

HOUSE OF PENNSYLVANIA
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

June 19, 2018

CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE and H.B. 1311 (Printer No. 3502)

Testimony of
Frank P. Cervone, Esq., Executive Director
Support Center for Child Advocates

The Support Center for Child Advocates is Philadelphia's lawyer pro bono program for abused and neglected children. We offer the skills and dedication of lawyer-social worker teams, and we represent more than 1,100 children each year. Our legal and social services are offered to child victims through two service lines: a) **Direct Representation Services** and b) **Child Advocacy Leadership & Training**. Through these initiatives, *Child Advocates* works to ensure safety, health, education, family permanency, and access to justice. Our direct service staff is comprised of attorneys and masters social workers, all seasoned professionals with years of experience in the field and with the agency. For more than 40 years, we have served as a resource to this Legislature and its staff, and I thank you for the invitation to serve in this role once again. When asked, we attempt to offer to you a balanced, candid and constructive assessment of what our children need and how we are all doing for our kids.

I appreciate the assistance of Cathleen Palm, Director of the Center for Children's Justice, and Jennifer Pokempner of the Juvenile Law Center for their continued leadership.

Today we consider the creation of the Office of the Children's Advocate, to give children and families a place to go and a process by which to access government when they believed they have been aggrieved. As you may be aware, the creation of a Children's Ombudsman was recommended by the Advisory Committee to the Joint State Government Commission's Task Force on Services to Children and Youth, in 2002. It was my honor and pleasure to serve as Chair of the Advisory Committee. I have testified before this Committee twice before in support of bills that would have created the Children's Ombudsman, in 2002 and 2007. Those testimonies are attached to my written remarks (Attachments A and B). You will see that public access, government service accountability, and the authority to investigate are key features of these functions; these elements remain in the current House Bill 1311.

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All these years later, the child welfare system is serving twice as many vulnerable children; their parents and caregivers have needs that are exponentially larger in number and scope; and there are hundreds more providers and processes serving and prevailing upon these members of the public at large. Many have lawyers provided by government, at varied levels of quality, caseload, availability and responsiveness. With due respect to our own capacity and that of my colleague child and parent advocate-lawyers, our roles are no replacement for the Ombudsman function. And there are many more children and parents – thousands, really – who have no right to counsel, no one to speak for them, nowhere to go when they believe they have been wronged.

The 2002 Advisory Committee Report notes that at least 13 other states had some version of the Children's Ombudsman. Today a total of thirty-nine states now have some form of Ombudsman or Children's Advocate! According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, across the nation Children's Ombudsman Offices, also known in some jurisdictions as Office of the Child Advocate,

assist in providing oversight of children's services. Approximately twenty-two states have established a Children's Ombudsman/ Office of the Child Advocate with duties and purposes specifically related to children's services. Another five states have a statewide Ombudsman program which address the concerns of all governmental agencies, including children's services. Nine states have related Ombudsman services, program specific services, or county-run programs. See Chart, Attachment C. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/childrens-ombudsman-offices.aspx#What%20is>

In addition to the important complaint-resolution mechanism, the current H.B. 1311 empowers the Children's Advocate to identify and make appropriate recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, Supreme Court and Attorney General concerning issues affecting the welfare of children. This combines the classic individual complaint-resolution mechanism of many ombudsman functions, with the important capacity for systemic advocacy. In this way children, youth, and their families gain an essential institutional voice inside government.

It is often suggested that the state and county child welfare agencies have processes in place for receiving and resolving complaints. However these do not serve the purposes we are seeking. Regional offices can investigate and make recommendations, but they cannot provide or require a remedy. There is a structure for fair hearings and grievances, but as far as we can tell, parents rarely use these structures, and youth do not seem to use them at all. The courts can be a good forum to address some concerns, but given the time and costs associated with any litigation, it is hard to imagine a parent, much less a child, always feeling like problems can be redressed in that forum.

Mostly, the public hears about problems with child welfare services when there is a tragic ending. We all know about Luzerne County and what came to be the largest scandal in the history of the American court system – didn't those youths and their families demonstrate that they should have had a place to call with their concerns? In Philadelphia in 2016, shortly after the youth David Hess died in a struggle with staffers at the residential program Wordsworth, the state closed the facility, decrying it as "an immediate and serious danger" to the children who lived there. ...and then we learned from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that in the last decade, at least 49 sex crimes had been reported at Wordsworth, including 12 rapes and 23 accounts of sexual abuse.

