



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

JANESE LEWIS GEORGE

Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair of the Committee on
Facilities and Family Services

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
Committee on Public Works and Operations

December 21, 2023

Petrina Jones-Jesz
Acting Ombudsperson, Office of the Ombudsperson for Children
955 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Acting Ombudsperson Jones-Jesz:

In preparation for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children's Fiscal Year 23 Performance Oversight Hearing, the Committee on Facilities and Family Services is sending the following questions for your response.

Although the schedule for the Council's performance oversight hearings is not yet finalized, the Committee is sending these questions now to give your agency ample time to craft thorough responses. The Committee will be in touch with further details about OFC's hearing when the schedule is final.

I request you please submit your responses no later than **5 p.m. on Thursday, January 25th**. *For ease of review, please ensure that the responses include searchable text.* Please send your responses to facilities@dccouncil.gov. If the documents are too large to send by e-mail, please submit via Dropbox here: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/2e4yk3k40o65kk5lnkb1l/h?rlkey=nwhbroughtpznmtadudlgoxkiu&dl=0>. Please provide an electronic version with text responses in a single document, with clearly marked attachments where necessary.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Committee at facilities@dccouncil.gov. Thank you in advance for your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janeese Lewis George".

Janeese Lewis George
Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair, Committee on Facilities and Family Services

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Overall

Achievements and Priorities

1. Identify the agency's overall mission statement.

OFC Mission Statement:

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC) is committed to working collaboratively across systems that impact CFSA children to foster improved outcomes, strengthen service delivery and increase accountability.

2. Identify the agency's top achievements in FY 23 and FY 24, to date.

In FY 2023, the agency's top achievements include:

- The OFC website, complaints, and general email addresses launched on January 31, 2023. Complaints form and OFC case management database was also launched on January 31, 2023.
- The OFC began receiving complaints from the community in February 2023. CFSA transferred their Ombudsman responsibilities to the OFC effective February 6, 2023.
- Onboarding of employees to four OFC positions: Chief Deputy Ombudsperson, Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson, and two Ombuds Analysts during FY 23.
- Creation of an OFC core operating policy effective February 1, 2023.
- Identified and occupied office space in FY 23.
- Initiated community outreach efforts in FY 23. The OFC team met with and introduced the Office to multiple community and government agencies.
- The Acting Ombudsperson and Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson attended the USOA annual conference in September 2023, and attended the New Ombudsman pre conference session.
- Facilitated interagency communication between CFSA and DYRS to identify a population of crossover youth. Data is shared between the two (2) agencies and reports are produced that will allow for the tracking of outcomes, identification of service gaps and opportunities to collaborate towards improved outcomes for these youth.

3. Identify the agency's top five overall priorities. Explain how the agency expects to address these priorities in FY 24 and identify the metrics used to track success for each.

- Develop OFC policies, procedures, and guiding documents to direct the work of the Office. Metric: Additional policies and documents will include a Confidentiality policy and case management database documentation. Other needed documents will be identified and developed throughout the year.
- Recruit and hire qualified individuals to fill vacant OFC positions. Metric: Steps will be taken to fill the following positions: Chief Deputy Ombudsperson and Ombuds Analyst.

- Ongoing community outreach to government and community agencies. Increasing our presence in the community is a priority for the OFC. Metric: Meet with agencies to discuss the child welfare system or introduce the Office to community and government agencies at least two times per month.
- Expand data on crossover youth. Identify and gain access to additional dataset to further assess crossover youth data and make recommendations for improvements in service delivery to this community.
- Ensure comprehensive investigation of complaints are occurring timely and identify areas for improving the investigative process. Metric: Monitor effectiveness of policy guidelines for completing investigations. Current metric is 45 days with exceptions depending on the complexity of the case.

4. Describe any new initiatives or programs that the agency implemented in FY 23 and FY 24, to date, to improve the operations of the agency. Describe any funding utilized for these initiatives or program and the results, or expected results, of each initiative.

- OFC launched its case management database in FY 23, and initiated enhancements to the database in the same year, in partnership with OCTO. The database enhancements include the addition of a data dashboard, functions to allow OFC staff to track assigned investigative cases and task completion, and fields to record case notes and to store documentation. In FY 23, we also launched the OFC's website which included an online complaint form. The complaint form is connected to the case management database and allows constituents to submit complaints and concerns online. OFC funding was used for the development of the database (one time cost \$28,000).
- OFC began tracking the critical events reported by CFSA, to include child deaths and serious injuries to children. The tracking will focus on identifying trends related to these incidents to make recommendations from OFC to enhance prevention activities for policy or practice improvements.
- OFC began compiling a comprehensive listing of community resources that serve children and families in the district. These resources will be utilized to support families that contact our office.

5. Identify the agency's Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Explain why each KPI was selected and how it supports the overall mission of the agency.

