemplates both the benefits and drawbacks of a particular policy.

Additionally, the OCPO has also become a trusted, neutral venue to host state-wide task forces such as the Timothy Montoya Task Force for Youth Who Run from Out of Home Placements and the Mandatory Reporting Task Force. The OCPO remains engaged long after a task force has finished its work by ensuring that legislative members are briefed on the task force process and provided context for various task force recommendations. The OCPO essentially serves as the conduit by which task force recommendations may become legislative proposals.

Currently, the CPO relies upon existing staff to fulfill the need for these services. However, given the CPO's increasing caseloads, the CPO is unable to absorb this work without additional support. Because the legislative session is five months long, the CPO requests ongoing annual funding for a part-time contract policy person to provide support to the CPO for its work with the Colorado General Assembly.

**Impact if request is not granted:** The OCPO will be limited in its ability to provide timely, informed research and support to the General Assembly on matters of significance to Colorado children, youth and families who are involved in the child protection system.

**Schedule 00 - Reconciliation Detail**

<b>FY 2025-26 Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
HB24-1430 FY 2024-25 Long Bill	\$2,415,993	14.3	\$2,415,993	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>	<b>\$2,525,385</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,525,385</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO TA-01 Annualize FY25 R1 Data Analyst	(\$15,110)	0.1	(\$15,110)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-02 Annualization FY25 R2 Sr Client Svcs Analyst	(\$15,525)	0.1	(\$15,525)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-03 Annualization FY25 R3 Admin Office Specialist	(\$11,434)	0.0	(\$11,434)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-04 Annualization FY25 R4 IT Upgrade & Support	(\$14,000)	0.0	(\$14,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-05 Annualization HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tool	\$7,071	0.0	\$7,071	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-06 Annualization HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters	(\$65,000)	0.0	(\$65,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-07 Annualize 22-1375 Child Res Tx & Runaway Yth	(\$21,458)	0.0	(\$21,458)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-08 Statewide Total Comp Request	\$177,478	0.0	\$177,478	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R01 Special Investigator FTE	\$78,290	1.0	\$78,290	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R02 Legislative Policy Support	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R03 Cyber Security	\$10,000	0.0	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$2,705,697</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,705,697</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Legal Services</b>						
HB24-1430 FY 2024-25 Long Bill	\$48,697	0.0	\$48,697	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO TA-09 Legal Services	(\$12,988)	0.0	(\$12,988)	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Schedule 00 - Reconciliation Detail**

<b>FY 2025-26 Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>Total For: 09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
HB24-1430 FY 2024-25 Long Bill	\$2,464,690	14.3	\$2,464,690	\$0	\$0	\$0
HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tools	\$109,392	0.5	\$109,392	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO TA-01 Annualize FY25 R1 Data Analyst	(\$15,110)	0.1	(\$15,110)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-02 Annualization FY25 R2 Sr Client Svcs Analyst	(\$15,525)	0.1	(\$15,525)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-03 Annualization FY25 R3 Admin Office Specialist	(\$11,434)	0.0	(\$11,434)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-04 Annualization FY25 R4 IT Upgrade & Support	(\$14,000)	0.0	(\$14,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-05 Annualization HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tool	\$7,071	0.0	\$7,071	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-06 Annualization HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters	(\$65,000)	0.0	(\$65,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-07 Annualize 22-1375 Child Res Tx & Runaway Yth	(\$21,458)	0.0	(\$21,458)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-08 Statewide Total Comp Request	\$177,478	0.0	\$177,478	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-09 Legal Services	(\$12,988)	0.0	(\$12,988)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R01 Special Investigator FTE	\$78,290	1.0	\$78,290	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R02 Legislative Policy Support	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R03 Cyber Security	\$10,000	0.0	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$2,741,406</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,741,406</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Schedule 00 - Reconciliation Summary**

<b>FY 2025-26 Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
HB24-1430 FY 2024-25 Long Bill	\$2,464,690	14.3	\$2,464,690	\$0	\$0	\$0
HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tools	\$109,392	0.5	\$109,392	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO TA-01 Annualization FY25 R1 Data Analyst	(\$15,110)	0.1	(\$15,110)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-02 Annualization FY25 R2 Sr Client Svcs Analyst	(\$15,525)	0.1	(\$15,525)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-03 Annualization FY25 R3 Admin Office Specialist	(\$11,434)	0.0	(\$11,434)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-04 Annualization FY25 R4 IT Upgrade & Support	(\$14,000)	0.0	(\$14,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-05 Annualization HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tool	\$7,071	0.0	\$7,071	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-06 Annualization HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters	(\$65,000)	0.0	(\$65,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-07 Annualization HB22-1375 Child Res Tx & Runaway Yth	(\$21,458)	0.0	(\$21,458)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-08 Statewide Total Comp Request	\$177,478	0.0	\$177,478	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-09 Legal Services	(\$12,988)	0.0	(\$12,988)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R01 Special Investigator FTE	\$78,290	1.0	\$78,290	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R02 Legislative Policy Support	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$2,731,406</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,731,406</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

# FY 2025-26 Summary of Change Requests

# Schedule 10

Request Name	Interagency Review	Requires Legislation	Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Cash Funds	Reappr	Federal
<b>Non-Prioritized Request</b>								
None	n/a	n/a	\$0	0.0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Subtotal Non-Prioritized Request</b>			<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Prioritized Request</b>								
OCPO R01 Special Investigator FTE	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$78,290	1.0	\$78,290	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R02 Legislative Policy Support	No Other Agency Impact	No	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total For: Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>			<b>\$128,290</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>\$128,290</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Schedule 02 - Four Year Summary**

<b>FY 25-26 Office of Judicial Discipline</b>	<b>Long Bill Line</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop</b>	<b>Federal</b>
<b>FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditures</b>							
	09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$1,635,111	10.5	\$1,635,111	\$0	\$0	\$0
	<b>Total For: FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,635,111</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,635,111</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2023-24 Actual Expenditures</b>							
	09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$1,941,044	12.0	\$1,941,044	\$0	\$0	\$0
	<b>Total For: FY 2023-24 Actual Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,941,044</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>\$1,941,044</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>							
	09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$2,574,082	14.8	\$2,574,082	\$0	\$0	\$0
	<b>Total For: FY 2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2025-26 Governor's Budget Request</b>							
	09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	\$2,741,406	16.0	\$2,741,406	\$0	\$0	\$0
	<b>Total For: FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$2,741,406</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,741,406</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Schedule 3A

