



MICHIGAN

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

AUDIT REPORT



THOMAS H. MCTAVISH, C.P.A.
AUDITOR GENERAL

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– Article IV, Section 53 of the Michigan Constitution

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Michigan *Office of the Auditor General* **REPORT SUMMARY**

Performance Audit

Office of Children's Ombudsman

Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

Report Number:
071-0176-12

Released:
January 2013

The Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO) was established as an autonomous State agency by Act 204, P.A. 1994 (the Children's Ombudsman Act). Organizationally, OCO is placed within the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget. OCO helps to ensure the safety and well-being of Michigan's children in need of protective services, foster care, adoption services, or juvenile justice through independent investigations of complaints and child advocacy.

Audit Objective:

To assess the effectiveness of OCO's efforts to ensure timely and effective reviews and investigations of complaints concerning a child involved with children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that OCO's efforts to ensure timely and effective reviews and investigations of complaints concerning a child involved with children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system were moderately effective. We noted one material condition (Finding 1) and two reportable conditions (Findings 2 and 3).

Material Condition:

OCO, in conjunction with the Department of Human Services (DHS), did not obtain access to DHS's computer networks relating to children's protective services,

foster care, adoption services, and the juvenile justice system (Finding 1).

Reportable Conditions:

OCO's investigators did not always complete timely reviews and investigations as outlined in its established procedures (Finding 2).

OCO's investigators did not always verify that DHS and/or child placing agencies took the agreed-upon corrective action to address policy or procedure violations (Finding 3).

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Audit Objective:

To assess the effectiveness of OCO's efforts to report accurate and complete information to DHS, the Governor, and the Legislature.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that OCO's efforts to report accurate and complete information

to DHS, the Governor, and the Legislature were effective. Our audit report does not include any reportable conditions related to this audit objective.

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Agency Response:

Our audit report contains 3 findings and 3 corresponding recommendations. OCO's preliminary response indicates that it agrees with all 3 recommendations.

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A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling 517.334.8050 or by visiting our Web site at: <http://audgen.michigan.gov>



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January 25, 2013

Ms. Verlie M. Ruffin, Director
Office of Children's Ombudsman
Boji Tower
Lansing, Michigan
and
John E. Nixon, C.P.A., Director
Department of Technology, Management, and Budget
George W. Romney Building
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Ms. Ruffin and Mr. Nixon:

This is our report on the performance audit of the Office of Children's Ombudsman, Department of Technology, Management, and Budget.

This report contains our report summary; description of agency; audit objectives, scope, and methodology and agency responses and prior audit follow-up; comments, findings, recommendations, and agency preliminary responses; a history of the Office of Children's Ombudsman, presented as supplemental information; and a glossary of acronyms and terms.

Our comments, findings, and recommendations are organized by audit objective. The agency preliminary responses were taken from the agency's response subsequent to our audit fieldwork. The *Michigan Compiled Laws* and administrative procedures require that the audited agency develop a plan to comply with the audit recommendations and submit it within 60 days after release of the audit report to the Office of Internal Audit Services, State Budget Office. Within 30 days of receipt, the Office of Internal Audit Services is required to review the plan and either accept the plan as final or contact the agency to take additional steps to finalize the plan.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us during this audit.

Sincerely,

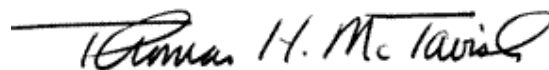

Thomas H. McTavish, C.P.A.
Auditor General

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Description of Agency

The Office of Children's Ombudsman* (OCO) was established as an autonomous* State agency within the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget by Act 204, P.A. 1994 (the Children's Ombudsman Act). OCO defines its mission* in its annual report:

The mission of the OCO is to assure the safety and well-being of Michigan's children in need of protective services, foster care, adoption services, and juvenile justice and to promote public confidence in the child welfare system. This will be accomplished through independently investigating complaints, advocating for children, and recommending changes to improve law, policy and practice for the benefit of current and future generations.

Act 560, P.A. 2004, amended several provisions of the Children's Ombudsman Act relating to the appointment process, complaint process, powers and duties of the Children's Ombudsman, conduct of investigations, confidentiality and disclosure of information, and report of findings. The act expanded the list of persons who can be considered a complainant* and receive confidential children's protective services information to include those persons defined as mandatory reporters under the Child Protection Law. Under the act, OCO was to have access to the Department of Human Services' (DHS's) computer networks, records, and reports, including medical and mental health records that are necessary to carry out his or her powers and duties. The act also provided OCO with the authority to independently take legal action on behalf of a child involved in children's protective services, foster care services, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system and authorized OCO to request a subpoena for records and reports and to petition the court to enforce the subpoena for five years after the effective date of the amended statute, which expired in January 2010.

