



West Virginia Foster Care Ombudsman Program

State Fiscal Year 2022 | 1st Quarter Report

July 1, 2021 - September 30, 2021





**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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October 28, 2021

Governor Jim Justice
Joint Standing Committee on Government and Finance
Legislative Oversight Commission on Health and Human Resources Accountability
West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Social Services

I am pleased to submit the first quarterly report of the Foster Care Ombudsman office for the 2021-2022 state fiscal year. This report captures the first fiscal quarter beginning July 1, 2021.

Please contact the Foster Care Ombudsman office with questions, comments, or for additional information.

Sincerely,

/s/ Pamela M. Woodman-Kaehler

Pamela M. Woodman-Kaehler, Director
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Foster Care Ombudsman Quarterly Report

Reporting Period: First Quarter - July 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021

Voices Heard. People Empowered. Systems Informed.

Introduction

The Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO), located within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Office of Inspector General, receives, investigates, and resolves complaints filed on behalf of foster children, foster parents, kinship parents, and on the Foster Care Ombudsman's own initiative. This quarterly report provides summary data relating to complaints pursuant to the requirements of W. Va. Code §9-5-27, §49-9-102, and §49-2-126 *et seq.*

Mission:

The Foster Care Ombudsman is an independent, impartial, and confidential resource that advocates for the rights of foster children and foster/kinship parents, investigates and resolves complaints, and makes recommendations for systemic reform.

Vision:

We envision an empathic, healing, and accountable child welfare system where voices are heard, people are empowered, and systems are responsive.

Complaint Count by Month and Quarter

Data reflects complaints received by month and quarter within the state fiscal year (SFY). Complaint data in this report, unless otherwise specified, is presented to reflect complaints that were in a closed/concluded

status as of October 25, 2021. As of that date, 31 complaints received were

Complaint Count by Month and Quarter													
SFY 2022	2021						2022						State Fiscal Year End Running Total
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	
	60	45	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			142
	142			0			0			0			

still in open/active status. The total incoming complaints combining open/active and closed/concluded equals 173. Due to rounding, not all column totals will compute to 100%.

Complaint Count by Alleged Bill of Rights Violations

Data reflects complaints received when a Bill of Rights provision is alleged to be violated. The count reflects DHHR's Bureau for Social

Complaint Count by Alleged Bill of Rights Violations							
Bill of Rights	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Total	Percent Validated	
Foster/Kinship BOR	2	4	4	2	12	75.0%	
Child BOR	2	2	8	2	14	35.7%	
Both BOR	1	1	1	3	6	33.3%	
Total	5	7	13	7	32	50.0%	
07/01/2021 - 09/30/2021							

Services region by case county and the Foster Care Ombudsman determination of complaint validity. The date span for this table is July 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. Of the 142 total complaints received during this period, 32 complaints (23% of the total) included alleged Bill of Rights violations and of those,

50% were determined wholly or partially valid. More detailed information around this topic will be addressed in future FCO reports.

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Unit

Data reflects complaints received according to the BSS unit that is most closely associated with a complaint's main theme, for each quarter of the state fiscal year. The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children governs the placement of children in other states. The Institutional Investigative Unit is responsible for child abuse and neglect investigations in residential facilities, schools, and foster homes.

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Unit						
Bureau for Social Services Unit	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Child Protective Services	124	0	0	0	124	87.3%
Adoption	6	0	0	0	6	4.2%
Other	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
Post-Adoption	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
Youth Services	3	0	0	0	3	2.1%
Homefinding	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Institutional Investigative Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Main Complaint Theme

Data reflects complaints received according to the main theme of the complaint as expressed to the Foster Care Ombudsman by the complainant, for this first quarter of the state fiscal year. Additional theme levels and greater specificity regarding the topical content of complaints will be provided in future FCO reports.

Complaint Count by Main Complaint Theme						
Main Complaint Theme	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Action/Inaction of Agency/Employee	39	0	0	0	39	27.5%
Placement of Children	22	0	0	0	22	15.5%
Other	21	0	0	0	21	14.8%
Decision of Agency/Employee	21	0	0	0	21	14.8%
Lack of Communication	15	0	0	0	15	10.6%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	10	0	0	0	10	7.0%
Removal of Children	7	0	0	0	7	4.9%
Policy/Regulation Issue	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	3	0	0	0	3	2.1%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Complainant Relationship to Child

Data reflects complaints received according to the relationship of the complainant to the child, for this first quarter within the state fiscal year.

Complaint Count by Complainant Relationship to Child						
Relationship to Child	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Foster/Kinship Parent	49	0	0	0	49	34.5%
Grandparent	29	0	0	0	29	20.4%
Birth Parent	21	0	0	0	21	14.8%
Other Relative	18	0	0	0	18	12.7%
Other or Unspecified	8	0	0	0	8	5.6%
Community Professional/Service Provider	7	0	0	0	7	4.9%
State Employee	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
Legal Guardian	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Other Attorney	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Child's Attorney/GAL	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Birth Parent's Attorney	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Adoptive Parent	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Child	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by FCO Case Intensity

Data reflects complaints received according to the level of assistance provided by the Foster Care Ombudsman, for this first quarter of the state fiscal year.

