



WEST VIRGINIA
**Foster Care
Ombudsman**

**West Virginia Foster Care Ombudsman Program
State Fiscal Year 2022 ~ 4th Quarter Report
April 1, 2022 - June 30, 2022**



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

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July 25, 2022

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

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
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Foster Care Ombudsman Quarterly Report

Reporting Period: Fourth Quarter - April 1, 2022 to June 30, 2022

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, also representing a one year period, 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:

The Foster Care Ombudsman envisions 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 DHHR’s Bureau for Social Services (BSS).

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 June 30, 2022. By comparison, for the same fourth quarter in the prior SFY, complaints totalled 101 and for the full prior SFY, complaints totalled 391.

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	47	47	55	62	49	54	
Total	Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			
	171			138			149			165			623

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 the BSS region by case county and the Foster Care Ombudsman determination of complaint validity. The date span for this table is the fourth quarter (April 1, 2022 - June 30, 2022) of SFY 2022. Of the 165 total complaints received during this quarter, 91 complaints (55.2 % of the total) included alleged Bill of rights violations and of those, 53.8% were determined wholly or partially valid.

Complaint Count by Alleged Bill of Rights Violations					
Bill of Rights	North	South	Unspecified	Total	% Validated
Both BOR	20	28	0	48	60.4%
Child BOR	23	9	0	32	43.8%
Foster/Kinship BOR	5	6	0	11	54.5%
Total	48	43	0	91	53.8%

Complaint Count by BSS Unit

Data below reflects complaints received according to the 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	111	126	481	77.2%
Other	5	32	29	20	86	13.8%
Homefinding	1	5	5	4	15	2.4%
Adoption	6	3	1	4	14	2.2%
Post-Adoption	4	2	3	4	13	2.1%
Youth Services	4	1	0	6	11	1.8%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	1	1	0	1	3	0.5%
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	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		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 and full 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	28	38	153	24.6%
Placement of Children	31	22	33	25	111	17.8%
Lack of Communication	21	22	29	35	107	17.2%
Decision of Agency/Employee	31	19	15	15	80	12.8%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	11	26	13	25	75	12.0%
Removal of Children	9	10	11	9	39	6.3%
Policy/Regulation Issue	7	2	8	10	27	4.3%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	3	2	4	4	13	2.1%
Other	1	3	2	3	9	1.4%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	1	1	6	1	9	1.4%
Total	171	138	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		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 and full SFY 2022.

Complaint Count by Complainant Relationship to Child						
Relationship to Child	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Non-Relative Foster Parent	63	43	33	33	172	27.6%
Relative/Kinship Parent	31	47	37	45	160	25.7%
Birth Parent	27	13	17	22	79	12.7%
Other Non-Caregiving Relative/Kinship	20	11	27	17	75	12.0%
Other or Unspecified	9	7	14	24	54	8.7%
Community Professional/Service Provider	7	7	10	16	40	6.4%
State Employee/Specific Unit	6	3	3	3	15	2.4%
Legal Guardian	2	5	4	3	14	2.2%
Adoptive Parent	0	1	4	1	6	1.0%
Other Attorney	3	0	0	0	3	0.5%
Birth Parent's Attorney	2	0	0	0	2	0.3%
Child's Attorney/GAL	1	0	0	1	2	0.3%
Child	0	1	0	0	1	0.2%
Total	171	138	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		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 and full SFY 2022.

- *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	98	103	410	65.8%
Information	54	34	44	46	178	28.6%
Case Withdrawn	1	5	7	10	23	3.7%
Investigation	6	0	0	6	12	1.9%
Total	171	138	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		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 and full SFY 2022.

Complaint Count by Referral Source							
Referral Source	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent	
Prior Contact with FCO	23	16	28	32	99	15.9%	
Community Professional/Service Provider	34	21	19	19	93	14.9%	
Friend/Family	17	26	27	20	90	14.4%	
State Employee	27	23	21	14	85	13.6%	
Conference/Training	26	17	12	15	70	11.2%	
Unspecified	8	10	4	38	60	9.6%	
Social Media/Internet	26	15	8	7	56	9.0%	
Other	0	3	21	14	38	6.1%	
Attorney/GAL	8	1	3	2	14	2.2%	
Media (TV, Brochures, Pamphlets, Other Literature)	0	3	1	1	5	0.8%	
Elected Official	1	2	1	1	5	0.8%	
Court Appointed Special Advocate	0	1	2	1	4	0.6%	
FCO Website	0	0	2	1	3	0.5%	
Teacher/School Employee	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%	
Email	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	
Initiated by FCO	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	
Total	171	138	149	165	623		
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%			100.0%

Complaint Count by Closure

Data below reflects complaints received according to the nature of the case closure, for this quarter and full SFY 2022. 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 quarter period in SFY 2021, the percent valid was 35.8%.