OCO has the authority to investigate complaints of DHS or a child placing agency to ensure compliance with relevant statutes, rules, and policies pertaining to children's protective services and the placement of children in foster care and adoptive homes. Anyone can file a complaint with OCO; however, the Children's Ombudsman Act lists

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

those complainants that may receive the written findings, recommendations, and responses to an OCO investigation as the following:

- The child, if he or she is able to articulate a complaint.
- A biological parent of the child.
- A foster parent of the child.
- An adoptive parent or a prospective adoptive parent of the child.
- A legally appointed guardian of the child.
- A guardian ad litem of the child.
- An adult who is related to the child within the fifth degree by marriage, blood, or adoption, as defined in Section 22 of the Michigan Adoption Code (Section 710.22 of the *Michigan Compiled Laws*).
- An attorney for any individual described above.
- A Michigan legislator.
- An individual required to report child abuse or child neglect under Section 3 of the Child Protection Law (Section 722.623 of the *Michigan Compiled Laws*).

Complainants that do not fall into these categories can receive only the recommendations and responses.

OCO categorizes complaints into three types: inquiries*, referrals*, and valid complaints*. Inquiries are requests for information or complaints that do not involve children's protective services, foster care services, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system and, therefore, are not within OCO statutory authority to investigate. Referrals are complaints that concern a child involved in children's protective services, foster care services, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system, but the complaint

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

is about the actions of a component of the child welfare system that OCO has no jurisdiction to investigate (e.g., law enforcement or the court system). Valid complaints fall under the statutory authority of the Children's Ombudsman Act and may or may not result in an investigation. A valid complaint may not be opened for investigation for several reasons, including a complaint regarding an event that occurred many years prior and where involvement by OCO would not serve any purpose or where a complaint is about an issue that has since been addressed through new policy or State law.

After OCO opens an investigation and receives the case file, the case is assigned to an investigator. OCO utilizes a team approach when completing investigations. Each case is assigned to a primary investigator, who is responsible for conducting interviews, typically done via the telephone or e-mail, and analyzing the case to determine if DHS or the child placing agency complied with State laws, rules, and policies. Prior to completion of all investigations, investigative team members participate in the analysis of case facts, findings, and conclusions. Findings and recommendations made in individual cases are the result of input and discussion by the OCO investigative team. Generally, the investigation focuses on the issues identified by the complainant. However, the investigation is not limited to those issues if other violations of State laws or DHS policies are found. Upon completion of the investigation, if OCO finds that the actions of DHS and/or the child placing agency were not in the best interests of the child and/or did not comply with law or DHS policies, OCO completes a report detailing its specific findings (violations) and recommendations and sends the report to DHS and/or the child placing agency. The agencies have 60 days to review and respond to the results of OCO's violation report. A closing letter will be sent to the complainant informing him or her of the results of OCO's investigation, the DHS and/or child placing agency's response, and any actions taken to correct the identified problem(s).

At the end of each fiscal year, OCO prepares and submits an annual report to DHS, the Governor, and the Legislature as required by the Children's Ombudsman Act. The report provides an account of OCO's operations and includes overall recommendations to DHS and the Legislature regarding the need for legislation or changes in rules or policies.

We summarized OCO complaint and investigation activities for fiscal years 2009-10 and 2010-11:

	Fiscal Year	
	2009-10	2010-11
Complaints received	999	1,152
Investigations opened	128	133
Child death alerts received	239	210
Child death alerts opened for investigation	37	68
Number of investigators	6	5

OCO incurred expenditures of \$1.2 million for fiscal year 2010-11. As of March 31, 2012, OCO was composed of 9 employees, including the Children's Ombudsman, 1 supervisor, 5 investigators, and 2 administrative support staff.

Audit Objectives, Scope, and Methodology and Agency Responses and Prior Audit Follow-Up

Audit Objectives

Our performance audit* of the Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO), Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB), had the following objectives:

1. To assess the effectiveness* of OCO's efforts to ensure timely and effective reviews and investigations of complaints concerning a child involved with children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system.
2. To assess the effectiveness of OCO's efforts to report accurate and complete information to the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Governor, and the Legislature.