Complaint Count by FCO Case Intensity						
FCO Case Intensity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Intervention	89	0	0	0	89	62.7%
Information	47	0	0	0	47	33.1%
Investigation	5	0	0	0	5	3.5%
Case Withdrawn	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

- *Intervention* involves routine case documentation review, interaction by the FCO with four or fewer contacts inside or outside of DHHR, facilitating communications between the complainant and other case participants and authorities, as well as providing education, context, and referrals to other entities, people, or resources. Cases of this intensity level may involve or exceed 20 hours of FCO time.
- *Information* involves providing education, context, and referrals to other entities, people, or resources. Cases of this intensity level vary significantly in content and may involve or exceed 10 hours of FCO time.
- *Investigation* involves non-routine, systemic, or more intensive/on-site review, interaction with five or more contacts inside or outside of DHHR, and may necessitate formal meetings/reports involving internal or external agency leadership. Cases of this intensity level may be case-specific or systemic and involve a team of FCO personnel.

Complaint Count by Referral Source

Data reflects complaints received according to the referral source, i.e., the means by which the complainant learned about or was encouraged to contact the Foster Care Ombudsman, for this first quarter of the state fiscal year.

Complaint Count by Referral Source						
Referral Source	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Community Professional/Service Provider	30	0	0	0	30	21.1%
Social Media/Internet	23	0	0	0	23	16.2%
Conference/Training	22	0	0	0	22	15.5%
Prior Contact with FCO	19	0	0	0	19	13.4%
State Employee	19	0	0	0	19	13.4%
Friend/Family	14	0	0	0	14	9.9%
Attorney/GAL	7	0	0	0	7	4.9%
Unspecified	6	0	0	0	6	4.2%
Teacher/School Employee	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Elected Official	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Media (TV, Brochures, Pamphlets, Other Literature)	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Email	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Initiated by FCO	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Closure

Data reflects complaints received according to the nature of the case closure, for this first quarter of the state fiscal year. The Foster Care Ombudsman continues to examine and label complaint closings with greater specificity, which will be reflected in future reports. In nearly all cases, complaints determined valid are with the concurrence of the involved agency *which may or may not be BSS*.

Complaint Count by Closure						
Closure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Information Exchange	50	0	0	0	50	35.2%
Not Valid	39	0	0	0	39	27.5%
Valid - Resolved	22	0	0	0	22	15.5%
Partially Valid	15	0	0	0	15	10.6%
Withdrawn by Complainant	7	0	0	0	7	4.9%
Insufficient Information to Rate Validity	6	0	0	0	6	4.2%
Valid - Not Resolved	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Other	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Declined by FCO	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Case County

Data on the right reflects complaints received according to the BSS case county for this first quarter, for the state fiscal year. Complaints are geographically determined by the county of the BSS case. It is important to consider that each county exhibits differences, including population, demographics, and number of child abuse and neglect petitions filed.

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Region

Data below reflects complaints received according to the BSS region during this first quarter for the state fiscal year. Complaints are geographically determined by the county of the BSS case.

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Region						
Region	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	Percent
1	24	0	0	0	24	16.9%
2	32	0	0	0	32	22.5%
3	47	0	0	0	47	33.1%
4	26	0	0	0	26	18.3%
Unspecified	13	0	0	0	13	9.2%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100%

Complaint Count by Method of Initial Contact with FCO

Data below reflects complaints received according to the means by which the complainant made initial contact with the Foster Care Ombudsman, for this first quarter of the state fiscal year.

Complaint Count by Method of Initial Contact with FCO						
Method of Contact	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Telephone	104	0	0	0	104	73.2%
Email	33	0	0	0	33	23.2%
Fax/Letter/Text/Other	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
In Person	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Conclusion

The Foster Care Ombudsman is committed to providing a helping service, and to vigorously endorsing that the voices of those served and affected by West Virginia’s foster care system are valued, respected, and integrated to the system’s development and improvement.

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Case County						
County	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Barbour	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
Berkeley	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Boone	3	0	0	0	3	2.1%
Braxton	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Brooke	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Cabell	5	0	0	0	5	3.5%
Calhoun	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Clay	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Doddridge	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Fayette	7	0	0	0	7	4.9%
Gilmer	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Grant	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Greenbrier	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Hancock	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Hardy	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Harrison	13	0	0	0	13	9.2%
Jackson	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Jefferson	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Kanawha	20	0	0	0	20	14.1%
Lewis	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
Lincoln	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Logan	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Marion	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Marshall	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Mason	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
McDowell	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Mercer	3	0	0	0	3	2.1%
Mineral	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Mingo	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Monongalia	9	0	0	0	9	6.3%
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Morgan	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Nicholas	3	0	0	0	3	2.1%
Ohio	3	0	0	0	3	2.1%
Pendleton	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Pleasants	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Pocahontas	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Preston	3	0	0	0	3	2.1%
Putnam	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Raleigh	7	0	0	0	7	4.9%
Randolph	5	0	0	0	5	3.5%
Ritchie	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Roane	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Summers	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Taylor	5	0	0	0	5	3.5%
Tucker	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Tyler	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Upshur	6	0	0	0	6	4.2%
Wayne	1	0	0	0	1	0.7%
Webster	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Wetzel	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Wirt	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Wood	4	0	0	0	4	2.8%
Wyoming	2	0	0	0	2	1.4%
Unspecified	14	0	0	0	14	9.9%
Total	142	0	0	0	142	
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%