- Include the outcomes for FY 23 and FY 24, to date for each KPI measure.***
- Provide a narrative description of what actions the agency undertook to meet the key performance indicators or any reasons why such indicators were not met.***

Strategic Objectives/Core Duties of the Office of the Ombudsperson:

- Receive complaints through online complaint form, by phone, email and in-person.

- Make recommendations for resolution of complaints from CFSA constituents involving an administrative act of CFSA or a CFSA affiliate;
- Facilitate interagency communication and coordination related to issues impacting CFSA children;
- Investigate, on its own initiative, systemic concerns related to CFSA children, including issues relating to interagency communication and coordination;
- Review policies, procedures, regulations, and directives as established, implemented, or practiced by CFSA or a CFSA affiliate;
- Provide recommendations to policies and procedures, staff training, regulations, and strategies based on investigations performed;
- Notify the appropriate CFSA contact, including the Agency Director and Office of General Counsel (OGC), if necessary, of identified concerns and make recommendations for improvement;
- Facilitate communication between CFSA and CFSA constituents as needed;
- Offer voluntary conflict resolution services; and
- Provide education, information, and referrals to individuals as appropriate.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Engage CFSA and other child and family serving agencies to address systemic issues impacting CFSA children. The OFC meets with CFSA leadership monthly to address investigative findings and systemic issues with the agency.
- Monitor outcomes for CFSA children and hold agencies accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities. During FY 23, a report on dual jacketed youth was developed and distributed in partnership with CFSA and DYRS. Outcomes for CFSA children are discussed with the child welfare agency, and a process for submitting documentation on findings and recommendations to CFSA was implemented in FY 24.
- Timely response to acknowledge complaints within (2) business days of receipt. An automatic response email is sent to the constituent when a complaint is submitted to the OFC through the complaints email address. This email acknowledges receipt and explains that an OFC employee will follow up within two business days.
- Information and Referral Services will be provided within (5) business days of assignment. The OFC tracks timeliness of this KPI and this timeframe is being met.
- Investigations will be completed within (45) business days of assignment. We continue to track timeliness in completing investigations and take into consideration complex investigations that may go beyond 45 days.
- Annual report submitted to the Council every December 31 covering the prior fiscal year. The annual report was submitted in a timely manner in 2022 and 2023.

These Key Performance Indicators support the overall mission of OFC by focusing on outcomes for CFSA children and families served through engaging and responding to concerns of constituents; identifying and addressing systemic issues; working collaboratively across systems and holding agencies accountable for providing services that are equitable, high quality, responsive to the needs of those served and foster improved outcomes for CFSA children.

6. ***List each policy initiative of the agency during FY 23 and FY 24, to date. For each initiative provide:***
- a. ***A detailed description of the program;***
 - b. ***The name of the employee who is responsible for the program;***
 - c. ***The total number of FTEs assigned to the program; and***
 - d. ***The amount of funding budgeted to the program.***

The OFC has not established a policy initiative during the FY 23 and FY 24 to date. Areas of interest for establishing a policy initiative include informal relative caregiver placements and access to resources, and housing for families and youth aging out of care.

7. ***Did the agency meet the objectives set forth in the performance plan for FY 23? Provide a narrative description of what actions the agency undertook to meet the objectives or any reasons why such objectives were not met.***

The Office met the objectives set forth in the performance plan established during the FY 23 performance hearing. Objectives discussed in last year's performance plan were met during the fiscal year and include:

- The creation and distribution of a Mid-Year report to address child welfare and OFC operational trends. This report included the first version of the dual jacketed youth report. The report was distributed in July 2023.
- The OFC identified and onboarded employees in the two Ombuds Analyst positions, and the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson position in FY 23.
- The case management database was launched in FY 23. Ongoing work and enhancements to the OFC case management database is occurring.
- Held a community roundtable on Kinship/relative placements with CFSA, DC Council, and community organizations. This roundtable occurred in June 2023.
- Conducted investigations submitted to the Office by DC constituents. Also, connected individuals to resources when the concern is identified as needing information and referral. Implemented the Office's core policy.
- Developed targeted metrics for crossover youth and dual jacketed youth. Facilitated data sharing between CFSA and DYRS to develop the dual jacketed youth report on identified outcome measures.
- Conducted community outreach activities with government and community organizations. Outreach included meetings with local organizations to introduce the office and identify opportunities to support the OFC's mission and improve the child welfare system.

- 8. List and provide a copy of all memoranda of understanding (“MOU”) or other written agreements between OFC and other District agencies during FY 23 and FY 24, to date, as well as any MOU currently in force and any MOU planned for the upcoming year. For each, indicate the date on which the MOU was entered and the termination date.**

There are no MOUs planned for the upcoming year.

Attached please find:

MOA between CFSA and OFC is attached. October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023, with an automatic renewal unless modifications are requested.

MOU between OCTO and OFC is attached. October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023, with an extension.

