



WEST VIRGINIA
**Foster Care
Ombudsman**

**West Virginia Foster Care Ombudsman Program
State Fiscal Year 2022 ~ 2nd Quarter Report
October 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021**



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

Bill J. Crouch
Cabinet Secretary

Foster Care Ombudsman
State Capitol Complex
Building 6, Room 817-B
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
Telephone: (304) 558-1117 Fax: (304) 558-1992

Jolynn Marra
Inspector General

June 1, 2022

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 second quarterly report of the Foster Care Ombudsman office for the 2022 state fiscal year. This report captures the second fiscal quarter beginning October 1, 2021.

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

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Woodman-Kaehler

Pamela M. Woodman-Kaehler, Director
Foster Care Ombudsman

Pamela.M.Woodman-Kaehler@wv.gov

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Complaint Count by Month and Quarter	4
Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Unit	5
Complaint Count by Main Complaint Theme	6
Complaint Count by Complainant Relationship to Child	6
Complaint Count by FCO Case Intensity	7
Complaint Count by Referral Source	7
Complaint Count by Closure	8
Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Region	8
Complaint Count by Method of Initial Contact with FCO	8
Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Case County	9
Conclusion	9

Foster Care Ombudsman Quarterly Report

Reporting Period: Second Quarter - October 1, 2021 to December 31, 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, §49-2-126, and §49-2-127.

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.

Data in the quarterly report does *not* yet include systemic reviews/cases or those that are conducted on the Foster Care Ombudsman’s initiative. Information detailing this work product will be integrated into future reports. Detailed “drill down” complaint data by county is available to the Bureau of Social Services.

Complaint Count by Month and Quarter

Data below reflects complaints received by month and quarter within the state fiscal year (SFY) 2022. Complaint data in this report, unless otherwise specified, is presented to reflect complaints that were in a closed/concluded status as of December 31, 2021. By comparison, for the same two quarter period in SFY 2020, the complaints totalled 178. **This represents a 73.6% year over year increase.**

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	
	61	52	58	38	55	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			309
	171			138			0			0			

Complaint Count by Alleged Bill of Rights Violations

Data below reflects complaints received when a Bill of Rights provision is alleged to be violated. The count reflects DHHR's Bureau for Social Services region by case county and the Foster Care Ombudsman determination of complaint validity. The date span for this table is October 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. Of the 309 total complaints received during this period, 59 complaints (19% of the total) included alleged Bill of Rights violations and of those, 44.1% were determined wholly or partially valid.

Complaint Count by Alleged Bill of Rights Violations						
Bill of Rights (BOR)	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Total	Percent Validated
Foster/Kinship BOR	2	3	4	4	13	30.8%
Both BOR	11	5	12	4	32	50.0%
Child BOR	3	3	6	2	14	42.9%
Total	16	11	22	10	59	44.1%

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Unit

Data below reflects complaints received according to the Bureau for Social Services (BSS) unit that is most closely associated with a complaint's main theme for each quarter of the state fiscal year. The federal Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children governs the placement of children in other states. The Institutional Investigative Unit within BSS 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	150	94	0	0	244	79.0%
Other	5	32	0	0	37	12.0%
Adoption	6	3	0	0	9	2.9%
Homefinding	1	5	0	0	6	1.9%
Post-Adoption	4	2	0	0	6	1.9%
Youth Services	4	1	0	0	5	1.6%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	1	1	0	0	2	0.6%
Institutional Investigative Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Main Complaint Theme

Data below reflects complaints received according to the main theme of the complaint as expressed to the Foster Care Ombudsman by the complainant for this quarter of SFY 2022. 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	56	31	0	0	87	28.2%
Placement of Children	31	22	0	0	53	17.2%
Decision of Agency/Employee	31	19	0	0	50	16.2%
Lack of Communication	21	22	0	0	43	13.9%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	11	26	0	0	37	12.0%
Removal of Children	9	10	0	0	19	6.1%
Policy/Regulation Issue	7	2	0	0	9	2.9%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	3	2	0	0	5	1.6%
Other	1	3	0	0	4	1.3%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	1	1	0	0	2	0.6%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Complainant Relationship to Child

Data below reflects complaints received according to the relationship of the complainant to the child for this quarter within SFY 2022.

Complaint Count by Complainant Relationship to Child						
Relationship to Child	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Non-Relative Foster Parent	63	43	0	0	106	34.3%
Relative/Kinship Parent	31	47	0	0	78	25.2%
Birth Parent	27	13	0	0	40	12.9%
Other Non-Caregiving Relative/Kinship	20	11	0	0	31	10.0%
Other or Unspecified	9	7	0	0	16	5.2%
Community Professional/Service Provider	7	7	0	0	14	4.5%
State Employee	6	3	0	0	9	2.9%
Legal Guardian	2	5	0	0	7	2.3%
Other Attorney	3	0	0	0	3	1.0%
Birth Parent's Attorney	2	0	0	0	2	0.6%
Adoptive Parent	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Child's Attorney/GAL	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
Child	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Other Relative	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by FCO Case Intensity

Data below reflects complaints received according to the level of assistance provided by the Foster Care Ombudsman for this quarter of SFY 2022. Data of this nature will be incorporated into future reports.

- *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 FCO Case Intensity						
FCO Case Intensity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Intervention	110	99	0	0	209	67.6%
Information	54	34	0	0	88	28.5%
Case Withdrawn	1	5	0	0	6	1.9%
Investigation	6	0	0	0	6	1.9%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Referral Source

Data below reflects complaints received according to the referral source, i.e., the means by which the complainant learned about the Foster Care Ombudsman, for this quarter of SFY 2022.