<b>FY 2022-23 - Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman, Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
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
<b>FY 2022-23 Final Appropriation</b>	<b>\$1,694,803</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,694,803</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2022-23 Final Expenditure Authority</b>	<b>\$1,694,803</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,694,803</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,635,111</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,635,111</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2022-23 Reversion (Overexpenditure)</b>	<b>\$59,692</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$59,692</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b><i>FY 2022-23 Personal Services Allocation</i></b>	<b>\$1,289,654</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,289,654</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b><i>FY 2022-23 Total All Other Operating Allocation</i></b>	<b>\$345,456</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$345,456</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total For: 09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
<b>FY 2022-23 Final Expenditure Authority</b>	<b>\$1,694,803</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,694,803</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2022-23 Actual Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,635,111</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,635,111</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2022-23 Reversion (Overexpenditure)</b>	<b>\$59,692</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$59,692</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Schedule 3B**

<b>FY 2023-24 - Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman,</b>						
<b>Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
SB23-214 FY 2023-24 Long Bill	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2023-24 Final Appropriation</b>	<b>\$2,170,852</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>\$2,170,852</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
FY 2023-24 Final Expenditure Authority	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2023-24 Actual Expenditures	\$1,941,044	12.0	\$1,941,044	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2023-24 Reversion (Overexpenditure)	\$229,808	0.0	\$229,808	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>FY 2023-24 Personal Services Allocation</i>	\$1,618,283	12.0	\$1,618,283	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>FY 2023-24 Total All Other Operating Allocation</i>	\$322,761	0.0	\$322,761	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total For: 09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
FY 2023-24 Final Expenditure Authority	\$2,170,852	12.0	\$2,170,852	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2023-24 Actual Expenditures	\$1,941,044	12.0	\$1,941,044	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2023-24 Reversion (Overexpenditure)	\$229,808	0.0	\$229,808	\$0	\$0	\$0

Schedule 3C

<b>FY 2024-25 - Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman,</b>						
<b>Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
HB24-1430 FY 2024-25 Long Bill	\$2,415,993	14.3	\$2,415,993	\$0	\$0	\$0
HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tools	\$109,392	0.5	\$109,392	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>	<b>\$2,525,385</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,525,385</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2024-25 Personal Services Allocation</b>	<b>\$2,053,791</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,053,791</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2024-25 Total All Other Operating Allocation</b>	<b>\$471,594</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$471,594</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Legal Services</b>						
HB24-1430 FY 2024-25 Long Bill	\$48,697	0.0	\$48,697	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2024-25 Initial Appropriation</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2024-25 Operating Allocation</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Schedule 3D

<b>FY 2025-26 - Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
<b>Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
<b>FY 2025-26 Starting Base</b>	<b>\$2,525,385</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,525,385</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO TA-01 Annualize FY25 R1 Data Analyst	(\$15,110)	0.1	(\$15,110)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-02 Annualization FY25 R2 Sr Client Svcs Analyst	(\$15,525)	0.1	(\$15,525)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-03 Annualization FY25 R3 Admin Office Specialist	(\$11,434)	0.0	(\$11,434)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-04 Annualization FY25 R4 IT Upgrade & Support	(\$14,000)	0.0	(\$14,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-05 Annualization HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tool	\$7,071	0.0	\$7,071	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-06 Annualization HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters	(\$65,000)	0.0	(\$65,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-07 Annualize 22-1375 Child Res Tx & Runaway Yth	(\$21,458)	0.0	(\$21,458)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-08 Statewide Total Comp Request	\$177,478	0.0	\$177,478	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Base Request</b>	<b>\$2,567,407</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>\$2,567,407</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO R01 Special Investigator FTE	\$78,290	1.0	\$78,290	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R02 Legislative Policy Support	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$2,695,697</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,695,697</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Personal Services Allocation</b>	<b>\$2,199,163</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,199,163</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total All Other Operating Allocation</b>	<b>\$496,534</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$496,534</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Schedule 3D

<b>FY 2025-26 - Child Protection Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Reapprop Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>
<b>Legal Services</b>						
<b>FY 2025-26 Starting Base</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$48,697</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO TA-09 Legal Services	(\$12,988)	0.0	(\$12,988)	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Base Request</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Personal Services Allocation</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$35,709</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total For: 09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</b>						
<b>FY 2025-26 Starting Base</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,574,082</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO TA-01 Annualization FY25 R1 Data Analyst	(\$15,110)	0.1	(\$15,110)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-02 Annualization FY25 R2 Sr Client Svcs Analyst	(\$15,525)	0.1	(\$15,525)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-03 Annualization FY25 R3 Admin Office Specialist	(\$11,434)	0.0	(\$11,434)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-04 Annualization FY25 R4 IT Upgrade & Support	(\$14,000)	0.0	(\$14,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-05 Annualization HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tool	\$7,071	0.0	\$7,071	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-06 Annualization HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters	(\$65,000)	0.0	(\$65,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-07 Annualize 22-1375 Child Res Tx & Runaway Yth	(\$21,458)	0.0	(\$21,458)	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-08 Statewide Total Comp Request	\$177,478	0.0	\$177,478	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO TA-09 Legal Services	(\$12,988)	0.0	(\$12,988)	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Base Request</b>	<b>\$2,603,116</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>\$2,603,116</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OCPO R01 Special Investigator FTE	\$78,290	1.0	\$78,290	\$0	\$0	\$0
OCPO R02 Legislative Policy Support	\$50,000	0.0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>FY 2025-26 Elected Official Request</b>	<b>\$2,731,406</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,731,406</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Personal Services Allocation</b>	<b>\$2,234,872</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>\$2,234,872</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total All Other Operating Allocation</b>	<b>\$496,534</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$496,534</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

# Child Protection Ombudsman

# Schedule 14B

Line Item	Object Code	Detail	Object Group Name	FY 22-23 Actual Exp	FY23 FTE	FY 23-24 Actual Exp	FY24 FTE	FY 24-25 Approp Budget	FY25 FTE	FY 25-26 EO Request Budget	FY26 FTE
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## 09. Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman

### Personal Services - Employees

Object Group	Object Group Name					
FTE	Total FTE		10.5	12.0	14.8	16.0
1000	Total Employee Wages and Benefits	\$1,233,233	\$1,467,690	\$2,053,791	\$2,199,163	

Object Code	Object Name				
1000	Personal Services	\$0	\$0	\$2,053,791	\$2,199,163
1120	Temporary Full-Time Wages	\$7,020	\$0	\$0	\$0
1121	Temporary Part-Time Wages	\$36,348	\$11,904	\$0	\$0
1210	Contractual Employee Regular Full-Time Wages	\$810,192	\$1,020,307	\$0	\$0
1211	Contractual Employee Regular Part-Time Wages	\$26,609	\$2,847	\$0	\$0
1240	Contractual Employee Annual Leave Payments	\$9,508	\$20,298	\$0	\$0
1340	Employee Cash Incentive Awards	\$18,000	\$16,000	\$0	\$0
1510	Dental Insurance	\$5,252	\$5,939	\$0	\$0
1511	Health Insurance	\$118,151	\$144,023	\$0	\$0
1512	Life Insurance	\$1,027	\$1,131	\$0	\$0
1513	Short-Term Disability	\$1,203	\$1,496	\$0	\$0
1514	Statutory Personnel & Payroll System Vision Insurance	\$473	\$734	\$0	\$0
1520	FICA-Medicare Contribution	\$12,748	\$15,019	\$0	\$0
1522	PERA	\$99,535	\$119,383	\$0	\$0
1524	PERA - AED	\$43,284	\$51,520	\$0	\$0
1525	PERA - SAED	\$43,284	\$51,520	\$0	\$0
1532	Unemployment Compensation	\$0	\$4,970	\$0	\$0
1630	Contractual Employee Other Employee Benefits	\$600	\$600	\$0	\$0

**Child Protection Ombudsman**

**Schedule 14B**

Line Item	Object Code	Detail	Object Group Name	FY 22-23 Actual Exp	FY23 FTE	FY 23-24 Actual Exp	FY24 FTE	FY 24-25 Approp Budget	FY25 FTE	FY 25-26 EO Request Budget	FY26 FTE
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**Personal Services - Contract Services**

Object Group	Object Group Name									
1100	Total Contract Services (Purchased Personal Services)	\$56,421	\$150,593	\$0	\$0					
Object Code	Object Name									
1910	Personal Services - Temporary	\$0	\$3,901	\$0	\$0					
1920	Personal Services - Professional	\$45,030	\$129,963	\$0	\$0					
1935	Personal Services - Legal Services	\$77	\$300	\$0	\$0					
1960	Personal Services - Information Technology	\$11,314	\$16,429	\$0	\$0					
<b>Subtotal All Personal Services</b>		<b>\$1,289,654</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,618,283</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>\$2,053,791</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,199,163</b>	<b>16.0</b>	

**All Other Operating Expenditures**

Object Group	Object Group Name								
2000	Total Operating Expenses	\$333,797	\$293,393	\$471,594	\$496,534				
3000	Total Travel Expenses	\$11,660	\$21,101	\$0	\$0				
6000	Total Capitalized Property Purchases	\$0	\$8,267	\$0	\$0				
Object Code	Object Name								
2000	Operating Expense	\$0	\$0	\$471,594	\$496,534				
2160	Other Cleaning Services	\$375	\$0	\$0	\$0				
2252	Rental/Motor Pool Mile Charge	\$0	\$180	\$0	\$0				
2253	Rental of Equipment	\$2,318	\$2,194	\$0	\$0				
2255	Rental of Buildings	\$0	\$700	\$0	\$0				
2510	In-State Travel	\$483	\$2,461	\$0	\$0				
2511	In-State Common Carrier Fares	\$0	\$461	\$0	\$0				
2512	In-State Personal Travel Per Diem	\$18	\$403	\$0	\$0				
2513	In-State Personal Vehicle Reimbursement	\$84	\$522	\$0	\$0				

**Child Protection Ombudsman**

**Schedule 14B**

Line Item Object Code Detail	Object Group Name	FY 22-23	FY23	FY 23-24	FY24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26 EO		
		Actual Exp	FTE	Actual Exp	FTE	Approp Budget	FY25 FTE	Request Budget	FY26 FTE
2520	In-State Travel/Non-Employee	\$67		\$1,124		\$0		\$0	
2522	In-State/Non-Employee - Personal Per Diem	\$0		\$183		\$0		\$0	
2523	In-State/Non-Employee - Personal Vehicle Reimbursement	\$0		\$1,044		\$0		\$0	
2530	Out-Of-State Travel	\$3,556		\$8,924		\$0		\$0	
2531	Out-Of-State Common Carrier Fares	\$6,882		\$4,469		\$0		\$0	
2532	Out-Of-State Personal Travel Per Diem	\$570		\$1,480		\$0		\$0	
2533	Out-Of-State Personal Vehicle Reimbursement	\$0		\$30		\$0		\$0	
2610	Advertising And Marketing	\$3,343		\$3,353		\$0		\$0	
2631	Communication Charges - Office Of Information Technology	\$1,939		\$4,091		\$0		\$0	
2641	Other Automated Data Processing Billings-Purchased Svcs	\$6,244		\$6,503		\$0		\$0	
2680	Printing And Reproduction Services	\$247		\$11,953		\$0		\$0	
2820	Purchased Services	\$261,536		\$172,845		\$0		\$0	
3110	Supplies & Materials	\$100		\$247		\$0		\$0	
3118	Food and Food Service Supplies	\$1,523		\$1,607		\$0		\$0	
3120	Books/Periodicals/Subscriptions	\$9,328		\$8,450		\$0		\$0	
3121	Office Supplies	\$4,287		\$3,511		\$0		\$0	
3123	Postage	\$196		\$53		\$0		\$0	
3128	Noncapitalizable Equipment	\$0		\$1,410		\$0		\$0	
3132	Noncapitalizable Furniture And Office Systems	\$961		\$361		\$0		\$0	
3140	Noncapitalizable Information Technology	\$18,254		\$26,973		\$0		\$0	
3145	Software Subscription	\$11,253		\$24,167		\$0		\$0	
4100	Other Operating Expenses	\$0		\$79		\$0		\$0	
4140	Dues And Memberships	\$2,362		\$2,606		\$0		\$0	
4220	Registration Fees	\$9,530		\$21,850		\$0		\$0	
4256	Other Benefit Plan Expense	\$0		\$260		\$0		\$0	
6211	Information Technology - Direct Purchase	\$0		\$8,267		\$0		\$0	
<b>Subtotal All Other Operating</b>		<b>\$345,456</b>		<b>\$322,761</b>		<b>\$471,594</b>		<b>\$496,534</b>	
<b>Total Line Item Expenditures</b>		<b>\$1,635,111</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>\$1,941,044</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>\$2,525,385</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>\$2,695,697</b>	<b>16.0</b>

