

Table of Contents
2016-17 Biennial Budget – Ombudspersons for Families

Agency Profile – Ombudspersons for Families 1

<http://mn.gov/ombudfam/>

AT A GLANCE

- In 2012, children of color and American Indian children made up approximately 20% of Minnesota’s child population, but represented more than half of all children in out-of-home placements.
- In 2012 we received more than 500 calls for assistance; utilized conflict resolution/mediation to mitigate 90% of the case circumstances; formally investigated 12 cases.
- Approximately 78% of the agency’s budget comes from the General Fund and approximately 22% from other miscellaneous funds.
- Four full-time Ombudspersons operate independently, but in collaboration with the Indian Affairs Council, the Chicano Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans, and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans. These four community-specific boards comprise the full board that advises the Office.

PURPOSE

The Office of Ombudsperson for Families (OBFF) is an independent state agency whose goals are: (1.) to reduce racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionality in Minnesota’s child welfare system (2.) to improve outcomes for children and their families involved in child protection cases; (3.) to ensure that all laws governing the protection of children and their families are implemented in a culturally and linguistically competent manner and (4.) to ensure that laws protecting children and families are adhered to in decision-making processes. We work to resolve complaints from families who have been negatively impacted by child welfare social service agencies.

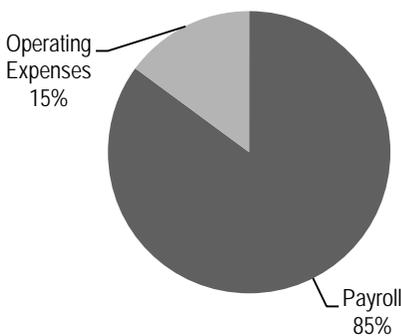
Our mission is to ensure that children and families are protected by law in all child placement proceedings conducted by public and private agencies and organizations.

The Office of the Ombudspersons for Families contributes to the following statewide outcomes:

- Strong and stable families and communities
- People in Minnesota are safe
- Efficient and accountable government services

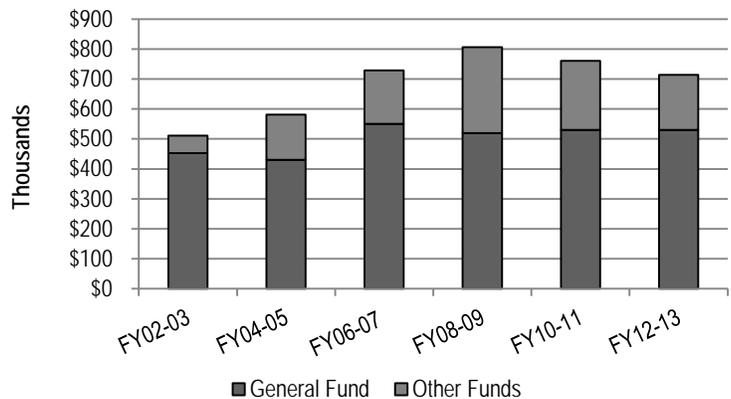
BUDGET

Spending by Category
FY 13 Actual



Source: SWIFT

Historical Spending



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

DISPARITIES DATA AT A GLANCE

Number of All Children Placed in Out-of-home Care, 2012

	African American/Black	American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander	White	Hispanic ethnicity-any race	Two or more races	Unknown or declined
Total Placement settings*	2,461	1,772	296	5,522	1,082	1,319	83

Source: DHS Minnesota Child Welfare Report – 2012; Report to the 2013 Minnesota Legislature

*Placement settings include: Relative and non-relative foster families or pre-adoptive homes; juvenile correctional facilities; group homes, residential treatment centers, foster care with shift staff, and intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded. Remarks: Children of color and American Indian children make up approximately 20% of Minnesota’s child population, but more than half of all children in out-of-home placements.

Children in Out-of-home Care (OHC) per 1,000 by Race/Ethnicity, 2012

Race	Number	2012: A non-White child is...
African American/Black	24.0	4.4 times more likely than a White child to be placed in OHC
American Indian	78.1	14.3 times more likely than a White child to be placed in OHC
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.1	n/a
Hispanic ethnicity-any race	10.2	2 times more likely than a White child to be placed in OHC
Two or more races	19.7	3.6 times more likely than a White child to be placed in OHC

Source: DHS Report Section II – 2012 Children in Out-of-home Care (White children in OHC per 1,000 is 5.5)

STRATEGIES

To accomplish its mission, the Office of Ombudsperson for Families uses the following strategies:

- **Investigation** - Through case investigations, the Ombudspersons make recommendations on cases regarding non-compliance with state or federal laws and policies. These cases include, but are not limited to: possible bias, discrimination, lack of culturally appropriate services and inadequate linguistic and cultural sensitivity.
- **Taking complaints** - Complaints include a person making a specific claim against a county child welfare agency, or its agent; a public or private child placing agency, or its agent; the courts; the Guardian Ad Litem Program; and others. A person may call to complain about current laws, policies, and practices.

Specific examples of types of complaints received and resolved include, but are not limited to the following: Children are not placed with their families or relatives; relatives and families are not being considered for permanency placement; a mother is not allowed appropriate visitation time to breastfeed her infant; the social worker and/or Guardian ad Litem do not speak the clients’ language, nor are interpreter services being provided; no transportation to visitations; cannot get into treatment in a timely manner; inadequate housing; failure to provide linguistically and culturally appropriate mental health services. Note: The Office of Ombudsperson for Families does not provide direct services or programs, nor do the Ombudspersons have enforcement over their recommendations.

- **Monitoring** – (a) Monitor agency compliance with all laws governing child protection and placement that impact children of color and American Indian children; (b) document and monitor court activities in order to heighten awareness of diverse belief systems and family relationships; (c) ensure experts from the appropriate community of color including tribal advocates are used as court advocates and are consulted in placement decisions that involve children of color and American Indian children; (d) ensure guardians ad litem and other individuals from communities of color and American Indian are used in court proceedings to advocate on behalf of children of color and American Indian children; and (e) provide training programs for bilingual workers.
- **Public Policy development** - Through public policy development, the Ombudspersons work to effect policy changes when current policies do not reflect best practices. Examples of some of the initiatives on which the Ombudspersons have worked include: Minnesota Supreme Court Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI); Minnesota Department of Human Services Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Task Force; Minnesota Child Welfare Training System (MNCWTS), Central Steering Committee; Ramsey County Citizen Advisory Panel; and Hennepin County Child Protection Task Force. These initiatives and task forces have had

an ongoing and positive impact on eliminating racial disparities and disproportionality in child welfare, and improving outcomes for children and their families involved in child protection cases.

RESULTS

<i>Type of Measure</i>	<i>Name of Measure</i>	<i>Previous</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Quantity	Complaints/calls received *	524	553	2010 & 2012
Quantity	Investigations	17	12	2010 & 2012

* This measure tracks the number of people who contact the Office of Ombudsperson for Families to make inquiries or request information about the child protection system and how to navigate it.

M.S. 257.0755 provides the legal authority for the Office of Ombudsperson for Families.