Complaint Count by Referral Source						
Referral Source	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Community Professional/Service Provider	34	21	0	0	55	17.8%
State Employee	27	23	0	0	50	16.2%
Friend/Family	17	26	0	0	43	13.9%
Conference/Training	26	17	0	0	43	13.9%
Social Media/Internet	26	15	0	0	41	13.3%
Prior Contact with FCO	23	16	0	0	39	12.6%
Unspecified	8	10	0	0	18	5.8%
Attorney/GAL	8	1	0	0	9	2.9%
Other	0	3	0	0	3	1.0%
Media (TV, Brochures, Pamphlets, Other Literature)	0	3	0	0	3	1.0%
Elected Official	1	2	0	0	3	1.0%
Court Appointed Special Advocate	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Teacher/School Employee	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
FCO Website	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	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Closure

Data below reflects complaints received according to the nature of the case closure for this quarter of the SFY. The Foster Care Ombudsman continues to examine and label complaint closings with greater specificity. In nearly all cases, complaints determined valid are with the concurrence of and notification to the involved agency, *which may or may not be BSS*. By comparison regarding percent validated in whole or in part, for the same two quarter period in 2020, the percent valid was 33.7%.

Complaint Count by Closure						
Closure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Not Valid	48	45	0	0	93	30.1%
Information Exchange	53	28	0	0	81	26.2%
Valid - Resolved	29	33	0	0	62	20.1%
Partially Valid	19	15	0	0	34	11.0%
Insufficient Information to Rate Validity	12	6	0	0	18	5.8%
Withdrawn by Complainant	8	6	0	0	14	4.5%
Valid - Not Resolved	2	4	0	0	6	1.9%
Other	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Declined by FCO	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%
Validity %						33.0%

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Region

Data below reflects complaints received by BSS region during this quarter for SFY 2022. Complaints were grouped into four BSS regions then grouped into two North and South BSS regions after a BSS organizational redesign.

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Region						
Region	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	Percent
1	34	37	0	0	71	23.0%
2	37	24	0	0	61	19.7%
3	54	44	0	0	98	31.7%
4	33	24	0	0	57	18.4%
Unspecified	13	9	0	0	22	7.1%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100%

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Region						
Region	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	Percent
North	84	79	0	0	163	52.8%
South	72	51	0	0	123	39.8%
Unspecified	15	8	0	0	23	7.4%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Method of Initial Contact with FCO

Data to the right reflects complaints received according to the means by which the complainant made initial contact with the Foster Care Ombudsman, for this quarter of SFY 2022.

Complaint Count by Method of Initial Contact with FCO						
Method of Contact	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Telephone	121	115	0	0	236	76.4%
Email	45	21	0	0	66	21.4%
Fax/Letter/Text/Online/Other	4	2	0	0	6	1.9%
In Person	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
No Prior Contact	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Case County

Data to the right reflects complaints received according to the BSS case county for this quarter for the SFY 2022. Complaints are geographically determined by the county of the BSS case. When reviewing complaint totals by county, it is important to consider that each county exhibits differences, including population, demographics, and number of child abuse and neglect petitions filed.

Conclusion

The Foster Care Ombudsman is committed to providing a helping service and to 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. If you would like more information about the Foster Care Ombudsman unit, email FosterCareOmbudsman@wv.gov.

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Case County						
County	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Barbour	4	4	0	0	8	2.6%
Berkeley	4	3	0	0	7	2.3%
Boone	3	2	0	0	5	1.6%
Braxton	1	4	0	0	5	1.6%
Brooke	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Cabell	6	2	0	0	8	2.6%
Calhoun	2	1	0	0	3	1.0%
Clay	1	4	0	0	5	1.6%
Doddridge	2	0	0	0	2	0.6%
Fayette	10	2	0	0	12	3.9%
Gilmer	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Grant	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
Greenbrier	2	1	0	0	3	1.0%
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Hancock	1	3	0	0	4	1.3%
Hardy	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Harrison	14	17	0	0	31	10.0%
Jackson	0	3	0	0	3	1.0%
Jefferson	2	0	0	0	2	0.6%
Kanawha	23	15	0	0	38	12.3%
Lewis	4	0	0	0	4	1.3%
Lincoln	1	1	0	0	2	0.6%
Logan	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Marion	1	2	0	0	3	1.0%
Marshall	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
Mason	0	3	0	0	3	1.0%
McDowell	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Mercer	3	4	0	0	7	2.3%
Mineral	1	1	0	0	2	0.6%
Mingo	2	2	0	0	4	1.3%
Monongalia	12	5	0	0	17	5.5%
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Morgan	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Nicholas	3	6	0	0	9	2.9%
Ohio	6	2	0	0	8	2.6%
Pendleton	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Pleasants	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
Pocahontas	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
Preston	4	3	0	0	7	2.3%
Putnam	1	0	0	0	1	0.3%
Raleigh	8	3	0	0	11	3.6%
Randolph	6	5	0	0	11	3.6%
Ritchie	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Roane	1	1	0	0	2	0.6%
Summers	0	2	0	0	2	0.6%
Taylor	5	3	0	0	8	2.6%
Tucker	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Tyler	1	1	0	0	2	0.6%
Upshur	7	3	0	0	10	3.2%
Wayne	2	0	0	0	2	0.6%
Webster	0	2	0	0	2	0.6%
Wetzel	0	1	0	0	1	0.3%
Wirt	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Wood	5	15	0	0	20	6.5%
Wyoming	4	1	0	0	5	1.6%
Unspecified	15	8	0	0	23	7.4%
Total	171	138	0	0	309	
	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%	0.0%		100.0%