Audit Scope

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records of the Office of Children's Ombudsman. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Our audit procedures, conducted from April through August 2012, generally covered the period October 1, 2009 through March 31, 2012.

As part of our audit, we prepared a history of the Office of Children's Ombudsman (see supplemental information) that relates to our audit objectives. Our audit was not directed toward expressing a conclusion on this supplemental information and, accordingly, we express no conclusion on it.

Audit Methodology

We conducted a preliminary review to obtain an understanding of OCO's activities and to establish our audit objectives. Our preliminary review included obtaining an

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

understanding of OCO's operations and internal control* by conducting interviews with various OCO employees; examinations and analysis of OCO records and annual reports; reviews of applicable laws, policies, procedures, manuals, and guidelines; and an examination of the previous audit report and similar agencies' annual reports, policies, and procedures.

To accomplish our first objective, we interviewed OCO management and investigators to obtain information regarding OCO's processes and procedures used when reviewing and investigating complaints. We reviewed the controls over OCO's database. We performed random testing on a sample of various types of complaints, including referrals, inquiries, valid complaints not opened, child death alerts, and valid complaints opened for investigation. We reviewed the corresponding hard copy case files to evaluate OCO's review and investigation processes to assess OCO's compliance with applicable laws, policies, and procedures. We also compared the hard copy case files to the information in DHS's computer networks. For the investigations in which findings and recommendations reports were issued, we reviewed the responses and actions.

To accomplish our second objective, we interviewed OCO management and staff to obtain an understanding of the annual reporting process to DHS, the Governor, and the Legislature. We reviewed the fiscal year 2009-10 and 2010-11 annual reports and compared the information to the information in OCO's database.

This audit report summarizes control weaknesses in the review and investigation processes. It does not contain detailed examples of the investigations because of the confidential nature of the information. During the course of the audit, we provided OCO and DTMB management with detailed examples of the review and investigation weaknesses identified during our fieldwork.

When selecting activities or programs for audit, we use an approach based on assessment of risk and opportunity for improvement. Accordingly, we focus our audit efforts on activities or programs having the greatest probability for needing improvement as identified through a preliminary review. Our limited audit resources are used, by design, to identify where and how improvements can be made. Consequently, we prepare our performance audit reports on an exception basis.

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

Agency Responses and Prior Audit Follow-Up

Our audit report contains 3 findings and 3 corresponding recommendations. OCO's preliminary response indicates that it agrees with all 3 recommendations.

The agency preliminary response that follows each recommendation in our report was taken from the agency's written comments and oral discussion subsequent to our audit fieldwork. Section 18.1462 of the *Michigan Compiled Laws* and the State of Michigan Financial Management Guide (Part VII, Chapter 4, Section 100) require OCO to develop a plan to comply with the audit recommendations and submit it within 60 days after release of the audit report to the Office of Internal Audit Services, State Budget Office. Within 30 days of receipt, the Office of Internal Audit Services is required to review the plan and either accept the plan as final or contact the agency to take additional steps to finalize the plan.

We released our prior performance audit of the Office of Children's Ombudsman, Department of Management and Budget (07-176-03), in February 2004. OCO complied with both prior audit recommendations.

COMMENTS, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AGENCY PRELIMINARY RESPONSES

EFFORTS TO ENSURE TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE REVIEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS OF COMPLAINTS

COMMENT

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness of the Office of Children's Ombudsman's (OCO's) efforts to ensure timely and effective reviews and investigations of complaints concerning a child involved with children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system.

Audit Conclusion: We concluded that OCO's efforts to ensure timely and effective reviews and investigations of complaints concerning a child involved with children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system were moderately effective. Our assessment disclosed one material condition* (Finding 1). OCO, in conjunction with the Department of Human Services (DHS), did not obtain access to DHS's computer networks relating to children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, and the juvenile justice system.

Our assessment also disclosed two reportable conditions* related to timeliness of investigations and follow-up on action taken by DHS and/or child placing agencies (Findings 2 and 3).

FINDING

1. Access to DHS's Computer Networks

OCO, in conjunction with DHS, did not obtain access to DHS's computer networks relating to children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, and the juvenile justice system. As a result, OCO could not ensure that it received complete information to perform effective reviews and investigations of complaints concerning children involved with children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system.

OCO is an external agency responsible for conducting independent investigations of DHS. Section 722.928(3) of the *Michigan Compiled Laws* requires OCO, the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB), and DHS to enter into an agreement not later than June 30, 2005 to ensure that OCO has access, in OCO's office, to DHS computer networks relating to protective services, foster

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

care, and adoption services. After a brutal death of a Michigan child, this section of the Children's Ombudsman Act was amended in 2005 to expand OCO's access to computerized information.