If you believe that the child welfare system is self-correcting, that it is sufficiently safeguarded with regulations and the oversight of the licensure process, that its good people are good enough, then perhaps there is no need for a Children's Advocate. The experiences of countless families and children tell a different story. You will hear that confidentiality is needed to protect children and families; my concern is that secrecy protects bad systems and bad practice.

When the child welfare system acts in a manner that is questionable or suspect or even abusive, citizens and consumers presently have little recourse outside the system that is arguably aggrieving them. Individuals need a place to turn. The public at large needs assurance that this is a system they can trust. The Office of the Children's Advocate will not erode confidence; rather it will build confidence that these are systems we can trust. As 39 states are demonstrating, it is now the state of the art of governing, that communities care enough to listen.

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**HOUSE OF PENNSYLVANIA
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

October 1, 2003

CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN and H.B. 1621 (Printer No. 2048)

**Testimony of
Frank P. Cervone, Esq., Executive Director
Support Center for Child Advocates**

The Support Center for Child Advocates is Philadelphia's lawyer pro bono program for abused and neglected children. We offer the skills and dedication of lawyer-social worker teams, and we represent more than 700 children each year. Our work is focused on four Core Programs: Abuse and Neglect, Medically Needy Children, Kinship Care, and Adoptions. For more than 25 years, we have served as a resource to this Legislature and its staff, and I thank you for the invitation to serve in this role once again. When asked, we attempt to offer to you a balanced, candid and constructive assessment of what our children need and how we are all doing for our kids.

It has been my honor and pleasure to serve as Chair of the Advisory Committee to the Joint State Government Commission's Task Force on Services to Children and Youth. As you know, the Task Force and its Advisory Committee were created almost four years ago and served under the leadership of Senator Charles Dent and Representative Julie Harhart. In the Advisory Committee, more than fifty child-serving professionals and lay members of the community from across the Commonwealth, worked with diligence, patience and creativity to explore the needs and opportunities of our child welfare system. Our 292-page Report was delivered to the General Assembly in November 2002. We appreciate the invitation of Chairman Birmelin to join you. Today's informational session marks the important start of the Assembly's formal consideration and study of the Advisory Committee Report.

* * * * *

I will comment today on the need for the appointment of a Children's Ombudsman, and specifically on two similar vehicles: the Advisory Committee recommendations, and the currently proposed House Bill 1621. My colleague Susan Dichter will address House Bill 1622 and the creation of the Office of Prevention Services. Of course we are both available for questions from the Committee. On both topics we commend your attention to the Advisory Committee Report for a more complete treatment.

The theme of accountability permeated the work of the Advisory Committee. The Committee Report ultimately made numerous recommendations targeted at improving the performance of the child welfare system through performance review, local case monitoring, the creation of local complaint resolution functions or customer service capacity within each county agency, data collection and greater public access to the process of child protection. The creation of a function for public advocacy and the investigation of complaints from the public at large – the

Children's Ombudsman – may be the most significant of these recommendations because of its potential prominence in a landscape that is traditionally unexamined and unknown.

Why was accountability important to the Advisory Committee? One must acknowledge that child welfare services are little known and long forgotten to most of the public at large. It is said that “child abuse lives in the shadows of our lives.” The same can be said of the systems and services that are provided to children and families needing them: they live without account. Certainly there are systemic oversights, like the regulatory schema, the licensure process and the budgeting process. But when those systems and services act in a manner that is questionable or suspect or even abusive, citizens and consumers presently have no recourse outside the system that is arguably aggrieving them. Individuals need a place to turn. The public at large needs assurance that this is a system they can trust.

The Advisory Committee Report notes that at least 13 other states have some version of the Children's Ombudsman; each was studied closely, along with academic literature and the respected recommendations on the subject by the American Bar Association. In our work we tried to capture the best elements of each of these.

The Children's Ombudsman features several key elements: comprehensiveness in scope; independence in structure, function and appearance; the authority to conduct inquiries and investigations; and finally confidentiality.

Comprehensiveness: The Children's Ombudsman addresses complaints from individuals and other issues of concern that affect the welfare of children. The Children's Ombudsman may investigate “remediable actions”, that is, actions by an agency that are contrary to law, rule or policy, actions which are imposed without adequate statement of reason, or actions that are based on irrelevant or erroneous grounds. The Children's Ombudsman can investigate complaints and also address issues that itself identifies. To maintain its caseload, and subject to the constraints defined in the legislation, the Children's Ombudsman has total discretion on which issues to investigate or examine.