**Child Protection Ombudsman**

**Schedule 14B**

Line Item	Object Code	Detail	Object Group Name	FY 22-23 Actual Exp	FY23 FTE	FY 23-24 Actual Exp	FY24 FTE	FY 24-25 Approp Budget	FY25 FTE	FY 25-26 EO Request Budget	FY26 FTE
<b>Legal Services</b>											
<b>Personal Services - Employees</b>											
<b>Object Group</b>		<b>Object Group Name</b>									
FTE			Total FTE		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0
1000			Total Employee Wages and Benefits	\$0		\$0		\$48,697		\$35,709	
<b>Object Code</b>		<b>Object Name</b>									
1000			Personal Services	\$0		\$0		\$48,697		\$35,709	
<b>Personal Services - Contract Services</b>											
<b>Object Group</b>		<b>Object Group Name</b>									
<b>Object Code</b>		<b>Object Name</b>									
<b>Subtotal All Personal Services</b>				\$0	0.0	\$0	0.0	\$48,697	0.0	\$35,709	0.0
<b>All Other Operating Expenditures</b>											
<b>Object Group</b>		<b>Object Group Name</b>									
<b>Object Code</b>		<b>Object Name</b>									
<b>Subtotal All Other Operating</b>				\$0		\$0		\$0		\$0	
<b>Total Line Item Expenditures</b>				\$0	0.0	\$0	0.0	\$48,697	0.0	\$35,709	0.0

**Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman FTE Detail**

**Schedule 14A**

Job Class #	Job Class Name	FY23		FY24	
		FTE	FY23 Wages	FTE	FY24 Wages
850000	Ombudsman	1.0	\$147,180	1.0	\$166,902
850001	Deputy Ombudsman	1.0	\$113,580	1.0	\$130,617
850002	Director of Administrative Services	1.0	\$81,779	1.0	\$92,085
850003	Child Protection System's Analyst	4.3	\$304,198	4.3	\$337,478
850005	Director of Client Services	1.0	\$91,356	1.0	\$105,517
850006	Director of Legislative Services	0.0	\$0	0.8	\$67,123
850007	Public Information Coordinator	0.8	\$79,112	0.6	\$51,036
850008	Senior Analyst	1.0	\$76,128	1.0	\$86,329
T603XX	Contract Employee	0.1	\$7,020	0.1	\$10,560
<b>Total Wages</b>		<b>10.1</b>	<b>\$900,354</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>\$1,047,647</b>

**FY 2025-26 Office of Child Protection Ombudsman**

**Schedule 06**

Session Year/Bill Number	Long Bill Line	Total Funds	FTE	General Fund	Cash Funds	Re - approp	Fed
<b>2022-23 Special Bill Line Item Appropriations</b>							
<b>HB22-1240 Mandatory Reporters</b>							
	09. Office of the Child Protection Omb	\$97,500	0.0	\$97,500	\$0	\$0	0
	<b>Subtotal HB22-1240</b>	<b>\$97,500</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$97,500</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>HB22-1375 Child Residential Treatment And Runaway Youth</b>							
	09. Office of the Child Protection Omb	\$99,500	0.0	\$99,500	\$0	\$0	0
	<b>Subtotal HB22-1375</b>	<b>\$99,500</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$99,500</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>2023-24 Special Bill Line Item Appropriations</b>							
	None	\$0	0.0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
		<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>FY 2024-25 Special Bill Line Item Appropriations</b>							
<b>HB24-1046 Child Welfare System Tools</b>							
	09. Office of the Child Protection Omb	\$109,392	0.5	\$109,392	\$0	\$0	0
	<b>Subtotal HB24-1046</b>	<b>\$109,392</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>\$109,392</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Salary Pots Request Template**

Category	TOTAL FUNDS/FTE FY 2025-26	GENERAL FUND	CASH FUNDS	REAPPROP FUNDS	FEDERAL FUNDS
<b>I. Continuation Salary Base</b>		FUND SPLITS - From Position-by-Position Tab			
Sum of Filled FTE as of July 31, 2024	16.00	100.000%	0.000%	0.000%	0.0000%
Salary X 12	\$1,562,386	\$1,562,386	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA (Standard, Trooper, and Judicial Rates) at FY 2025-26 PERA Rates	\$181,393	\$181,393	\$0	\$0	\$0
Medicare @ 1.45%	\$22,655	\$22,655	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal Continuation Salary Base =	\$1,766,434	\$1,766,434	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>II. Salary Survey Adjustments</b>					
System Maintenance Studies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Cost of Living Adjustment - Base Building	\$39,060	\$39,060	\$0	\$0	\$0
Cost of Living Adjustment - Non-Base Building	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Movement to Statewide Minimum Wage - Base Adjustment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Subtotal - Salary Survey Adjustments</b>	\$39,060	\$39,060	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA (Standard, Trooper, and Judicial Rates) at FY 2025-26 PERA Rates	\$4,535	\$4,535	\$0	\$0	\$0
Medicare @ 1.45%	\$567	\$567	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Request Subtotal =</b>	\$44,162	\$44,162	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>III. Step Pay Adjustments</b>					
Step Increase - Base Adjustment - Classified, Step Eligible	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Step-Like Increase - Base Adjustment - Step-Ineligible	\$9,097	\$9,097	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Subtotal - Step Pay Adjustments</b>	\$9,097	\$9,097	\$0	\$0	\$0
PERA (Standard, Trooper, and Judicial Rates) at FY 2025-26 PERA Rates	\$1,056	\$1,056	\$0	\$0	\$0
Medicare @ 1.45%	\$132	\$132	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Request Subtotal =</b>	\$10,285	\$10,285	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>IV. Shift Differential</b>					
FY 2023-24 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
<b>Request Subtotal =</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>V. Revised Salary Basis for Remaining Request Subtotals</b>					
Total Continuation Salary Base, Adjustments, Performance Pay & Shift	\$1,610,543	\$1,610,543	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>VI. Unfunded Liability Amortization Equalization Disbursement Payments</b>					
Revised Salary Basis * 10.00%	\$161,054	\$161,054	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>VII. Short-term Disability</b>					
Revised Salary Basis * 0.15%	\$2,416	\$2,416	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>VIII. Health, Life, and Dental</b>					
Funding Request	\$275,046	\$275,046	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>IX. Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program Premiums</b>					
	\$7,247	\$7,247	\$0	\$0	\$0
		100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