- 9. List all reports (annual or otherwise) published by the office, citing statutory authority. Highlight the report deadline as well as the date of actual submission for FY 23 and to date in FY 24.**

Statutorily, the Ombudsperson is required to submit an annual report to the Council on December 31, 2022 and every December 31 thereafter containing information collected over the course of the prior fiscal year (D.C. Law 23-270, Sec. 108).

The annual report due on December 31, 2023, covered the first full fiscal year of the Office’s implementation. The FY 2023 annual report was submitted to the Council on December 29, 2023.

The OFC also created and submitted a mid-year report of the Office’s activities and child welfare trends. The purpose of this report is to monitor organizational performance and progress on data metrics, indicators, and trends. This report was distributed in July 2023.

- 10. Provide OFC’s annual report and a summary of its key findings.**

Please see the attached. The annual report can also be found on the OFC website at ofc.dc.gov under the Reports menu item.

Organization and Staffing

- 11. Provide a current organizational chart for the agency, including the number of vacant and filled positions in each division or subdivision. Include the names and titles of all personnel and note the date that the information was collected on the chart.**
- a. Include an explanation of the roles and responsibilities for each division and subdivision.**

- b. Provide a narrative explanation of any organizational changes made during the previous year.***

Please see the attached.

- 12. How many vacancies were posted during FY 23 and FY 24, to date? Identify each position, how long the position was vacant, what steps have been taken to fill the position, whether the agency plans to fill the position, and whether the position has been filled.***

In FY 2023, four vacancies were posted. The Chief Deputy Ombudsperson position was filled in December 2022. The Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson position was filled in February 2023. Two Ombuds analyst positions were filled in July 2023. It took approximately 90 days from position posting to employee start date and the position filled.

One of the Ombuds Analyst positions became vacant on January 13, 2024. We will post the position by the second calendar quarter of 2024. The OFC expects to fill the legal analyst position proposed in FY 23, as funding will allow.

- 13. Provide a current Schedule A for the agency which identifies each position by program and activity, with the salary, fringe benefits, and length of time with the agency. Note the date that the information was collected. The Schedule A should also indicate if the position is continuing/term/temporary/contract or if it is vacant or frozen. Indicate if any position must be filled to comply with federal or local law.***

- 14. Provide an update on the office's location and efforts to secure physical office space.***

Office space for the OFC is located at:

955 L'Enfant Plaza SW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC

OFC moved into the office suite in FY 23.

- 15. Provide an update on the office's website, helpline, and database to process complaints.***

OFC's Website can be found at: ofc.dc.gov. Linked to the website is a form to submit complaints. During FY 2023, the Office identified additional functions to enhance the case management database. These enhancements are being developed with a planned completion date of the second quarter of 2024.

The Office's helpline/main office number was launched in October 2023. The number is 202-671-1321.

Contracting and Procurement

16. List each contract, procurement, lease, and grant (“contract”) awarded or entered into by the agency during FY 23 and FY 24, to date. For each contract, provide the following information, where applicable:

a. The name of the contracting party;

Department of General Services (DGS)

b. The nature of the contract, including the end product or service;

Lease for Office space

c. The dollar amount of the contract, including budgeted amount and actually spent;

First Fiscal Year Fixed Costs

Fixed Costs for First Fiscal Year of Occupancy: [____\$94,882.08____]

(i.e., total amount for 12 months) Fixed Costs amount subject to adjustment each Fiscal Year.

Monthly Fixed Cost Payment Amount: [____\$7,906.84____]

(prorated for any partial month of occupancy)

Fixed Cost will have 2.5% escalation each fiscal year.

Fixed Cost Payment Amount FY24 : [____\$97,254.13____]

Fixed Cost Payment Amount FY25 : [____\$99,685.48____]

Fixed Cost Payment Amount FY26 : [____\$102,177.62____]

d. The term of the contract;

March 1, 2023-September 30, 2026

e. Whether the contract was competitively bid or not;

It was not competitively bid.

f. The name of the agency’s contract monitor and the results of any monitoring activity; and

The agency head is the contract monitor for all of OFC’s contracts.

g. Funding source.

Leasing office space is included in OFC’s budget.

17. Provide the following information for all contract modifications made in FY 23 and FY 24, to date:

- a. Name of the vendor;**
- b. Purpose of the contract;**
- c. Modification term;**
- d. Modification cost, including budgeted amount and actual spent;**
- e. Narrative explanation of the reason for the modification; and**
- f. Funding source.**

No contract modifications occurred during FY 23 or FY 24 to date.

18. Provide a list of any contractors or consultants performing work within the agency, including job description, salary, and length of contract and city of residence.

Not applicable

19. For FY 2023 and FY 2024, to date, provide the number of contracts and procurements executed by the agency. Indicate how many contracts and procurements were for an amount under \$250,000, how many were for an amount between \$250,000-\$999,999, and how many were for an amount over \$1 million.

One contract was executed by the agency in FY 2023 to lease office space at 955 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Third floor, Washington, DC for an amount under \$250,000.