The term “Children's Ombudsman” is slightly misleading in that the intended purview might include examination of services provided to the parents of children. The Children's Ombudsman is intended to have the ability to address the full range of services and functions of the child welfare system. [The phrase “office of the Child Advocate” has also been suggested in prior legislation. We note that several states have used this appealing phrase. However in Pennsylvania there is a tradition of using the phrase “Child Advocate” synonymously with “guardian *ad litem*” or “child's lawyer.”]

Independence: The Children's Ombudsman will be appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. The officeholder will serve for up to five years per term, to a maximum of two terms, and may not be removed except for neglect of duty, misconduct or inability to perform its duties. Importantly, the position resides in the Office of the Governor, *outside* the Department of Public Welfare and the agencies it oversees.

Authority to Investigate: This is the key to the recommendation: the Children's Ombudsman can investigate problems, complaints and other issues that come to its attention. This combines the classical individual complaint-resolution mechanism of many ombudsman

functions, with the important capacity for systemic advocacy. This body may recall the problems of county agencies not communicating with their local prosecutors, or the failures to provide notice to parents when changing a case goal, or countless other issues which laws, litigations and tragedies would eventually highlight.

Confidentiality: All matters under investigation and records of the office of the Children's Ombudsman are to be treated as confidential. The complainant, the agencies involved and (under House Bill 1621, the individual subject of the complaint) all will receive copies of the Ombudsman's report. [It should be noted that the Advisory Committee did *not* recommend that the individual subject of the complaint receive the Ombudsman's Report, due to concerns for the confidentiality of the sources of information].

* * * * *

We note several differences the Advisory Committee recommendations and the currently proposed House Bill 1621:

- 1). In Sec. 6379.9(b), the omission of the last sentence may deprive the Ombudsman of a means of following up his or her recommendations. ("The ombudsman may request to be notified by the subject of the report within a specified time of any action taken on any recommendation presented.")
- 2). In sec. 6379.9(d), the provision as revised requires the Ombudsman to provide the complainant with a copy of the report. The Report text may have deliberately avoided doing that in order to preserve the confidentiality of persons assisting with the Ombudsman's investigation, especially private witnesses.
- 3). In sec 6379.10(a), the immunity provided by that provision is extended those who may not have complained in good faith. This change should be considered closely.

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A caveat: the recently introduced House Bill 2028 calls for the appointment of a children's ombudsman only for cities of the first class. We find this an ill-advised approach for several reasons. First, the need for an ombudsman, and in general for system accountability, spans the entire Commonwealth and its 67 county children and youth agencies. Second, the move would send the message that only city-based services need scrutiny and only city-dwellers deserve opportunity for have their complaints heard. Finally, while the cities have at least a modicum of public interest and community capacity to engage in oversight of the county systems, there is little to no such capacity in most of the other counties.

**HOUSE OF PENNSYLVANIA
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

November 1, 2007

CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN and H.B. 1709 (Printer No. 2270)

**Testimony of
Frank P. Cervone, Esq., Executive Director
Support Center for Child Advocates**

The Support Center for Child Advocates is Philadelphia's lawyer pro bono program for abused and neglected children. We offer the skills and dedication of lawyer-social worker teams, and we represent more than 800 children each year. Our work is focused on five Core Programs: Abuse and Neglect, Medically Needy Children, Kinship Care, Adoptions and Child Advocacy Leadership. For more than 30 years, we have served as a resource to this Legislature and its staff, and I thank you for the invitation to serve in this role once again. When asked, we attempt to offer to you a balanced, candid and constructive assessment of what our children need and how we are all doing for our kids.

As you may be aware, the creation of a Children's Ombudsman was recommended by the Advisory Committee to the Joint State Government Commission's Task Force on Services to Children and Youth. It was my honor and pleasure to serve as Chair of the Advisory Committee. As you know, the Task Force and its Advisory Committee were created almost 8 years ago and served under the leadership of then-Senator Charles Dent and Representative Julie Harhart, and included the service of Representative Phyllis Mundy, a co-sponsor of House Bill 1709. In the Advisory Committee, more than fifty child-serving professionals and lay members of the community from across the Commonwealth, worked with diligence, patience and creativity to explore the needs and opportunities of our child welfare system. Our 292-page Report was delivered to the General Assembly in November 2002. We appreciate the invitation of Chairman Bishop to join you and to return to this important topic. I appear today in my own right and not as a spokesman for the Advisory Committee.