Despite entering into an agreement by June 30, 2005 with DTMB and DHS as required by State law, OCO has not obtained access to DHS computer networks. OCO has encountered numerous obstacles in obtaining access, including DHS initially did not want to provide OCO with access to the new DHS system until it was implemented in all DHS local offices, which began in 2006; DHS's firewalls did not allow OCO to access DHS's networks; DHS was concerned with OCO having access to confidential information; and, most recently, DHS does not have the resources to modify the current system to provide OCO with access but will provide OCO with access to its new system scheduled for implementation in 2014.

OCO has the responsibility to investigate the actions of DHS related to children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, and the juvenile justice system. In order to complete these investigations, OCO needs the ability to obtain any information that it determines necessary to complete timely and effective investigations. Without this direct access, OCO is required to rely on information provided by DHS.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that OCO obtain and DHS provide OCO with access to DHS's computer networks relating to children's protective services, foster care, adoption services, and the juvenile justice system.

AGENCY PRELIMINARY RESPONSE

OCO agrees with the recommendation.

OCO stated that access to the DHS child welfare computer system is statutorily required and a critical component for more thorough and expedient OCO investigations.

OCO informed us that it recognizes the importance of complying with the Children's Ombudsman Act and will continue to work to obtain access to DHS's computer networks. Although OCO has pursued access to the computer networks, access

has been denied by DHS. OCO also informed us that, in a December 2012 letter from the DHS director to the OCO director, the DHS director confirmed that OCO "will have access to the Michigan Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (MiSACWIS) planned for implementation in the summer of 2013." Access to DHS's computer networks would help improve the timeliness of OCO investigations and ensure that OCO has complete, up-to-date information for investigations. OCO further informed us that, going forward, OCO will report, via its annual report to DHS, the Governor, and the Legislature, on its progress in working with DHS to obtain access to DHS's computer system.

FINDING

2. Timeliness of Investigations

OCO's investigators did not always complete timely reviews and investigations as outlined in its established procedures. As a result, OCO's response to complainants was delayed.

Our audit disclosed:

- a. Of the 2,889 complaints that OCO received during our audit period, we reviewed 51 complaints and determined that in 11 (21.6%) instances OCO did not respond to the complainant within 3 business days of receiving the complaint. In these 11 instances, the number of business days for OCO to respond to the complainant ranged from 4 business days to 14 business days, averaging 9 business days.

OCO had established procedures to respond to complaints regarding DHS or a child placing agency within 3 business days of receiving the complaint. However, OCO explained that the supervisor was delayed in responding to these complaints because of the supervisor's workload. A delay in OCO's response to a complainant results in a delay in OCO gathering and evaluating the facts of the case to determine if action by OCO is needed.

b. Of the 238 investigations that OCO completed during our audit period, we randomly sampled 19 investigations and identified the following delays:

- (1) OCO requested 29 case files from DHS for the 19 investigations. Of these 29 case files, DHS took more than 10 business days to provide the case files in 13 (44.8%) instances, ranging from 11 business days to 19 business days, averaging 14 business days. In an additional 2 instances, DHS exceeded the 10 business days but requested and was granted an extension.

In order to investigate complaints regarding DHS, OCO requests relevant case files from DHS. The memorandum of understanding between OCO and DHS requires DHS to provide the information within 10 business days. If DHS is unable to provide the requested information within 10 business days, DHS must notify OCO in writing that an extension, not to exceed an additional 10 business days, is required in order to process the request.

OCO's investigations are delayed when the case files are not received on a timely basis from DHS. Access to DHS's computer networks (Finding 1) would allow OCO to immediately obtain the case file information.

- (2) Of the 19 investigations, 9 (47.4%) investigations exceeded the 6-month time frame for completion. In these 9 investigations, the time to complete the investigations ranged from 10 months to 15 months, averaging 12 months.

OCO had established informal procedures to complete investigations within 6 months from when the case was assigned to the investigator. OCO explained that investigations are assigned on a rotating basis to the investigators and are informally prioritized based on certain criteria, such as external complainant or high-profile case. Of the 9 investigations that took longer than 6 months, 4 investigations had external complainants.