20. Provide the typical timeframe from the beginning of the solicitation process to contract execution for:

- a. Contracts and procurements under \$250,000;**
- b. Contracts and procurements between \$250,000-\$999,999; and**
- c. Contracts and procurements over \$1 million.**

Execution of the contract to lease the office space at 955 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Third floor, Washington DC was completed approximately 60 days.

21. In cases where you have been dissatisfied with the procurement process, what have been the major issues?

Not applicable

22. What changes to contracting and procurement policies, practices, or systems would help the agency deliver more reliable, cost-effective, and timely services?

OFC does not have any recommendations for changes.

Racial Equity

23. The District defines racial equity as “the elimination of racial disparities such that race no longer predicts opportunities, outcomes, or the distribution of resources for residents

of the District, particularly for persons of color and Black residents.” What are three areas, programs, or initiatives within the agency that have the most opportunity to make progress toward racial equity?

- The Office conducts impartial and confidential investigations into complaints that rise to that level.
- Data analysis of crossover youth and dual jacketed youth data include racial demographics to help identify racial disparities.
- Per enabling legislation, the Office can provide mediation services to address individuals on issues pertaining to the child welfare system. The mediation of concerns can include racial equity and discrimination.

24. In the past year, what are two ways the agency has addressed racial inequities internally or through the services you provide?

In the past year:

- The OFC provided opportunities to all DC residents to give a voice to their complaints and concerns directly to the Office. We provide complainants an opportunity to express their concerns, which may include bias and discrimination, in a confidential manner.
- Per enabling legislation, the Office has the authority to provide mediation and conflict resolution. This discussion can address racial equity and experiences due to racism.

25. Consider one area where the agency collects race information. How does the agency use this data to inform decision-making?

The agency collects race information regarding dual jacketed youth. The data is used to identify racial disparity in the provision of services to youth or overall treatment.

26. How are communities of color engaged or consulted when the agency considers changes to programs or services? Provide one specific example from the past year.

During the past year, the OFC received complaints about actions taken by CFSA from relatives of children in their care, in an informal arrangement. Several of these complaints were made in person to the OFC and from individuals of color. In each of these cases, an investigation was opened, and the result of the investigation was shared with the relatives.

Sexual Harassment

27. Describe the agency’s procedures for investigating allegations of sexual harassment or misconduct committed by or against its employees. List and describe any allegations received by the agency in FY 2023 and FY 2024, to date, and whether and how those allegations were resolved.

If the Office received an allegation of sexual harassment, the Office would request guidance from the District of Columbia's Human Resources Department. We have not received any allegations of sexual harassment in FY 2023 or FY 2024, to date.

- 28. Has OFC identified a primary and alternate sexual harassment officer (“SHO”) as required by Mayor’s Order 2023-131 (“Sexual Harassment Order”)? If no, why not? If so, provide the names of the primary and alternate SHOs.**

Due to the size and number of staff reporting to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, the OFC has elected to seek the guidance of DC HR regarding any allegations of sexual harassment.

- 29. Has OFC received any requests from staff in an otherwise prohibited dating, romantic, or sexual relationship for a waiver of provisions of the Sexual Harassment Order? What was the resolution of each request? If a waiver has been granted, are there limitations on the scope of the waiver?**

No requests were received from staff regarding a waiver of provisions of the Sexual Harassment Order.

Other

- 30. Explain any significant impacts on the agency, if any, of legislation passed at the federal or local level during FY 23 and FY 24, to date.**

There was no federal or local level legislation passed in FY 23 and FY 24, to date, that impact the Office.

- 31. Provide the number of FOIA requests received for FY 23, and FY 24, to date. Include the number granted, partially granted, denied, and pending. In addition, provide the average response time, the estimated number of FTEs required to process requests, the estimated number of hours spent responding to these requests, and the cost of compliance.**

No FOIA requests were made to the Office in FY 2023 or FY 2024.

Budget

- 32. Provide a table showing the agency's Council-approved budget, revised budget (after reprogrammings, etc.), and actual spending, by program, activity, and funding source for FY 23 and FY 24, to date. Detail any over- or under-spending and if the agency had any federal funds that lapsed.**

Please see the attached.

- 33. Provide a list of all budget enhancement requests (including capital improvement needs) for FY 23 or FY 24. For each, include a description of the need, the amount of funding requested, and the status of the enhancement.**

Not applicable

- 34. For FY 23 and FY 24, to date, list all intra-District transfers to or from the agency. For each, provide a description of the purpose of the transfer and which programs, activities, and services within the agency the transfer impacted.**

FY23-\$28,0000 MOU with OCTO for Website Development from Office of the Ombudsperson Program.

- 35. List, in chronological order, each reprogramming that impacted the agency in FY 23 and FY 24, to date, including those that moved funds into the agency, out of the agency, and within the agency. For each reprogramming, list the date, amount, rationale, and reprogramming number.**

Reprogramming for FY23, \$457,237 for end of year Districtwide reprogramming. No reprogramming to date for FY 24.