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The theme of accountability permeated the work of the Advisory Committee. The Committee Report ultimately made numerous recommendations targeted at improving the performance of the child welfare system through performance review, local case monitoring, the creation of local complaint resolution functions or customer service capacity within each county agency, data collection and greater public access to the process of child protection. The creation of a function for public advocacy and the investigation of complaints from the public at large – the Children's Ombudsman – may be the most significant of these recommendations because of its potential prominence in a landscape that is traditionally unexamined and unknown.

Why was accountability important to the Advisory Committee? One must acknowledge that child welfare services are little known and often forgotten to most of the public at large. It is said that "child abuse lives in the shadows of our lives." The same can be said of the systems and services that are provided to children and families needing them: they live without account. Certainly there are systemic oversights, like the regulatory schema, the licensure process and the budgeting process. But when the child welfare system acts in a manner that is questionable or suspect or even abusive, citizens and consumers presently have little recourse outside the system that is arguably aggrieving

them. Individuals need a place to turn. The public at large needs assurance that this is a system they can trust.

The Advisory Committee Report notes that at least 13 other states had some version of the Children's Ombudsman; New Jersey has since created the Office of the Child Advocate. Each was studied closely, along with academic literature and the respected recommendations on the subject by the American Bar Association. In our work we tried to capture the best elements of each of these, and House Bill 1709 largely mirrors our recommendations.

The authority to investigate is the key: the Children's Ombudsman can investigate problems, complaints and other issues that come to its attention. This combines the classical individual complaint-resolution mechanism of many ombudsman functions, with the important capacity for systemic advocacy. The Committee might recall the problems of county agencies not communicating with their local prosecutors, or the failures to provide notice to parents when changing a case goal, or countless other issues which laws, litigations and tragedies would eventually highlight.

Two recent stories elucidate the need for a Children's Ombudsman:

First, a small-town story. Two weeks ago, I received a phone call from a lawyer, who learned of a sister-of-a-friend with a Children and Youth problem in a rural PA county. That prior Saturday night, a mid-twenties single mother was house sitting for a friend. In the middle of the night, her three-year-boy whom I will call Richie, left his bed, opened two latched doors, and wandered into the street. Next morning, mother frantically searched for Richie. Thankfully, he had been found by a passing motorist, who called police. But because he was a stranger to this town, he was placed in protective service of foster care. The mother felt pressured to sign a "Voluntary Placement Agreement" or lose the child in court; this gave the agency 30 days to act ... and it planned to use most of them! In most communities, this child would have been home the next day. But ten days later, he was still in care. Only with some outside calls from our office did the child even have one visit in those ten days with his mother. There were never any signs of child abuse. Neither mother nor child had any prior history with the C&Y agency in her home county. Yet no family members were contacted to serve as placement resources. The worker did not even meet with her supervisor until Thursday to shape a reunification plan. Conversations such as occurred between the worker and mother are rarely witnessed, so we cannot be certain of all that transpired. I can attest that this very upset and entirely innocent mother felt railroaded, disregarded and abused.

Second a large story of a child death. Front page headline on Thursday, October 25, 2007: ***N.J. Agency faulted in '06 slaying of infant.*** *New Jersey's child-welfare system failed to protect a 25-day old Camden boy who died last year after he was stabbed and thrown down a set of stairs, accounting to a report released yesterday by the state Office of the Child Advocate.*

In most counties, there is no place for Richie's mother to call. And in Pennsylvania, unlike New Jersey, the story of the system's failure to protect the infant boy would never, COULD NEVER be told. There is no office in Pennsylvania to conduct such an investigation and no authority to publish such a report.

To achieve the kind of transparency we need in Pennsylvania, I hope you will loosen the confidentiality provisions of the bill. To be clear, I hope you will consider going further than even our Advisory Committee recommended and that House Bill 1709 provides. As proposed, all matters under investigation and records of the office of the Children's Ombudsman are to be treated as confidential. In my own experience however, as a professional community, we remain uncomfortable

with the burdens of accountability and transparency. My own recommendation is that you give the Children's Ombudsman discretion to make public its investigative reports and its annual report.