Delays in completing the investigations result in delays for OCO in issuing findings and recommendations (F&R) reports to DHS. The F&R report is issued when OCO has determined that DHS has violated laws, rules, or policies and decisions were not consistent with case facts or the child's best interest. Of the 9 investigations that took longer than 6 months, 3 investigations resulted in OCO issuing delayed F&R reports. In addition, OCO would have issued an F&R report in an another investigation; however, because the investigation took nearly 15 months to complete, OCO determined that the F&R report would no longer be relevant; therefore, an administrative resolution was issued.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that OCO's investigators complete timely reviews and investigations as outlined in its established procedures.

AGENCY PRELIMINARY RESPONSE

OCO agrees with the recommendation.

OCO stated that timely OCO investigations are crucial in helping to ensure DHS and private child placing agency compliance with laws and policies affecting children and their families involved in the child welfare system.

OCO staff consist of the director, a supervisor, five investigators, and support staff. The number of complaints received and cases opened for investigation in 2012 was 1,334 and 137, respectively.

OCO informed us that it will continue to review its investigative processes and established procedures to ensure timely completion of investigations. OCO also informed us that, to do the best job possible with limited resources, OCO began streamlining its investigation controls and will work with DTMB to create a new case management process to achieve the established time frames more effectively. OCO stated that it anticipates completing this process in spring 2013.

FINDING

3. Follow-Up on Action Taken by DHS and/or Child Placing Agencies

OCO's investigators did not always verify that DHS and/or child placing agencies took the agreed-upon corrective action to address policy or procedure violations. As a result, OCO could not ensure that DHS and/or child placing agencies corrected current violations and, when applicable, took steps to prevent future violations.

Our review disclosed:

- a. OCO issued 4 requests for action (RFAs) to DHS during our audit period. An RFA is issued when OCO determines that there may be an immediate risk to a child, an inappropriate placement of a child (leaving the child at risk), or employee misconduct. We reviewed the 4 RFAs and determined that, in 2 of the 4 instances, DHS indicated that it had completed the agreed-upon corrective action; however, OCO did not verify that DHS performed the corrective action.
- b. OCO issued 78 F&R reports to DHS and/or child placing agencies during our audit period. An F&R report is issued when OCO completes an investigation and determines that actions by DHS and/or the child placing agency were not in the child's best interest; a matter should be further considered by DHS and/or the child placing agency, an administrative act or omission should be modified, canceled, or corrected or a reason should be given for the act or omission; or other actions should be taken by DHS and/or the child placing agency. Of the 78 F&R reports issued, we reviewed 7 F&R reports, which included 41 recommendations that required action by DHS and/or the child placing agencies. The responses to OCO's recommendations provided corrective actions that were already completed or would be completed to address the policy and procedure violations; however, OCO did not verify that DHS and/or the child placing agencies performed the corrective actions.

OCO explained that it can and sometimes does follow up with DHS and the child placing agencies and request documentation to support that actions have been taken; however, most of the time, it relies on their assertion that they have performed the actions. As an independent reviewer, OCO should independently

verify that DHS and/or the child placing agencies completed the agreed-upon action.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that OCO verify that DHS and/or child placing agencies took the agreed-upon corrective action to address policy or procedure violations.

AGENCY PRELIMINARY RESPONSE

OCO agrees with the recommendation.

OCO stated that its follow-up with agencies that agree with OCO recommendations is important to ensuring that the agreed-upon action has taken place.

OCO informed us that it will ensure that its investigation process includes verification that DHS and/or the child placing agency has taken the agreed-upon corrective action necessary to address policy or procedure violations. OCO also informed us that it has already met with DHS to discuss creating a follow-up process for OCO to use with DHS regarding recommendations outlined in F&Rs and RFAs. OCO further informed us that, going forward, documentation or other verifiable information will be provided by DHS or the child placing agency. OCO stated that it will fully comply with the recommendation by spring 2013.

EFFORTS TO REPORT ACCURATE AND COMPLETE INFORMATION

COMMENT

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness of OCO's efforts to report accurate and complete information to DHS, the Governor, and the Legislature.