- 36. List and describe any spending pressures the agency experienced in FY 23 and any anticipated spending pressures for the remainder of FY 24. Include a description of the pressure and the estimated amount. If the spending pressure was in FY 23, describe how it was resolved, and if the spending pressure is in FY 24, describe any proposed solutions.**

There were no spending pressures in FY 23. For FY 24, no spending pressures are expected.

- 37. For FY 23 and FY 24, to date, identify any special purpose revenue funds maintained by, used by, or available for use by the agency. For each fund identified, provide:**
- a. The revenue source name and code;**
 - b. The source of funding;**
 - c. A description of the program that generates the funds;**
 - d. The amount of funds generated by each source or program;**
 - e. Expenditures of funds, including the purpose of each expenditure; and**
 - f. The current fund balance.**

This question is not applicable to the Office.

- 38. For FY 23 and FY 24, to date, provide a list of employee bonuses, special pay granted, or separation pay issued, that identifies the employee receiving the bonus, special pay, or separation pay, the amount received, and the reason for the bonus, special pay, or separation pay.**

Not Applicable

- 39. List all currently open capital projects for your agency including those projects that are managed or overseen by another agency or entity. Include a brief description of each, the total estimated cost, expenditures to date, the start and completion dates, and the current status of the project. Also, indicate which projects are experiencing delays and which require additional funding.**

Not Applicable

- 40. For FY 23 and FY 24, to date, provide the following information regarding your agency's authorization of employee travel:**
- a. Each trip outside the region on official business or at agency expense;**
 - b. Individuals (by name and title/position) who traveled outside the region;**
 - c. Total expense for each trip (per person, per trip, etc.);**
 - d. What agency or entity paid for the trips; and**
 - e. Justification for the travel (per person and trip).**

- a. Trip to Atlanta, GA in September 2023 to attend the United States Ombudsman’s Association (USOA) annual conference.
- b. Petrina Jones-Jesz, Chief Deputy Ombudsperson; and William Thomas, Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson
- c. For the trip to Atlanta, GA to attend the USOA annual conference: Petrina Jones-Jesz - \$2259.77; William Thomas - \$1944.93
- d. Budget for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children
- e. OFC legislation requires the Ombudsperson to attend the USOA annual conference’s pre – conference session titled New Ombudsman training. It is a two-day training on the fundamentals of Ombudsman work, including the history of the Ombudsman position and investigation best practices. The Acting Ombudsperson attended because of her role in providing leadership to the Office during FY 23. Due to the nature of the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson’s role, which includes receiving complaints, he also attended the training.

Duties of the Office

Complaints

41. What is the procedure for processing complaints regarding CFSA or other government agencies? Provide a detailed description including how OFC maintains confidentiality during the complaint process.

- A. The OFC will receive and process complaints from CFSA constituents.
- B. OFC will receive complaints through (1) the online complaint form, (2) phone, (3) email or (4) in person. Furthermore, access to the online complaint form will be included on the OFC’s website (ofc.dc.gov).
- C. Each complaint received by the OFC will be assigned an intake number.
- D. During the Intake Process, OFC will gather information from the complainant. All information gathered during the intake will be entered into the OFC case management database.
- E. The Ombudsperson maintains discretion regarding how to handle intakes, as well as decline the acceptance of an intake if it is reasonably believed that:

1) The complaint alleges an emergency situation regarding the safety of a child.

*OFC will immediately refer the complainant, if by phone or in person, to contact

the CFSA child abuse hotline and/or OFC will make a report to CFSA child abuse hotline if such complaint is received by OFC through online complaint form or by email;

2) It is plain on the face of the complaint that an adequate remedy is presently available such that an investigation by OFC is unwarranted, and information can be provided to the complainant about the remedy;

3) The complaint relates to a matter that is outside the purpose of OFC (i.e., does not relate to an involved, previously involved or otherwise known child of CFSA);

4) The complaint is not made in good faith;

5) The complaint is against a court decision, court order, or the actions of judges or attorneys;

6) The complaint regards a personnel matter of CFSA or affiliate;

7) The complaint has been too long delayed to justify present examination;

8) Legal advice or legal representation is requested of OFC.

42. Provide a breakdown for the complaints received by the agency in FY 23 and FY 24, to date. Include:

a. Number of complaints;

As of January 23, 2024:

- Total number of complaints submitted to the OFC=**74**
- Total number of open/active cases=**21**
- Total number of closed cases=**53**

Data for Fiscal Year 23 (October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023)

- Total number of complaints submitted to the OFC=**49**
- Total number of open/active cases=**5**
- Total number of closed cases=**53**
- Total number of closed cases for the fiscal year=**32**

Data for Fiscal Year 24 (October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024)

- Total number of complaints submitted to the OFC=**25**
- Total number of open/active cases=**16**
- Total number of closed cases=**9**

b. Number of complaints that lead to an investigation;

All complaints led to an investigation or information and referral which required some level of investigation by OFC.

c. Type of complaints (categorize);

The OFC has received various complaints during FY 23 and FY 24 to date. Types of complaints are as follows and categorized accordingly:

- Informal relative placements and resources needs.
- Foster care placement concerns
- Unprofessional behavior demonstrated by the agency caseworker/harassment.
- DCPS has expressed concerns about CFSA policy
- Allegations of physical abuse and neglect in the home
- Concerns with the frequency of visitation
- Unable to reach the agency caseworker.