Earlier this year I served on Mayor John Street's Child Welfare Review Panel, which was appointed in November 2006 following publication of some notorious deaths of children who had been served by the Philadelphia child and youth agency. We should note that what gave rise to that crisis was not the child deaths per se, tragic as they were, but that their deaths had been forgotten. Consistent with state rules, each fatality had been studied; the Panel found the study process to be sound and thorough, their recommendations honest and challenging. BUT THEY WENT NOWHERE. These were lives unrequited, their deaths unredeemed. Without that leadership meltdown and a tremendous investment of public will, the many deficiencies in that system would never have seen the light of day. That dead-end secrecy is the all-too-common reality of child welfare work across the Commonwealth and around the nation.

We should make clear that there is much that is good about our system, its people and its practice. We confirmed that in the Advisory Committee and in the Mayor's Panel. The Ombudsman will not erode confidence; rather it will build confidence that these are systems we can trust.

We note that neither House Bill 1708 nor the Advisory Committee's recommendations make provision for court jurisdiction to enforce the mechanisms of the Children's Ombudsman. So for example, in the event a subject of an investigation fails to respond, or fails to provide access to information, there is no pathway to seek enforcement of the action. This could hamstring the investigative function.

If you believe that the child welfare system is self-correcting, that it is sufficiently safeguarded with regulations and the oversight of the licensure process, that its good people are good enough, then perhaps there is no need for a Children's Ombudsman. The experiences of countless families and children tell a different story. You will hear that confidentiality is needed to protect children and families; my concern is that secrecy protects bad systems and bad practice.

I commend Representative Scott Petri and the other sponsors of House Bill 1709, and for hearing the concerns expressed by the community in the several years since we all first addressed this topic. Accountability and transparency make for good government; they will also make for safer kids and a better system to serve them.

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CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN OFFICES | OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE

4/4/2018



What is an Ombudsman?

The word "Ombudsman" is derived from the Swedish word meaning "agent" or "representative[ⁱ]." Ombudsman offices have been established in a variety of state, municipal, county, local, and federal governments, as well in academic

organizations and businesses as an independent and impartial organization which assists in obtaining resolution of conflicts or complaints. Ombudsman may be alternatively known as "advocate," "citizen's representative," and "mediator.[ⁱⁱ]" The United States Ombudsman Association (USOA), defines the public sector ombudsmen as "an independent, impartial public official with authority and responsibility to receive, investigate or informally address complaints about government actions, and, when appropriate, make findings and recommendations, and publish reports[ⁱⁱⁱ]"

The USOA has established a set of best practices guidelines for Ombudsman offices: (1) An Ombudsman office should be **independent**-free from outside control or influence; (2) An Ombudsman should be **impartial**- receive and review each complaint in an objective and fair manner, free from bias, and treat all parties without favor or prejudice. (3)The Ombudsman should control **confidentiality**- have the privilege and discretion to keep confidential or release any information related to a complaint or investigation; and (4) The Ombudsman should create a **credible review process** of complaints- perform his or her responsibilities in a manner that engenders respect and confidence and be accessible to all potential complainants. [^{iv}]

Children's Ombudsman Offices /Office of the Child Advocate

Overview

Children's Ombudsman Offices, also known in some jurisdictions as Office of the Child Advocate, have been established at the state level in order to assist in providing oversight of children's services. Currently, approximately twenty-two states have established a Children's Ombudsman/ Office of the Child Advocate with duties and purposes specifically related to children's services. Another five states have a statewide Ombudsman program which address the concerns of all governmental agencies, including children's services. Nine states have related Ombudsman services, program specific services, or county run programs.

The purpose, responsibilities and duties of the Children's Ombudsman Office vary by state. In general, these offices exist to:

Handle and investigate complaints from citizens and families related to government services for children and families - this may include child protective services, foster care, adoption and juvenile justice services.

Provide a system accountability mechanism by recommending system-wide improvements to benefit children and families - often in the form of annual reports to the Legislature, Governor and public.

Protect the interests and rights of children and families - both individually and system-wide.

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Child Welfare Project, Denver Office, 303-364-7700

Monitor programs, placements and departments responsible for providing children's services - which may include inspecting state facilities and institutions.

Complaint Process^[v]

Once a concerned party calls a Children's Ombudsman's Office with a complaint, the call is screened to determine what action is necessary. One option is to provide the caller with resources and referrals. The other option is to open a case. Once a case is open, the Ombudsman gives notice of the complaint to the agency and begins to investigate or review the complaint and the agency is requested to respond. If necessary, the Ombudsman may intervene by facilitating communication, holding a meeting, or pursuing legal action. Once the Ombudsman has concluded its investigation, the office will develop a report while giving the agency the opportunity to respond. On an annual basis, the Ombudsman will summarize citizen complaints and identify system trends in an annual report.