OCPO - Pots Summary

<b>Common Policy Line Item</b>	<b>FY 2024-25 Appropriation</b>	<b>GF</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>RF</b>	<b>FF</b>
Salary Survey	\$45,592	\$45,592			
Step Pay	\$44,703	\$44,703			
Merit Pay	\$0	\$0			
PERA Direct Distribution	\$0	\$0			
Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program	\$5,437	\$5,437			
Shift	\$0	\$0			
Unfunded Liab Amortization Equalization Disbursement Payments	\$120,818	\$120,818			
Short-term Disability	\$1,812	\$1,812			
Health, Life and Dental	\$194,665	\$194,665			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$413,027</b>	<b>\$413,027</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Common Policy Line Item</b>	<b>FY 2025-26 Total Request</b>	<b>GF</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>RF</b>	<b>FF</b>
Salary Survey	\$44,162	\$44,162	\$0	\$0	\$0
Step Pay	\$10,285	\$10,285	\$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	\$7,247	\$7,247	\$0	\$0	\$0
Shift	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Unfunded Liab Amortization Equalization Disbursement Payments	\$161,054	\$161,054	\$0	\$0	\$0
Short-term Disability	\$2,416	\$2,416	\$0	\$0	\$0
Health, Life and Dental	\$275,046	\$275,046	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$500,211</b>	<b>\$500,211</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Common Policy Line Item</b>	<b>FY 2025-26 Incremental</b>	<b>GF</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>RF</b>	<b>FF</b>
Salary Survey	\$44,162	\$44,162	\$0	\$0	\$0
Step Pay	\$10,285	\$10,285	\$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	\$1,810	\$1,810	\$0	\$0	\$0
Shift	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Unfunded Liab Amortization Equalization Disbursement Payments	\$40,236	\$40,236	\$0	\$0	\$0
Short-term Disability	\$604	\$604	\$0	\$0	\$0
Health, Life and Dental	\$80,381	\$80,381	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$177,479</b>	<b>\$177,479</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

# **Appendix A**



OFFICE *of* COLORADO'S  
**CHILD PROTECTION  
OMBUDSMAN**



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
FISCAL YEAR 2023-24

LISTEN

INVESTIGATE

RESOLVE

IDENTIFY TRENDS

LASTING CHANGE

# LETTER FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

Dear friends and community partners,

It is my pleasure to present the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman's Annual Report. This is the eighth year that I have had the privilege of leading this organization and to co-create with our team, thousands of people and community partners to build a quality child protection system that provides services to children and families in an effective, efficient and compassionate manner.

Child welfare systems across our state serve some of our most vulnerable children, youth and families. These systems are designed to support families and to protect children from harm through an array of prevention and intervention services. Once families enter the Colorado child protection system, our agency works with them to ensure that they receive the best quality services possible.

This year our agency worked with more than 1,200 citizens to address concerns that they have about the state's child protection system. Our work took us into the lives of parents, young adults, children, extended families and child protection professionals across the state. In many of these instances, individuals confided in us the deeply personal experiences that brought them into the state's child protection system. They also shared the challenging and often frustrating interactions they experienced once in the system. In each case, our team helped these individuals navigate challenges and, in many instances, find resolutions to their concerns.

Additionally, we took the experiences that they shared and used this information to promote child protection reform. While we are statutorily charged with conducting systems reform work, we also consider it our moral imperative to do so. We believe that every person who contacts our agency has a unique voice that provides us and the entire child protection community with an opportunity to reflect, learn and grow.

During the past year, our systemic policy work has been reflected in three different projects. Two projects involve our two community task forces. One task force is addressing the disproportionate impact of mandatory child abuse reporting laws on Colorado children and families and our second task force is building systems of care for youth who run away from out-of-home placements, such as foster care and residential treatment facilities. In each instance, these task forces were formed because of citizens who came to our agency and expressed concerns that Colorado could and should do better for its children and families.

Our third project is designed to prioritize the experiences of youth who are in the child protection system. This year we started the Tori Schuler Youth Collective, a program that is dedicated to helping us connect with children, youth and young adults who have experience with the Colorado child protection system. We have already learned a great deal from these youth who share with us what is working, what is not and how we can improve the quality of care for all of them.

In the end, our agency is only as successful as the people who are willing to share their experiences and our ability to listen and integrate their experiences into our work. Our commitment today and in the years to come is to remain humble and vigilant learners who transform individual experience into systems of change that we can all be proud of. This report reflects this year's listening and learning.

Sincerely,



**Stephanie Villafuerte**

Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman



# CONTINUED GROWTH

## CPO TOTAL CASE ACTIVITY IN FY 2023-2024

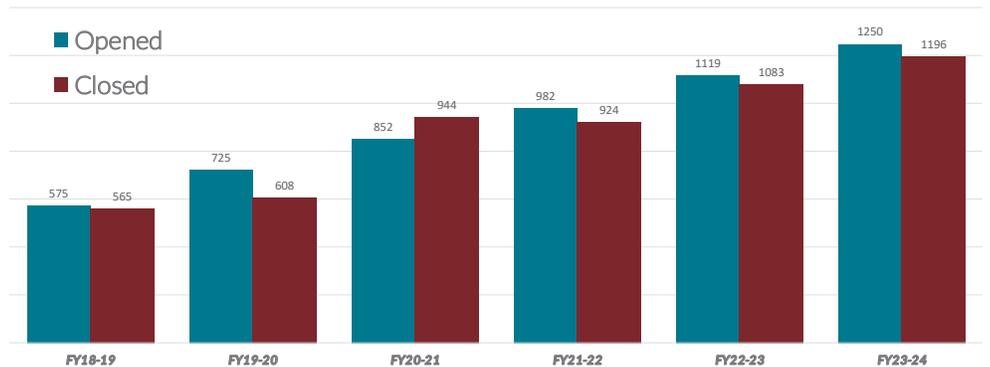
Fiscal Year 2023-24 marked the fifth consecutive year the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) experienced an increase in the number of cases it received from citizens. In total we opened a record 1,250 cases – demonstrating an almost 12 percent increase compared to the previous fiscal year. Similar to previous years, there are several factors that the CPO attributes to this increase in cases. These include increased outreach and education efforts to child protection professionals and children and youth. However, this year, the CPO saw a significant increase in the number of cases involving clients who had previously worked with the CPO. During the fiscal year, 30 percent of the clients served by the CPO were repeat clients. We were extremely excited to see so many clients return and seek the services of the CPO. Additionally, the number of cases referred to the agency by county departments of human services nearly doubled.