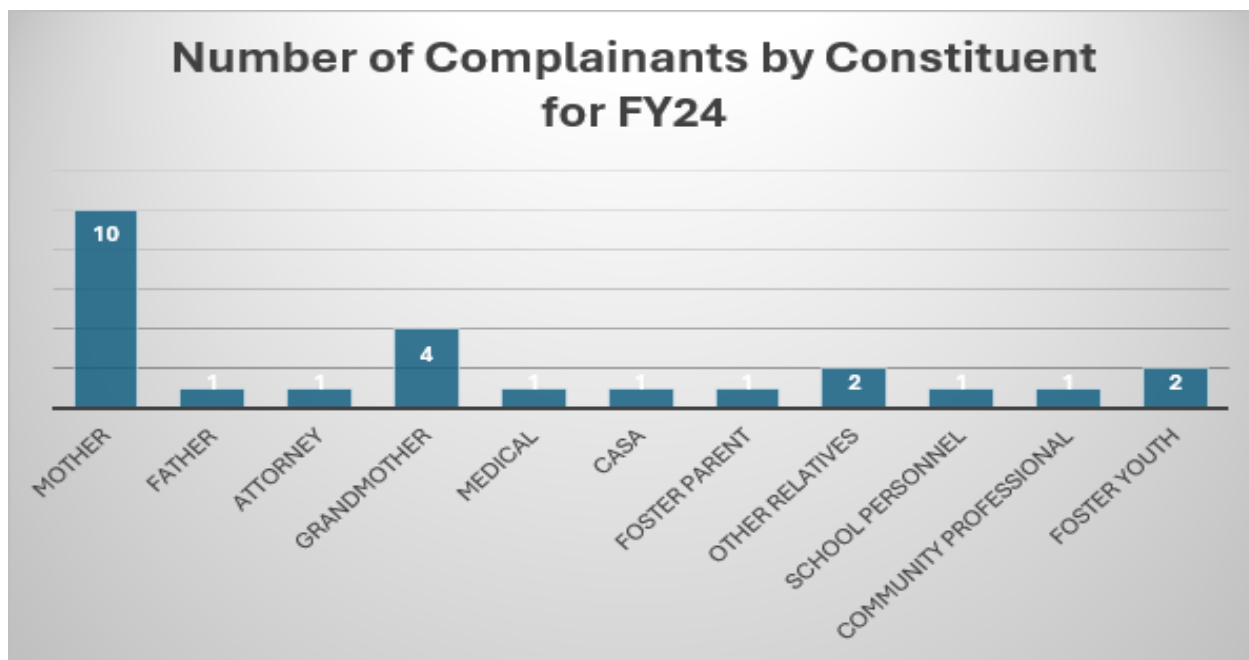
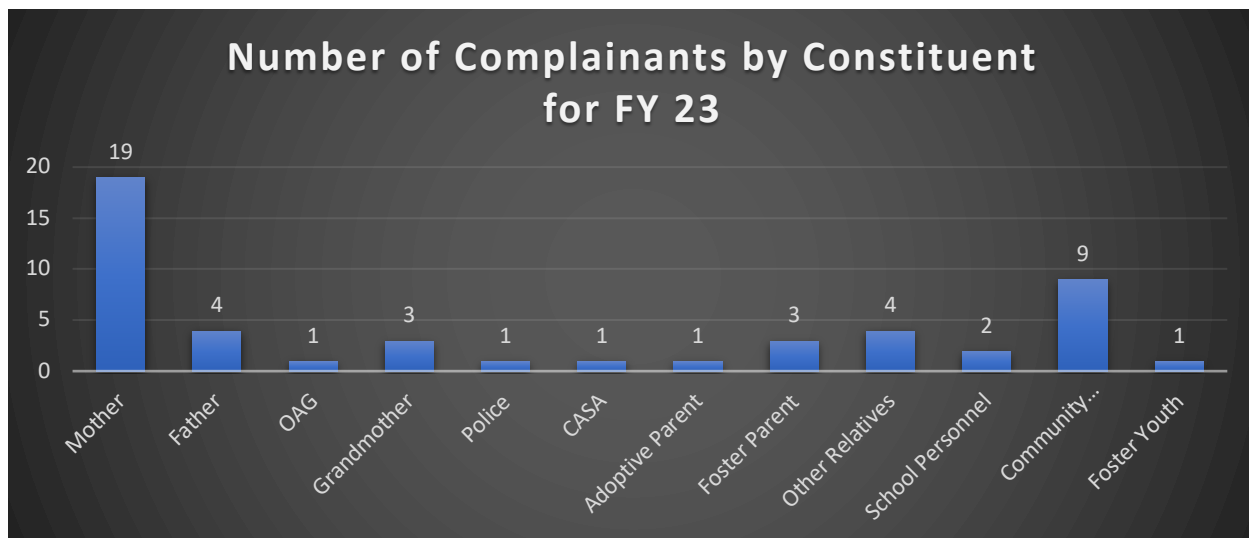
d. Determination process for a complaint leading to an investigation; and