Types of Children's Ombudsman Offices/ Offices of the Child Advocate

Jurisdiction, size and operation of Children's Ombudsman Offices vary by state. A Children's Ombudsman Office may be established by legislation, executive order, or by the child welfare agency. A Children's Ombudsman office can be an independent agency established by statute, existing either in the legislative branch or executive branch, or may be established within the child welfare agency. The office may be run by the government, or a non-profit organization under government contract. This section explains generally how states have organized Children's Ombudsman Offices. The chart below provides a state by state breakdown.

- 1. Independent and autonomous agency with oversight specific to child welfare:** Eleven states operate independent and autonomous Ombudsman offices, specifically handling issues related to children (Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington). These offices are established by the Legislature and may exist independently within either the legislative or executive branch^[vi]. These offices are not part of the state's division of child and family services. Independent Children's Ombudsman Offices oversee child-serving agencies with independence, impartiality, and confidentiality, and have a credible review process which includes access to information.^[vii] These Ombudsman are generally appointed by the Governor or Legislature. Statutory duties likely include: Receiving and investigating complaints; access to information, usually including the power to subpoena; control what information must be held confidential or released to the public; and must submit annual reports- usually these reports are available to the public.
- 2. Operates within, but autonomous of, the state agency providing child welfare services:** Three states (California, Texas, and Utah) have established Children's Ombudsman offices that operate within the state's division of child welfare services, but are established to act autonomous of the agency they oversee. These Ombudsman are also established by statute. The department director generally is responsible for or assists in appointing the Ombudsman. The duties and functions of these independent organizational Ombudsman likely include: receive and investigate complaints related to child serving agencies; access information, without the power to subpoena; maintain confidentiality; and prepare an annual report which is usually made available to the public.
- 3. Provides oversight to all governmental agencies within the state including child welfare services:** Five states (Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Iowa, and Nebraska) have general jurisdiction ombudsmen established to oversee all public agencies or departments within the state including child serving agencies.^[viii] These five Ombudsman offices are each established by statute, and exist independently as part of the Legislative Branch. Statutory duties include: receive and investigate complaints; access information with the power to subpoena; control confidentiality; and submit reports at least annually, available to the public.

Nebraska, in addition to the Public Counsel (Ombudsman's Office) which investigates complaints against state administrative agencies and state government, also enacted LB 821 in 2012 creating the Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare. The Inspector General operates as a subdivision of the Public Counsel, investigating "individuals and agencies responsible for the care and protection of children in the Nebraska Child Welfare system."

4. **Non-Independent Children's Ombudsman office, established within the child welfare agency:** Eight states (Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Oklahoma, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon) have non-independent Ombudsman offices established within state's division of child welfare services designed to take complaints and resolve disputes within the agency of oversight. These Offices may or may not be established by statute. These Ombudsman are appointed by the Director of the agency. Duties generally include: receive and investigate complaints; access information, without the power to subpoena; and the office may or may not be required to submit reports.

5. **Other statutory Ombudsman-like programs:** Four states (Delaware, Maryland, Minnesota, and Nevada) have established Ombudsman-like services by statute, limited to specific constituencies or services within the child welfare system. Delaware's program assists with judicial advocacy; Maryland has a Children's Advocate who assists residential youth with complaints; Minnesota has four Ombudspersons working with four different communities of color; and Nevada serves missing and exploited children. These Ombudsman programs may or may not be independent and autonomous of the agency they oversee.

6. **Non-statutory county-based or program-based offices:** Six states (Montana, Ohio, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia) have county- or program-based Ombudsman not established in state statute. These programs may be run as a citizen complaint office within the Governor's office; through individual county children's services agencies; or, are specific programs such as Virginia's Juvenile Justice's Ombudsman Office. The main duty of these offices is to receive and help resolve constituent complaints. Ohio and North Carolina are unique in that the ombudsman programs are located at the county, rather than the state, level. Ohio's Lucas County Children Services Ombudsman operates as a "neutral dispute resolver" designed to investigate complaints and make recommendations in a non-adversarial setting. Additionally, during the 2013 legislative session, North Carolina enacted a Foster Care Ombudsman Pilot Program in Gaston County. The Board of County Commissioners will establish the qualifications for and appoint the Ombudsman.

