



CHILD PROTECTION
OMBUDSMAN
of COLORADO

Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman

Fiscal Year 2016-2017

Performance Management System

August 01, 2016

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Background

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (Office) was established in June 2010, under Senate Bill 10-171. This legislation provided that the Office would operate as a program through a contract with a local non-profit agency, issued and managed by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS).

The original legislation was passed in response to the highly publicized deaths of 12 children who were known to the child welfare system within five years of dying from abuse. The Office was created to respond to the public outcry concerning the children's deaths and the belief that the Colorado child protection system required a greater degree of oversight, accountability and transparency to prevent such tragedies in the future.

From 2011 through 2015, the Office was housed by the nonprofit, the National Association of Counsel for Children, and was supervised by the CDHS. From the beginning, the Office has responded to citizen complaints about the sufficiency of the child protection system and evaluated whether it is performing in an optimal way to keep children safe. Throughout this time, the Office has issued approximately 164 recommendations and published four annual reports. Through these recommendations, the Office has been instrumental in improving service delivery to children and families across Colorado. The Office has also had a presence at the state Capitol during the past four years and has provided expert consultation and testimony related to several bills.

Since its inception, the Office has had two prior ombudsmen. Each ombudsman preceding the current appointee has continued to move the Office forward in a positive direction and played a significant role in the Office obtaining independence.

On June 2, 2015, Senate Bill 15-204, *Concerning the Independent Functioning of the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman*, was signed into law. This legislation transformed the original "program" located under the CDHS into a distinct, independent state office. The new, independent Office opened in January 2016.

The Ombudsman concept, which dates back hundreds of years, is designed to provide citizens with an independent, unbiased and trusted intermediary between the public and an entity. In this case, the entity is the child protection system. Ombudsmen are guided by standards set by organizations such as the United States Ombudsman Association and the American Bar Association. Using those standards, the Office creates an accountability mechanism by independently gathering information, investigating complaints and providing recommendations to child protection agencies. Compliance with those recommendations, or lack thereof, is published annually to citizens and stakeholders.

Additionally, the legislature created the first ever Child Protection Ombudsman Board in 2015. The board is the first of its kind in the nation. By law, this board is required to oversee the Ombudsman's performance as well as serve as an advisory body on strategic direction and outreach. It will be necessary for the Board to develop sound governance and operating policies in order to carry out its statutory mandates.

Mission

The mission of the Office is to bring accountability and transparency to the child protection system and promote better outcomes for children and families. The Office fields and reviews complaints regarding child protection agencies, defined in C.R.S. 19-3.3-103 as, “any public agency or any provider that receives public moneys that may adversely affect the safety, permanency, or well-being of the child.” Those agencies include – but are not limited to – CDHS, law enforcement, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), educators, day care providers, medical professionals and treatment providers. The Office serves the children of Colorado by driving policy reform and improving best practices within the child protection system.

Vision

Protecting children today and creating a stronger child protection system for the future.

Mandate

The Office was established pursuant to C.R.S. 19.3.3-101. Some of the Office’s primary duties include:

- Fielding and reviewing citizen and stakeholders’ complaints regarding Colorado’s child protection system;
- Making recommendations for better practice and systemic change;
- Maintain a highly visible grievance process;
- Treat all complaints as confidential;
- Use information gained from reviews and investigations to educate and advise citizens, the legislature and the Governor on key child protection issues, policies and improvements.

Performance Management System

Real Time Tracking

The Office’s performance management system is designed to ensure a continuous improvement to services, compliance with statutory requirements and the use of cost effective practices. In its Performance Plan, the Office outlined its four strategic policy initiatives – see below – and the strategies and performance measures needed to achieve those goals.

The Office has also secured Dapulse, an online project tracking and task management system. The dynamic system conserves staff time by eliminating lengthy meetings and miscommunications. It removes static to do lists and allows staff to track progress in real time. Each task and deadline is assigned to an employee. The Ombudsman and staff have the ability to effectively monitor all of the Office’s ongoing projects. When a roadblock arises, an employee can send an alert through the system to staff members and prompt an immediate problem solving session.

The Ombudsman and staff are required to update their tasks and review their progress in the system on a weekly basis. The dashboard, showing each task, employee assigned to that task and any progress is displayed and discussed during weekly staff meets.

Quarterly Reviews

Also, to ensure the Office is progressing toward accomplishing its goals, the Ombudsman and staff will hold quarterly review meetings. During these reviews, the Ombudsman and staff will:

- **Measure** any progress made during the relevant quarter. The Office will determine whether progress has been made by assessing whether performance measures have been accomplished and/or evaluating whether efforts being made are effective.
- **Evaluate** any progress or shortfalls. To ensure efficient steps are being made to accomplish its goals, the Office will evaluate any ongoing efforts to determine if any changes are necessary.
- **Report** any progress made. The results of the quarterly review meetings will be shared with the Colorado Office of State Planning and Budgeting, the Joint Budget Committee, the Governor, legislators and citizens in quarterly Performance Evaluations. During Fiscal Year 2016-2017, Performance Evaluations will be filed on **October 1**, **January 1** and **April 1**.

Goals, Strategies and Performance Measures

A months-long assessment of the Office's operations and budget revealed areas that need improvement. Using the goals and strategies listed below, the Office plans to expand services, meet statutory requirements and continually improve the efficiency of its practices.