Complaint Count by Closure						
Closure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Not Valid	48	45	54	39	186	29.9%
Information Exchange	53	28	42	47	170	27.3%
Valid - Resolved	29	33	19	30	111	17.8%
Partially Valid	19	15	17	18	69	11.1%
Withdrawn by Complainant	8	6	7	9	30	4.8%
Insufficient Information to Rate Validity	12	6	5	6	29	4.7%
Valid - Not Resolved	2	4	4	16	26	4.2%
Other	0	1	1	0	2	0.3%
Declined by FCO	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	171	138	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		100.0%
Validity %						33.1%

Complaint Count by BSS Region

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

Complaint Count by Bureau for Social Services Region						
Region	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	Percent
North	84	79	68	80	311	49.9%
South	72	51	77	75	275	44.1%
Unspecified	15	8	4	10	37	5.9%
Total	171	138	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		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 and full SFY 2022.

Complaint Count by Method of Initial Contact with FCO						
Method of Contact	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Telephone	121	115	111	111	458	73.5%
Email	45	21	35	40	141	22.6%
Fax/Letter/Text/Other	4	2	1	10	17	2.7%
No Prior Contact	0	0	2	4	6	1.0%
In Person	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%
Total	171	138	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		100.0%

Complaint Count by BSS Case County

Data to the right reflects complaints received according to the BSS case county for this quarter and full 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 endorsing that the voices of those served and affected by West Virginia's foster care system are valued, respected, and integrated into the system's development and improvement.

For 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	1	4	13	2.1%
Berkeley	4	3	7	3	17	2.7%
Boone	3	2	3	1	9	1.4%
Braxton	1	4	6	4	15	2.4%
Brooke	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Cabell	6	2	7	7	22	3.5%
Calhoun	2	1	1	1	5	0.8%
Clay	1	4	1	3	9	1.4%
Doddridge	2	0	0	0	2	0.3%
Fayette	10	2	9	3	24	3.9%
Gilmer	0	0	0	1	1	0.2%
Grant	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%
Greenbrier	2	1	0	0	3	0.5%
Hampshire	0	0	1	0	1	0.2%
Hancock	1	3	0	4	8	1.3%
Hardy	0	0	2	1	3	0.5%
Harrison	14	17	6	14	51	8.2%
Jackson	0	3	6	6	15	2.4%
Jefferson	2	0	0	0	2	0.3%
Kanawha	23	15	23	29	90	14.4%
Lewis	4	0	1	1	6	1.0%
Lincoln	1	1	1	2	5	0.8%
Logan	0	1	1	2	4	0.6%
Marion	1	2	5	9	17	2.7%
Marshall	1	0	1	1	3	0.5%
Mason	0	3	0	1	4	0.6%
McDowell	0	1	0	1	2	0.3%
Mercer	3	4	5	1	13	2.1%
Mineral	1	1	1	0	3	0.5%
Mingo	2	2	4	3	11	1.8%
Monongalia	12	5	6	5	28	4.5%
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Morgan	0	0	1	0	1	0.2%
Nicholas	3	6	2	1	12	1.9%
Ohio	6	2	2	5	15	2.4%
Pendleton	0	0	1	2	3	0.5%
Pleasants	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%
Pocahontas	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%
Preston	4	3	4	3	14	2.2%
Putnam	1	0	4	6	11	1.8%
Raleigh	8	3	4	3	18	2.9%
Randolph	6	5	4	6	21	3.4%
Ritchie	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Roane	1	1	0	4	6	1.0%
Summers	0	2	2	1	5	0.8%
Taylor	5	3	3	2	13	2.1%
Tucker	0	1	0	0	1	0.2%
Tyler	1	1	0	0	2	0.3%
Upshur	7	3	1	2	13	2.1%
Wayne	2	0	4	3	9	1.4%
Webster	0	2	1	0	3	0.5%
Wetzel	0	1	2	1	4	0.6%
Wirt	0	0	2	0	2	0.3%
Wood	5	15	9	9	38	6.1%
Wyoming	4	1	1	0	6	1.0%
Unspecified	15	8	4	10	37	5.9%
Total	171	138	149	165	623	
	27.4%	22.2%	23.9%	26.5%		100.0%