Children's Ombudsman Services by State

The chart below provides state specific information regarding Ombudsman programs related to children's services. For each state, the hyperlink to office's website is provided if available. A hyperlink to state statute is also provided as available; if there is not a direct link, the authority can be found by statute/code search. The information within the chart includes: the year established, if known; the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman's office and the location of the office within the state's government; information regarding how the Ombudsman is appointed and required qualification, if available; and, the duties and powers of the Ombudsman. This state-specific information comes from either the state's statutory language or the office's website.

STATE CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN OFFICES

STATE	OFFICE	JURISDICTION & LOCATION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT	APPOINTMENT & QUALIFICATION	DUTIES & POWERS OF THE OMBUDSMAN/CHILD ADVOCATE
ALASKA Alaska Stat. 24.55.010-340	Alaska Office of Ombudsman	The Ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate the administrative acts of all Alaska agencies, and is independent and autonomous of	The Ombudsman is selected by the Alaska Legislature's Ombudsman Selection Committee,	The Ombudsman may investigate complaints; has access to confidential records; issue subpoenas; and must maintain confidentiality. The Ombudsman may issue

<p>those agencies. As part of the Legislative Branch, the administrative facilities and services of the Legislative Affairs Agency may be used for management of the Office of the Ombudsman.</p>	<p>subject to approval by the Legislature and Governor. The Ombudsman serves for a term of five years and may be reappointed.</p> <p>The Ombudsman must be at least 21 years old, a qualified voter, resident in the state for three years, and cannot be a candidate for, or hold, public office.</p>	<p>investigative reports; and may submit recommendations to the Legislature.</p>
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<p>ARIZONA</p> <p>Ariz. Rev. Stat. 41-1371 through 41-1383</p>	<p>Arizona Office of Ombudsman Citizens Aide</p>	<p>The Ombudsman oversees all Arizona agencies and is independent and autonomous of those agencies. The Office of the Ombudsman is an independent agency of the Arizona Legislature, and physically may not be located in the state office or any agency office.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is appointed by Legislative committee. The Ombudsman serves a five-year term- and cannot serve more than three full terms.</p> <p>The Ombudsman must not hold public office, must be a state resident for 6 months, 25 years old, and have investigatory experience.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman may investigate the administrative acts of agencies; prepare an annual and public report; has access to confidential information; issues subpoenas; maintains confidentiality; makes recommendations.</p>
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<p>ARKANSAS</p> <p>Ark. Code Ann. § 16-87-216</p>	<p>Arkansas Public Defender's Commission's Juvenile Ombudsman</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is part of the Public Defender's Commission, the Juvenile Ombudsman provides for</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is appointed by the Executive Director of the Public Defender's</p>	<p>The Ombudsman has access to confidential information and juveniles in the state's custody; receives and investigates complaints; prepares annual</p>
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independent oversight of the Division of Youth Service's facilities and programs that are unlicensed or unaccredited. Commission. The Ombudsman should have an advanced degree in related field and four years related experience. reports.

Arkansas	Foster Parent Ombudsman	The Foster Parent Ombudsman is located within the Department of Human Services; has the responsibility of assisting foster parents. No statutory authority.	The Foster Parent Ombudsman serves as an advocate for foster parents by answering questions, providing training and assistance, and working to help resolve complaints or problems the foster parents might be having with the Division.
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CALIFORNIA Cal. Welfare And Institutions Code § 16160-16167	California Ombudsman for Foster Care	The Ombudsman is established as an autonomous entity within the State Department of Social Services with the oversight of children in foster care and relating to their care, placement or services.	The Department Director and interested committee shall appoint the Ombudsman for a term of four years. The Ombudsman may be appointed for consecutive terms.	The California Ombudsman for Foster Care investigates complaints; has access to confidential information; must maintain confidentiality; prepares an annual report for the Legislature that is available to the public.
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COLORADO Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-3.3-101 to -109	Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman	The Child Protection Ombudsman is established in the State Department and administered by contract with a public agency or private nonprofit organization. The Ombudsman must act independently of Divisions responsible for child welfare,	The Child Protection Ombudsman works cooperatively with the Child Protection Ombudsman Board. This board is comprised of up to 12 individuals. These individuals are appointed by Chief Justice of	The Child Protection Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; maintains confidentiality; has access to confidential information; does not have the ability to subpoena; makes recommendations; reports annually; educates the public.
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youth corrections, or child care, and independently of the county departments.

the Colorado Supreme Court, the Governor, the president and minority leader of the Senate and the speaker and minority leader of the House of Representatives.