Complaints can be submitted in person, by phone, in writing, or electronically. The complaint is reviewed, and an initial assessment is conducted to ensure all needed information has been gathered. The OFC will assess complaints for validity and investigate all valid complaints. Some examples of valid complaints include:

- Complaints that include actions inconsistent with local and federal law, policy, or best practices.
- Actions performed in an unprofessional manner and are detrimental to the safety, permanency, and well-being of a CFSA child and family.

e. Who or what entities are filing complaint (categorize)

Please see below:



43. How many complaints are currently open?

Please see question 42a.

44. What documentation or information is provided to the complainant on case closure?

When a case is closed, we provide the complainant with a case closure letter. This letter identifies the OFC's findings and provides other relevant case information.

Investigations

45. What is the procedure for an investigation? Discuss the amount of time it may take to investigate and provide recommendations on resolving complaints, and the factors affecting how quickly complaints are investigated and recommendations provided.

During the fiscal year, the OFC has created a core policy that governs the process for resolving complaints and other concerns. When an investigation is needed, the OFC staff will review the family case in CFSA's system of record, hold a follow-up discussion with the CFSA social worker and supervisor for additional information and clarification, and interview collateral stakeholders with knowledge of the family and/or case. Findings and recommendations are identified to improve agency practice or ensure compliance with the law and policy. If a constituent contacts the Office for information or to request services, a referral will be made to an appropriate agency.

The office established within policy the completion of cases within 45 business days. The cases that closed beyond the 45-business day requirement needed further investigative steps completed, to include additional meetings with constituents and CFSA staff in addition to further reviews of assessments completed on children, parents, or adoptive families.

Factors affecting how quickly investigations are completed and/or cases are closed include:

- Significant details and complex case records to review to complete the investigation.
- Multiple agencies are involved with the complaint and contact is required with each agency.
- Ongoing updates and changes with the family's circumstances require the case to remain open to complete a comprehensive investigation.
- The OFC may not close a case if the recommendations submitted to CFSA are not implemented by the agency.

46. Provide a breakdown for the investigations completed in FY 23 and FY 24, to date. Include:

- a. Number of investigations (ongoing, completed, incomplete);***
- b. Outcome of completed investigations; and***
- c. Reasons for an incomplete investigation.***

FY 23

Number of investigations ongoing=5

Number of investigations completed FY 23=32

Number of FY 23 complaints completed in FY 24=12

Total Investigations FY 23=49

FY 24

Number of Investigations ongoing=16

Number of Investigations completed FY 24=9

Total Investigations to date FY 24=25

There were no incomplete investigations in FY 23 or to date in FY 24.

47. Discuss any policy recommendations that your agency has published or discussed with the community or CFSA in FY 23 and FY 24, to date.

Policy recommendations shared with CFSA and published in the OFC annual report include:

- The child welfare agency should conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for all Kinship arrangements for the children and the caregivers prior to case closure.
- The child welfare agency should ensure that all Kinship arrangements have a second level approval prior to closure. (Supervisor and Program Manager approval).
- The child welfare agency should implement a standard checklist developed for Kinship arrangement cases to ensure that all areas of need are addressed, and the probability of a need being missed is decreased. The checklist should cover the critical needs of a child during informal relative caregiver arrangements.
- The child welfare agency should implement clear guidance and practice regarding transporting children to other states that are not in their custody.

48. How does your agency work with other District agencies when conducting investigations? Also describe other government agencies' involvement in completing investigations.

When the Office receives a complaint that includes a concern about the actions of CFSA and another government agency, the OFC will contact the other agency and inform them of the constituent's concern. The OFC will schedule time to meet with the other government agency to discuss the concern, receiving input from them about their actions and policies related to the concern. Typically, the other government agency is aware of the concern and has attempted to address it internally.

The information obtained from other government agencies is used to determine if local and federal policies and laws are being followed based on the concerns identified in the complaint.

49. Outline how the agency engages with the community Discuss regular meeting schedules and plans for FY 23 and FY 24, to date.