Every quarter, as listed in the timeline below, the Ombudsman will meet with staff to analyze whether efforts to reach these goals are proving to be effective and to create new strategies when needed. Collectively, the Ombudsman and staff will work to ensure that the work of the Office is in line with its strategic policy initiatives and any progress will be reported quarterly.

Below is a summary of the Office's goals and strategies.

Goal One: Establish an efficient office to ensure seamless delivery of services to the public.

STRATEGY ONE: Build physical infrastructure of the Office

Performance Measures:

- **Develop a safe and appropriate work space with allotment for future growth.**
- **Secure necessary hardware and software for business operations.**
- **Contract with IT Vendors for services, set up and ongoing maintenance.**

STRATEGY TWO: Build operating infrastructure

Performance Measures:

- **Develop internal financial policies and processes to ensure proper use of public funds.**
- **Develop necessary internal human resources systems.**

STRATEGY THREE: Establish Board structure and operating policies

Performance Measures:

- **Work with the executive, legislative and judicial branches to fill vacancies through appointments.**
- **Support Board in creating by-laws.**
- **Provide the Board support through scheduling monthly meetings, providing minutes and supplying Office reports.**
- **Provide support to the Board so it can develop a grievance and evaluation processes for the Ombudsman, as is required by statute.**
- **Develop fiscal rules for Board travel and expenses.**
- **Organize and schedule the required annual rural Board meeting.**
- **Create Board training program and manual.**

Goal Two: Create transparent and accountable operating policies that promote the Office's accessibility and responsiveness to the public.

STRATEGY ONE: Create a general operations manual for handling inquiries from the public

Performance Measures:

- Develop policies for how the Office receives complaints.
- Develop policies for the review and investigation of complaints.
- Develop policies for determining and disclosing case dispositions and investigation findings.
- Identify the most effective mechanisms to implement and track CPO recommendations.

STRATEGY TWO: Create communication policies in accordance with state law

Performance Measures:

- Develop procedures to effectively respond to Colorado Open Records Act requests and educate OCP staff on compliance with CORA.
- Develop procedures for document retention for internal records and confidential case records.
- Develop procedures to comply with Open Meeting Laws.

Goal Three: Institute outreach and communication plans to educate and advise the public and stakeholders on trends and recommendations to improve the child protection system.

STRATEGY ONE: Develop a public policy strategy

Performance Measures:

- Create a short-term public policy plan.
- Create a long-term public policy plan.
- Utilize new database to quantify and examine complaints with the goal of identifying trends.
- Using data collected by the Office, educate and advise stakeholders and legislators on developing trends and citizens' concerns about the child protection system.
- Redesign Office website to serve as an information portal for citizens and stakeholders on real time child protection issues and Office initiatives.

STRATEGY TWO: Establish outreach strategy to help expand utilization of the Office's services

Performance Measures:

- Develop bi-lingual initiative to better connect with non-English speaking customers.
- Increase contacts with five key groups: foster and adoptive families, children, mandatory reporters kin and the child protection legal community.
- Integrate the Office into the broader child protection community in an effort to share and gain information to improve service delivery to children and families.
- Secure speaking engagements at key stakeholder conferences and meetings.

STRATEGY THREE: Improve communication with the public and stakeholders

Performance Measures:

- Develop protocols for communicating data related to citizen complaints.
- Develop quarterly report for citizens, stakeholders and media.
- Develop policies and strategies to proactively and reactively respond to media outlets on high-profile child abuse cases and investigations.

Goal Four: Increase staff to meet the growing demand for services.

STRATEGY ONE: Analyze the Office's needs to meet the demand for outreach and education and comply with statutory mandates

Performance Measure:

- Assess any additional funding that may be needed to bolster the part-time position of Communications and Policy Director.

STRATEGY TWO: Monitor increasing call demand and analyze ways to create an investigative capacity for systemic complaints

Performance Measure:

- Analyze how additional funding may be used to create a second full-time investigator position.

Conclusion and Timeline

The Child Protection Ombudsman respectfully submits this report to the Joint Budget Committee and the General Assembly, as is required under C.R.S. 2-7-204. The Office will comply with its requirements under the statute and will submit the required reports and evaluations following the schedule posted below.

July/August 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and write CPO’s 2016-2017 Performance Plan • Post CPO’s 2016-2017 Performance Plan • Research and write CPO’s 2016-2017 Performance Management System • Post CPO’s 2016-2017 Performance Management System by August 1
September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold first quarter review with Ombudsman and staff • Research and write CPO’s 2016-2017 First Quarter Performance Evaluation
October 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post CPO’s 2016-2017 First Quarter Performance Evaluation by October 1 • Research and write CPO’s 2016-2017 Performance Report
November 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post CPO’s 2016-2017 Performance Report by November 1
December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold second quarter review with Ombudsman and staff • Hold performance evaluations for all staff • Research and write CPO’s 2016-2017 Second Quarter Performance Evaluation
January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post CPO’s 2016-2017 Second Quarter Performance Evaluation on January 1
March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold third quarter review with Ombudsman and staff • Research and write CPO’s 2016-2017 Third Quarter Performance Evaluation Report
April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post CPO’s 2016-2017 Third Quarter Performance Evaluation by April 1
June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and write CPO’s 2017-2018 Performance Plan
July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research CPO’s 2017-2018 Performance Plan by July 1 • Research and write CPO’s 2017-2018 Performance Management System