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Ombudsperson for Families

http://www.ombudsfamilies.state.mn.us

Small Agency Profile

Mission:

The Office of Ombudsperson for Families' (OBFF) mission is to ensure that children and families are protected by law in all child placement proceedings conducted by public and private agencies. The OBFF seeks to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in out-of-home placements for children of color and American Indian children. To this end, the office assists communities of color and American Indian communities to resolve their differences with government and child welfare agencies by bringing a fair and neutral perspective to the proceedings.

OBFF Annual Report: http://www.ombudsfamilies.state.mn.us/Reports/OBFF%20Report%202008-2009.pdf

Statewide Outcome(s):

Ombudsperson for Families supports the following statewide outcome(s).

Strong and stable families and communities.

Context:

Each Ombudsperson shall monitor agency compliance with all laws governing child protection and placement, as they impact children of color. Minn. Stat. 257.0762, Subd 1 (a).

It has been demonstrated that fair and transparent processes, and increased cultural competency and sensitivity of child welfare workers and service providers has contributed to lowering disparities. The Ombudsperson assists counties and state agencies in reducing racial and ethnic disparities and improving outcomes for all Minnesota children. Minnesota Child Welfare Disparities Report: Figure 9, Page 21:

https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-6056-ENG

The Ombudsperson does not provide direct services or programs, nor does the Ombudsperson have enforcement authority over their recommendations.

Strategies:

- Monitors, reviews, and investigates inquiries and complaints of any family with a child in the child protection system who may be American Indian, Hispanic-Latino. Asian-Pacific, African or African-American descent in the state of Minnesota.
- Investigates, upon a complaint or upon personal initiative, any action of any agency that may be contrary to law, rule or policy, or that may be unfair, unclear or disregards the rights of a child.
- Assists in the development of policies and practices that help eliminate racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionality from intake to permanency.
- Develops policies to support and create culturally competent and bilingual social workers and Guardians ad Litem (GAL) in communities of color and American Indian communities throughout Minnesota.
- Works with state and local courts, policy makers, and service providers to promote integrated systems to ensure family reunification, stability, security, safety, permanency and well-being of Minnesota's families.
- Issues reports to highlight where systemic problems exist.

The OBFF is funded through a general fund appropriation and a special fund transfer from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The OBFF partners with court officials, child welfare agencies, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, policy makers, legislators and community service providers/organizations and legal service providers.

Results:

Through case investigations, the Ombudspersons make recommendations on cases that involve possible bias, discrimination, lack of cultural sensitivity, deficient linguistic and culturally appropriate services or non-compliance with state or federal law and policy.

Through public policy development, the Ombudsperson works to effect policy changes when those policies do not reflect current best practice.

For specific examples of committees, task forces and policy input the Ombudspersons contribute to please see the OBFF Annual Report. http://www.ombudsfamilies.state.mn.us/Reports/OBFF%20Report%202008-2009.pdf.

Performance Measures	Previous	Current	Trend
Numbers of contacts, inquiries and complaints received by the OBFF in 2005 and in 2009 * º	480	708	Worsening

Performance Measures Notes:

Previous data is 2005; current data is 2009. The 2005 data may be found at: http://www.ombudsfamilies.state.mn.us/Reports/ANNUAL%20REPORT[1].FINAL.MODERN%20PRESS.pdf. The 2009 data may be found at: http://www.ombudsfamilies.state.mn.us/Reports/OBFF%20Report%202008-2009.pdf

* 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, GAL program, and others. A person may call to complain about current laws, policies, and practices.

º This data represents the number of telephone calls into the Office of Ombudsperson for Families for inquiries and education for families regarding how the child protection system works and how to navigate the system. It also represents inquiries and questions that were then turned into informal cases where conflict resolution methods of mitigating or mediating the case circumstances were utilized to come into compliance with state and federal laws and policies. To see specific examples of types of complaints received and resolved see page 5 of both the 2005 and 2009 Annual Reports. Links provided above.

There are many factors when considering child welfare implications (education, housing, economic, poverty, judicial considerations, jobs/opportunity, etc.). It is difficult to pinpoint just one cause of worsening data.

Ombudsperson for Families
Current, Base and Governor's Recommended Expenditures
(Dollars in Thousands, Biennial Totals)

	General Funds	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	All Funds
Current Biennium Expenditures (FY 2012-13)	$530	$212		$742
Current Law Expenditures (FY 2014-15)	$530	$240		$770
Governor's Recommended Expenditures (FY2014-15)	$667	$240		$907
$ Change from FY 2014-15 Current Law to Governor's Rec	$137	$0		$137
% Change from FY 2014-15 Current Law to Governor's Rec	26%	0%		18%

Ombudsperson for Families
Sources and Uses
(Dollars in Thousands)

	Biennium FY14-FY15			
	General Funds	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
BALANCE FORWARD IN		$63		$63
TRANSFERS IN		$184		$184
APPROPRIATION	$667	$0		$667
SOURCES OF FUNDS	**$667**	**$247**		**$914**
BALANCE FORWARD OUT		$6		$6
EXPENDITURES	$667	$240		$907
PAYROLL EXPENSE	$655	$108		$763
OPERATING EXPENSES	$12	$132		$144
USES OF FUNDS	**$667**	**$246**		**$913**

Ombudsperson for Families

Governor's Changes

(Dollars in Thousands)

		FY 14	FY 15	FY 14-15 Biennium	FY 16	FY 17	FY 16-17 Biennium
Reinstatement of Office Manager Position							
The Governor recommends reinstating an office manager position within the agency. This reinstatement will allow the four Ombudspersons to focus on their core mission of ensuring that children and families are protected by law in all child placement proceedings conducted by public and private agencies and organizations.							
Performance Measures: The outcomes the agency expects to achieve are a reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in the child welfare system and for each Ombudsperson to fully perform the duties and powers defined in statute.							
General Fund	Expenditure	68	69	137	69	69	138
	Net Change	**68**	**69**	**137**	**69**	**69**	**138**
Net All Change Items	General Fund	68	69	137	69	69	138
	Net Change	**68**	**69**	**137**	**69**	**69**	**138**

Ombudsperson for Families
All Funds FTE by Program

Program	Current FY 2013	Forecast Base FY 2015	Governor's Recommendation FY 2015
Program: Ombudspersons For Families	4.4	4.0	5.0
Ombudsperson for Families	4.4	4.0	5.0