The Office engages with the community through regular and ad hoc meetings and discussions based on the complaints received from the community and initiated interactions established by the Office. The OFC attends the following meetings with community and government organizations FY 23 and continuing in FY 24:

- Monthly meetings with CFSA executive leadership

- United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) Child and Family chapter monthly meetings
- Monthly and quarterly meetings with child welfare advocates
- CFSA Internal Child Fatalities Review committee monthly meetings
- Quarterly Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (MACCAN) meetings

Ad hoc meetings are based on issues identified through investigations or opportunities to introduce the Office.

OFC will continue to engage with community stakeholders and the remaining contract agencies of CFSA to ensure that those stakeholders and constituents are aware of services that the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children provides. OFC is also exploring hosting community meetings. OFC also conducted outreach through email blasts in February 2023.

50. Identify any statutory or regulatory impediments to your agency’s operations.

District laws regarding Juvenile justice records – including OFC in the language of the law.

51. Have there been any barriers to completing the investigation in FY 23 and FY 24, to date? If so, describe.

No barriers have been experienced by the Office in completing investigations.

52. In CY 23, OFC held a roundtable on kinship foster care. Describe OFC’s takeaways from that roundtable. What roundtables or other community stakeholder events do you plan to hold in CY 24?

CFSA data on kinship placements was presented at this meeting. Information discussed and learned during the meeting includes:

- Of the 200 entries in FY 22, 21% were placed in a kinship placement.
- Barriers to a successful kinship placement can include the child’s behavior, parent’s behavior, or the willingness/ability of the relative caregiver. Child’s behavior and unwilling caregivers were consistent barriers in FY 22 and FY 23.
- The primary relationships with the child and kin were maternal grandmother, fictive kin, and maternal cousin in FY 22. Maternal aunt was the primary kin relationship in FY 23. Fictive kin and maternal cousin remained consistent.

Additional roundtables and other community stakeholder events to be held by the Office will include a community roundtable with government and community agencies on informal relative placements and safety plans. We also want to hold a community stakeholder event/town hall with relative caregivers.

53. What systemic issues have you identified to date with respect to CFSA operations or policies? Do you have recommendations to address these issues?

The OFC identified the need to comprehensively assess family members who are willing to serve as caregivers for a child as a systemic issue that affects CFSA operations. Observations made based on complaints received by OFC from DC constituents have determined that once a child is placed with a relative the case is typically closed. When comprehensive assessments have not been completed prior to case closure, the OFC has received reports that relatives need resources to continue caring for the child. This is the typical basis for complaints received by relative caregivers. The OFC has also learned from complaints that options for receiving resources have not been discussed with the relative before case closure. Finally, many relatives have expressed to the Office that they expected to care for the child on a temporary basis and unexpectedly found themselves caring for a child long term.

Data Collection

54. Describe how OFC maintains data collected for all complaints.

Data for all complainants are stored in the OFC case management database.

55. Describe how OFC maintains data collected for cross-over youth. In particular, describe:

a. How OFC is tracking the number, demographics, and other relevant characteristics of the crossover-youth population;

During FY 2023, the OFC developed targeted measures to track the number, demographics, and other relevant characteristics of this population. These measures were provided to CFSA and DYRS to be included in the report.

The OFC receives reports produced by CFSA in partnership with DYRS on dual jacketed youth. We currently have data for FY 2021, FY 2022, FY 2023.

b. What is the other Data, metrics, and trend analyses OFC is doing related to outcomes for crossover youth;

The OFC is currently focused on identifying youth outcomes and trends based on the established targeted metrics.

c. How OFC is assessing interagency communication and coordination related to crossover youth and its impact on outcomes for crossover youth; and

The OFC is assessing interagency communication and coordination regarding youth served by both agencies through in person discussions that occurred during

FY 23, and biannual reporting of data and systemic findings identified by CFSA and DYRS.

d. Any other information the Ombudsperson considers relevant to the outcomes for crossover youth.

The OFC's goal is to expand reporting on crossover youth using additional datasets.

56. Describe any policy recommendations made in the December 2023 Annual Report and how OFC plans to move the recommendations forward.

Please see question 47.

To move forward with the recommendations identified, the OFC will:

- Keep the case open on the OFC caseload and follow up with the child welfare agency on progress with implementing the recommendations.
- On an ongoing basis, gather data and make observations based on constituent complaints on the resource needs of relative caregivers.
- Continue sharing the results of subsequent investigations that include informal relative placements with CFSA to discuss potential policy changes and address the concerns.

57. Describe any lessons learned from the first year of OFC.

- The importance of the development of a relationship with CFSA Leadership that is built on trust, respect, and transparency.
- The importance of consistent communication with CFSA Leadership via meetings and email to enhance operations between OFC, CFSA, and NCCF.
- The critical need to ensure that the office hires employees that add value, experience, and synergy to the team.
- The importance of attending training to enhance knowledge, skills, and networking. OFC attended the United States Ombudsman's Association Conference that was beneficial to the upstart work of the office.
- The importance of solidifying in our communication and interactions with CFSA, constituents, and the community, the impartial nature of our operations when conducting investigations.