



OAG

Office of the Auditor General

Report Summary

Performance Audit

Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO)

Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB)

Report Number:
071-0176-17

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OCO was established as an autonomous agency and is organizationally placed within DTMB. OCO's mission is to assure the safety and well-being of Michigan's children in need of foster care, adoption, and protective services and to promote public confidence in the child welfare system. OCO may independently investigate complaints alleging that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and/or a private child placing agency violated law or policy concerning child welfare or made decisions harmful to a child's health or safety. OCO also must investigate child deaths that occur under circumstances specified in the Children's Ombudsman Act. From October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2018, OCO received approximately 4,600 complaints and other communications and opened approximately 680 investigations.

Audit Objective			Conclusion
Objective #1: To assess the effectiveness of OCO's efforts to properly address complaints and other communications received.			Effective
Findings Related to This Audit Objective	Material Condition	Reportable Condition	Agency Preliminary Response
For over 30% of complaints that we reviewed, OCO did not contact the complainant within 5 business days to gather additional information and determine if there were risks to the child. In these instances, complainants were contacted from 6 to 19 business days after the complaint was received (<u>Finding #1</u>).		X	Agrees
Improved data encryption was needed for OCO's Web-based complaint form to reduce the risk that sensitive or confidential information from complainants could be inappropriately accessed, stolen, or tampered with (<u>Finding #2</u>).		X	Agrees

Audit Objective			Conclusion
Objective #2: To assess the sufficiency of OCO's efforts to conduct investigations of child welfare complaints and deaths.			Sufficient, with exceptions
Findings Related to This Audit Objective	Material Condition	Reportable Condition	Agency Preliminary Response
OCO should enhance its procedures to independently identify child deaths requiring OCO investigation. OCO relied on MDHHS for notification of child deaths. Because of shortcomings in MDHHS's procedures, OCO did not receive timely notification of 206 child deaths (approximately 20%) recorded in MDHHS's system from 2014 through 2017 (<u>Finding #3</u>).	X		Agrees
Observations Related to This Audit Objective	Material Condition	Reportable Condition	Agency Preliminary Response
Capacity and mandated investigations have limited the number of OCO investigations of child welfare complaints (<u>Observation #1</u>).	Not applicable for observations.		

Audit Objective			Conclusion
Objective #3: To assess whether OCO sufficiently reported selected information to designated parties.			Sufficient
Findings Related to This Audit Objective	Material Condition	Reportable Condition	Agency Preliminary Response
None reported.	Not applicable.		

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