Audit Conclusion: We concluded that OCO's efforts to report accurate and complete information to DHS, the Governor, and the Legislature were effective. Our audit report does not include any reportable conditions related to this audit objective.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN
Department of Technology, Management, and Budget
History of the Office of Children's Ombudsman
Fiscal Years 1995-96 Through 2010-11

Fiscal Year	Staff (a)	Number of Complaints Received			Number of Full Investigations Completed		
		Non-Child Death Alerts	Child Death Alerts	Total Complaints	Non-Child Death Alerts	Child Death Alerts	Total Investigations
2010 - 2011	9	942	210	1,152 (b)	74	46	120
2009 - 2010	10	760	239	999	81	41	122
2008 - 2009	10	793	212	1,005	93	58	151
2007 - 2008	11	1,182	146 (c)	1,328	114	33	147
2006 - 2007	11	969	0	969	134	0	134
2005 - 2006	12	748	0	748	102	0	102
2004 - 2005	12	782	0	782	107	0	107
2003 - 2004	12	801	0	801	136	0	136
2002 - 2003	12	949	0	949	172	0	172
2001 - 2002	13	821	0	821	154	0	154
2000 - 2001	13	815	0	815	166	0	166
1999 - 2000	13	713	0	713	160	0	160
1998 - 1999 (d)	13	698	0	698	226	0	226
1997 - 1998 (e)	14	533	0	533	283	0	283
1996 - 1997 (e)	14	564	0	564	254	0	254
1995 - 1996 (f)	11	956	0	956	326	0	326

(a) Includes the Children's Ombudsman and 2 administrative support staff.

(b) Includes "Closed-New Intakes" effective in fiscal year 2010-11.

(c) The Office of Children's Ombudsman started getting child death alerts January 25, 2008.

(d) 18-month period from July 1, 1998 through September 30, 1999.

(e) 12-month period from July through June.

(f) 18-month period from January 1, 1995 through June 30, 1996.

Source: Office of Children's Ombudsman annual reports, database, and archived hard copy reports.

UNAUDITED

Number of Findings and Recommendations (F&Rs) Reports Issued	Percentage of Investigations Resulting in the Issuance of an F&R Report	Number of Findings in the Issued F&R Reports
36	30%	168
30	25%	151
43	28%	150
57	39%	219
52	39%	176
36	35%	156
36	34%	159
60	44%	237
65	38%	254
62	40%	354
80	48%	413
78	49%	618
86	38%	420
7	2%	45
5	2%	33
6	2%	44

GLOSSARY

Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

autonomous	Not controlled by others or by outside forces; independent.
complainant	An individual who makes a complaint to the Children's Ombudsman with respect to a particular child, alleging that an administrative act is contrary to law, rule, or policy; imposed without an adequate statement of reason; or based on irrelevant, immaterial, or erroneous grounds.
DHS	Department of Human Services.
DTMB	Department of Technology, Management, and Budget.
effectiveness	Success in achieving mission and goals.
F&R	findings and recommendations.
inquiry	A request for information or a complaint that does not involve children's protective services, foster care services, or adoption services. These complaints might involve custody matters, child support, school problems, or juvenile delinquency, which OCO has no statutory authority to investigate.
internal control	The plan, policies, methods, and procedures adopted by management to meet its mission, goals, and objectives. Internal control includes the processes for planning, organizing, directing, and controlling program operations. It includes the systems for measuring, reporting, and monitoring program performance. Internal control serves as a defense in safeguarding assets and in preventing and detecting errors; fraud; violations of laws, regulations, and provisions of contracts and grant agreements; or abuse.

material condition	A reportable condition that could impair the ability of management to operate a program in an effective and efficient manner and/or could adversely affect the judgment of an interested person concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of the program.
mission	The main purpose of a program or an entity or the reason that the program or the entity was established.
OCO	Office of Children's Ombudsman.
ombudsman	A Swedish term for an appointed government official who investigates complaints, reports findings, and helps achieve solutions.
performance audit	An audit that provides findings or conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence against criteria. Performance audits provide objective analysis to assist management and those charged with governance and oversight in using the information to improve program performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision making by parties with responsibility to oversee or initiate corrective action, and contribute to public accountability.
referral	A complaint that concerns a child involved in children's protective services, foster care services, adoption services, or the juvenile justice system, but the concern expressed is not about the actions of DHS or a private agency. Rather, the complaint is about a component of the child welfare system that OCO has no jurisdiction to investigate, for example, law enforcement, attorneys, or the court system.
reportable condition	A matter that, in the auditor's judgment, is less severe than a material condition and falls within any of the following categories: an opportunity for improvement within the context of the audit objectives; a deficiency in internal control

that is significant within the context of the audit objectives; all instances of fraud; illegal acts unless they are inconsequential within the context of the audit objectives; significant violations of provisions of contracts or grant agreements; and significant abuse that has occurred or is likely to have occurred.

RFA

request for action.

valid complaint

A complaint that falls under the statutory guidelines of the Children's Ombudsman Act.