CPO CASE HISTORY	TOTAL # OF CASES
Fiscal Year 2015-16	580
Fiscal Year 2016-17	577
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	1119
Fiscal Year 2023-24	1250

For the third consecutive year, we saw an increase in the number of cases brought to the agency by youth. During FY 2023-24, we received a total of 92 cases from youth clients. Of the youth-initiated cases closed by the CPO, half of them involved youth currently residing in the Colorado Department of Human Services' Division of Youth Services (DYS).

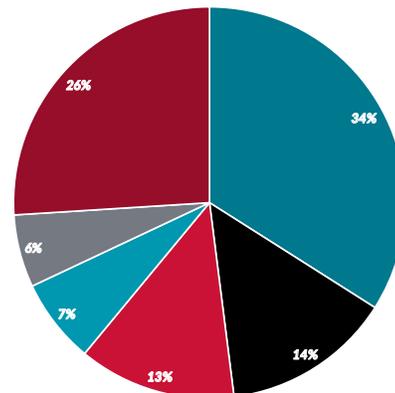
More than half of the total cases opened during the past fiscal year were brought to us by families of children and youth involved with the child protection system. In particular, reports filed by mothers accounted for 43 percent – 407 cases – opened by the CPO. Some of the issues most frequently raised included youth safety in the DHS, foster homes and residential facilities. We also reviewed several cases that involved ensuring youth access to education, mental health services and helping parents access necessary and required services – such as adequate parenting time.

## CASES BY FISCAL YEAR



## RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD

- Mothers
- Relatives
- Fathers
- Child/Youth
- Community Member
- Other



# CASE HIGHLIGHTS



## Case #1

The mother of a 13-year-old called the CPO with concerns about her son's safety inside a DYS youth center. The mother reported that her son's face was slammed into a metal door frame while staff attempted to physically restrain him. The impact resulted in a gash on the youth's face that required a series of stitches to close. This was one of many restraints the youth experienced while in the DYS' care. The CPO reviewed the case, including a report written by one of the staff that was involved with forcing the youth to the ground. In that report, the staff wrote that the youth was making verbal threats towards the staff after the youth's phone conversation with his family was disconnected. That phone call was with his mother, discussing details about an upcoming ceremony to celebrate the youth's brother who had recently passed away. According to the report, the staff justified physically forcing the youth to the ground because the youth allegedly made threatening statements. In addition to the written report by staff the CPO also reviewed video of the incident. The CPO watched the staff force the youth to the floor and his face hit the doorway. But the video did not contain any audio that would help the CPO confirm the youth had made verbal threats toward staff. This was just one of many cases in which the CPO reviewed a case involving a DYS youth who was physically restrained because staff claimed they either made threatening remarks or ignored staff's verbal directions. However, none of the videos produced by the DYS included audio that would help confirm staff's justification of the restraint. Ultimately, the CPO produced a brief detailing how the safety and well-being of youth may be compromised without better surveillance inside DYS facilities. The CPO will continue to work with the Colorado General Assembly to improve surveillance within DYS facilities.



## Case #2

The CPO was contacted by the mother of two children who were residing in a Colorado foster home. The mother was concerned that a firearm was accidentally discharged in the foster home while her children were in a different room. No one was harmed in the incident, but the CPO reviewed the case and quickly found concerns with how the event was reviewed and documented by the agency in charge of licensing and monitoring the foster home. This agency is commonly referred to as a child placement agency, CPA. The CPO's review confirmed that the firearm was discharged after the foster father cleaned the firearm and was placed back inside a closet. Foster parents are permitted to keep a firearm in their home, so long as certain safety protocols are followed. The CPA correctly followed state regulations when reviewing the incident and ensured the father attended necessary firearm safety classes. However, the CPO also found that the CPA failed to create and enter a report about the incident into the statewide child welfare database, Trails. Reports of such incidents are required to be submitted into the database so that county child welfare services and the CDHS – which are legally responsible for children and youth in foster care – are made aware of the incident. This information can be crucial when these entities are working to determine whether to place children and youth in a particular foster home. The CPO contacted the CPA and presented them with the regulation requiring the report be submitted. The CPA stated it did not think the incident originally qualified under the regulation. However, after working with the CPO, the agency recognized the need for the report to be entered into Trails to ensure all child welfare professionals have complete information when considering placing children in the care of the foster parents.



# CASE HIGHLIGHTS



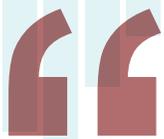
## Case #3

A 17-year-old transgender youth contacted the CPO while living in a treatment center located in a different state. The youth had received information about the CPO before leaving Colorado and sought the agency's help in obtaining gender-affirming medical care. The youth told the CPO she was placed in a treatment facility in a state that is legally prohibited from providing gender affirming care. Colorado facilities are currently allowed to provide such care. She was placed there because there were no available placements in Colorado. The youth reported to the CPO that she felt "stuck" in the out-of-state facility and that her legal representation was not helping her move to a different treatment center. The CPO reviewed the case and found that the judge that placed the youth in the out-of-state treatment center did so reluctantly. The youth's history of running away from care and other behaviors had resulted in her being denied admittance to several facilities in Colorado. The judge ordered the out-of-state placement to avoid the youth being forced to live in a hotel – without any therapies or services – until a different placement option became available. The CPO continued to follow the case and found that, while the local county department was continuing efforts to find a placement in Colorado, the youth's counsel had failed to follow through in assisting these efforts. Because the youth stated she was not receiving clear and meaningful communications about her case, the CPO worked to provide her updates regarding her case. Ultimately, the youth was transferred to a placement in Colorado. The youth remained in contact with the CPO during this transition and was grateful for the agency's attention to her case. She stated that she will continue to use the CPO as a resource and will ensure other transgender youth are aware of the CPO's services.



## Case #4

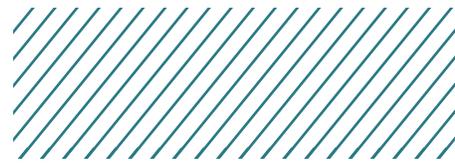
The CPO reviewed a case in a rural jurisdiction in which the wrong person was found to be responsible for the neglect of two teenagers. During its review, the CPO learned that child welfare services became involved with the family after a firearm was accidentally discharged at a party hosted at the teenagers' home. The teenagers' parents were home during the party and were aware that alcohol and drugs were being used by under-aged guests. The parents did not maintain supervision of the party. During the party, a firearm was accidentally discharged, and a guest suffered a non-life-threatening injury to their leg. The child welfare worker assigned to the case incorrectly identified the person responsible for the lack of supervision as a 20-year-old guest of the party. As a result, the parents were never assessed by child welfare services as to whether they could properly supervise and care for the teenagers. After the CPO informed the county department of this error, the department quickly moved to correct the issue. Ultimately the parents were founded for failure to supervise their children. Additionally, the 20-year-old incorrectly accused of failing to supervise the teenagers had the finding removed from their record. In discussing the case with the county department, the CPO learned that the department was struggling to recruit and maintain experienced staff. Without experienced staff, the department was struggling to maintain quality control of its cases. This is one of a number of cases the CPO has reviewed in which staffing issues have contributed to errors in handling child welfare cases. The CPO continues to monitor this trend.



**She stated she will continue to use the CPO as a resource...**



# FISCAL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS



## Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children and Youth from Running Away from Out-of-Home Care

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 through House Bill 22-1375. This task force was placed in the CPO's Policy Collaborative for Children & Families and met 12 times during FY 2023-2024. The task force has addressed a range of topics including ways to prevent youth from running from out of home placements to developing appropriate responses when they return. The CPO has provided a great deal of research detailing how other states have approached similar issues in their states. Speakers from Texas and Vermont as well as local nonprofits such as Foster Source have shared their experiences and perspectives at task force meetings. In recent months, the task force's focus has worked to finalize recommendations intended to develop standard, statewide programs to better serve these youth. On October 1, 2023, the task force issued its 2023 Interim Report, and its final report will be published on October 1, 2024.



## Mandatory Reporting Task Force

The Colorado General Assembly created the Mandatory Reporting Task Force during the 2022 legislative session with House Bill 22-1240. The task force was placed in the CPO's Policy Collaborative for Children & Families, and the CPO has convened the task force 17 times during FY 2023-2024. To support the work of the task force, the CPO created many resources compiling related policies used in other states, including an interactive 50-state comparison of mandatory reporting laws. Task force meetings also included presentations from external speakers, including employees from the state of New York's warmline system and Evident Change, a decision-support tool creating organization. The final report of the task force will be published and submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by January 1, 2025. In its final months, the task force is working on finalizing its recommendations for changes to improve the state's mandatory reporting laws and child protection system.



## Addressing Transparency and Practice Concerns in Washington County

During the summer of 2023, we notified the CDHS of serious child welfare practice concerns at the Washington County Department of Human Services (WCDHS). These concerns were the result of complaints filed with the CPO, alleging general and systemic practice concerns by the WCDHS. In total, we received eight complaints involving six distinct families and 10 children. The agency reviewed child welfare and court documentation in these cases and ultimately identified 64 potential violations of state regulation and law. These potential violations included concerns about WCDHS' ability to assess child safety concerns, develop appropriate interventions for families and attempts to keep families intact. The CPO urged CDHS to do a systemic review of WCDHS' practices including speaking with children and families directly about their experiences with the WCDHS practices. Six months later CDHS stated it did not identify any pervasive practice issues and refused to interview any children or families involved in the cases. While the CPO was disappointed by the quality of the CDHS' review, the CPO continues to monitor cases from Washington County to ensure children and families are receiving fair and quality services.



## Addressing Systemic Issues in Child Protection

State law requires the CPO to review systemic concerns in the Colorado child protection system. During the past fiscal year, there were several instances in which the agency highlighted the systemic issues impacting how child protection services are being administered in Colorado. For example, we presented four key issues to Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee, which was seeking solutions to systemic barriers in providing care and protection for children in Colorado. The CPO highlighted the impacts of poor communication with parents, lack of systems to monitor caseworker misconduct, the absence of a quality assurance system for residential facilities and inconsistency in how departments assess the safety and risk of children. This work has transitioned into multiple pieces of legislation and ongoing work to address these issues.

# Connecting with the Community

During the past fiscal year, we continued our efforts to connect with children and families to learn more about how the Colorado child protection system is functioning and to share more about our own work. Below are highlights from several of our efforts.



## Tori Shuler Youth Voice Collective

The CPO was excited to launch its Tori Shuler Youth Voice Collective program during the past fiscal year. This program is dedicated to helping us connect with children, youth and young adults who have experience with the child protection system in Colorado. The CPO has continued to prioritize the experiences and expertise of children, youth and young adults in shaping its public policy initiatives and improving how it can deliver better services directly to this population. During its first year, we held more than a dozen listening and engagement sessions with youth. These sessions were dedicated to first, asking youth how we should approach establishing this program and, second, how the CPO can inform its practices to better serve them. Based on the information gathered during its first year, the Collective will be expanding its outreach and engagement during Fiscal Year 2024-25. This will include more in-person meetings, engagements in rural Colorado and youth-driven changes to the CPO's outreach materials and connection points.



## Inaugural Youth Voice Event Celebration

On January 4, 2024, the CPO proudly partnered with the Office of the Child's Representative to host the first Foster Youth Voice Celebration. During the event 17 young people with lived experience in the foster care system were recognized for their leadership and advocacy in improving laws and policies in Colorado. More than 50 people attended the event, which included presentations by some of the young people being recognized. Judge Gail Meinster presented the young people with their certificates and the event was led by the mistress of ceremonies, Tori Shuler. Ms. Shuler was also recognized for her ongoing work and more than a decade of efforts to improve the foster care system in Colorado. The CPO coordinated with the Office of the Child's Representative and other state partners to host the event.



From left: Hon. Gail Meinster, Connie Vigil, Stephanie Villafuerte, Tori Shuler and Commissioner Charles Tedesco



## National Presence

We are honored at the opportunities presented each year to expand the role of ombudsman offices across the country, and to support other ombudsman offices working to address the needs of children and families. Our team is deeply engaged with the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA), working to strengthen practice among the diverse public sector ombudsman across the country. During September 2023, CPO Deputy Ombudsman Jordan Steffen was elected to serve as president of the USOA. Our work with the USOA includes working to ensure ombudsman practice is infused with principles of diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as working to aid other ombudsman offices that are facing challenges to their role and authority. Members of our team presented information about ombudsman theory and the work of the CPO in more than half a dozen states during the past fiscal year.



# CPO ADVISORY BOARD

The CPO Advisory Board is an independent, nonpartisan board comprised 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 amount 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

Ensuring that the state's child protection system consistently provides high-quality services to every child, family and community in Colorado.

### CPO STAFF

**Stephanie Villafuerte**, *Child Protection Ombudsman*

**Jordan Steffen**, *Deputy Ombudsman*

**Karen Nielsen**, *Director of Administrative Services*

**Amanda Pennington**, *Director of Client Services*

**Paul Atkinson**, *Communications Manager*

**Bryan Kelley**, *Public Policy Analyst*

**Claire Hooker**, *Client Services Analyst*

**Morgan Baptist**, *Client Services Analyst*

**Abbey Koch**, *Client Services Analyst*

**Marcos Saldana**, *Client Services Analyst*

**Meredith Sullivan**, *Client Services Analyst*

### CPO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Chief Justice Appointments

**Benjamin Rounsborg**, *Board Chair*

**Hon. Gail Meinster**

**Hannah Seigel Proff**

**Katy Saehler**

#### Governor Appointments

**Judith Martinez**, *Vice Chair*

**Aaron Miltenberger**

**Connie Vigil**

#### 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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[linkedin.com/company/cocpo](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cocpo)

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# **Appendix B**



OFFICE *of* COLORADO'S  
**CHILD PROTECTION**  
**OMBUDSMAN**

**FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025**  
**PERFORMANCE PLAN**

**July 1, 2024**

**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 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](http://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 2023-24 Quarters 3 and 4 Performance Evaluation

During Quarter 3 (Q3) and Quarter 4 (Q4) of Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24, 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 SMART Act reports, please click [here](#) or visit the website of the Colorado Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting.

# Fiscal Year 2024-2025 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 2024-25

- Utilize the CPO's Tori Shuler Youth Voice Program to continue connecting with children and youth. The information gathered during the initial outreach tour during FY 2023-24 should be used to develop a multi-year youth outreach campaign that raises awareness of the CPO and its services for youth.
- Continue utilizing youth focus groups and research from previous fiscal years, to update outreach 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 2025-26

- Key activities are completed yearly.

#### FY 2026-27

- Key activities are completed yearly.

### **Key Outcome(s) and Metrics**

- Development of a CPO youth outreach campaign plan, including a fiscal analysis of projected costs for maintenance of youth outreach efforts.
- 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 communities and members of the public who are quantitatively accessing the services of the CPO less frequently than others.**

---

### **Key Activities**

#### **FY 2024-2025**

- Develop targeted, multi-year outreach campaigns that raise awareness of the CPO and its services specific to various communities across the state.
- Promote the agency's services through digital content and distributing printed materials to agencies, providers and communities across the state.

#### **FY 2025-2026**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

#### **FY 2026-2027**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

### **Key Outcome(s) and Metrics**

- Distribution of new promotional materials, in both English and Spanish, to agencies, providers and communities across the state.
- Continue to monitor the contacts the agencies receive from members of the public in different communities.

**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.**

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### **Key Activities**

#### **FY 2024-2025**

- 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 2025-2026**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

### FY 2026-2027

- 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the CPO’s practices and procedures, please refer to the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman’ Case Practices and Operating Procedures.

**Critical Process: Provide CPO staff with ongoing training and education.**

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**Key Activities**

**FY 2024-2025**

- 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 2025-2026**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

**FY 2026-2027**

- 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 community outreach spreadsheet.<sup>2</sup>

*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 2024-2025**

- Utilizing the final report created by the contracted equity, diversity and inclusion specialist during the previous fiscal year, implement any needed changes in the agency's case practices or operating procedures.
- Resources permitting, contract with an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) specialist to provide continuous evaluation of the CPO's internal culture, processes and business landscape.
- Provide CPO staff with ongoing EDI educational opportunities.

**FY 2025-2026**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

**FY 2026-2027**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

**Key Outcome(s) and Metrics**

- Development and implementation of an EDI strategic plan.
- The total number of EDI educational opportunities attended, as measured by the CPO's community

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

outreach spreadsheet.

**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 2024-2025**

- Produce consistent 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 2025-2026**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

**FY 2026-2027**

- 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.**

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**Key Activities**

**FY 2024-2025**

- Facilitate the Mandatory Reporting Task Force, as established by C.R.S. § 19-3-304.2.
- Produce and publish the final report detailing the work of the Mandatory Reporting Task Force and any recommendations for improvements, pursuant to C.R.S. § 19-3-304.2(10).
- 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.
- Produce and publish the final report detailing the work of the Timothy Montoya Task Force and any recommendations for improvements, pursuant to C.R.S. § 19-3.3-111(7)(b).
- Continue outreach and education efforts through the CPO’s Tori Shuler Youth Voice Program to connect with children and youth in Colorado and educate them about the services of the CPO.
- 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 2025-2026**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

**FY 2026-2027**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

**Key Outcome(s) and Metrics**

- Publication of the statutorily required Mandatory Reporting Task Force Final Report.
- Publication of the statutorily required Timothy Montoya Task Force Final 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 stakeholder processes, 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 regarding child protection issues.**

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**Key Activities**

**FY 2024-2025**

- 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.

**FY 2025-2026**

- Key activities are completed yearly.

**FY 2026-2027**

- 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.