<p>CONNECTICUT</p> <p>Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46a-13k</p>	<p>Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate</p>	<p>The Child Advocate shall act independently of any state department. The Office of the Child Advocate is located within the Office of Governmental Accountability.</p>	<p>The Child Advocate is appointed by the Governor with Approval by the General Assembly to serve a four year term and may be reappointed.</p>	<p>The Child Advocate receives and investigates complaints; periodically reviews institutions; recommends policy changes; provides training to attorneys and guardians ad litem; has access to confidential information; issues subpoenas; maintains confidentiality; maintains a child fatality review panel; represents a child in court; produces annual and public reports.</p>
<p>DELAWARE</p> <p>Del. Code Ann. tit. 29 § 9001A – 9009A</p>	<p>Delaware Office of the Child Advocate</p>	<p>The Office of the Child Advocate is a non-judicial agency of the Court. The Child Advocate serves as Executive Director to the Committee of the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC).</p>	<p>Appointed by the Executive Committee of the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC).</p> <p>The Child Advocate shall be an attorney duly licensed to practice law in Delaware.</p>	<p>The Child Advocate provides legal representation of children; provides public education and legislative advocacy; reviews child policy; recommends changes, submits an annual report; maintains confidentiality; effectuates the purposes of the CPAC.</p>
<p>FLORIDA</p>	<p>Children's Board Ombudsman Program</p>	<p>The Ombudsman works with families who have children with complex mental health/behavioral challenges.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman provides advocacy referrals to appropriate services, information and resources.</p>	

<p>GEORGIA</p> <p>Ga. Code Ann, § 15-11-740 et. Seq.</p>	<p>Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children</p>	<p>The Child Advocate provides independent oversight of persons, organizations and agencies responsible for providing services to or caring for children who are victims of child abuse and neglect, or whose domestic situation requires intervention by the state. The Child Advocate is located within the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget for administrative purposes only.</p>	<p>The Child Advocate is appointed through a nominating process through the Governor.</p>	<p>The Child Advocate coordinates the Child Fatality Review Panel; investigates complaints; has access to confidential records; subpoenas records; reviews the facilities and procedures of any institution or residence; provides public education and legislative advocacy; provides annual and public reports.</p>
<p>HAWAII</p> <p>Hawaii Rev. Stat. § 96-1 to 96-19</p>	<p>Office of the Ombudsman</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is an officer of the Legislature and has jurisdiction to investigate the administrative acts of all agencies. The Ombudsman operates independently and autonomously of state and county agencies.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is appointed by the legislature for a six year term, with a three term limit.</p> <p>The Ombudsman may not currently serve public office.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; has access to confidential information; issues subpoenas; makes recommendations to state agencies; publishes recommendations; maintains confidentiality; publishes an annual and public report.</p>
<p>ILLINOIS</p> <p>Ch. 20 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 505/35.5</p>	<p>Illinois DCFS Office of the Inspector General</p>	<p>The Inspector General shall function independently, within the Department of Children and Family Services, with the authority to conduct investigations into</p>	<p>The Inspector General is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate for a term of four years.</p>	<p>The Inspector General makes recommendations to the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services; has access to confidential information; acts as liaison between the Department and the police; has power to</p>

by any employee, foster parent, service provider, or contractor of the Department of Children and Family Services.

subpoena; publishes an annual and public report.

INDIANA

Ind. Code § 4-13-19

Indiana Department of Child Services
Ombudsman Bureau

The Ombudsman oversees the Department of Child Services (DCS) and acts independently of DCS. The Ombudsman is housed in the Department of Administration.

The Ombudsman is appointed by the Governor.

The Ombudsman must be an attorney licensed to practice law in Indiana or a social worker with a master's degree, and must have significant experience or education in child development and child advocacy, including at least two (2) years experience working with child abuse and neglect.

The Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; provides public education; recommends changes; has access to confidential information; maintains confidentiality; makes reports.

IOWA

Iowa Code § 2C-1 et.seq.

Iowa Office of Citizen's Aide Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is part of the Legislative branch, acts independently and has the jurisdiction to investigate complaints about all state and local government agencies.

The Ombudsman is appointed by the legislative council, approved by the Senate and House of Representatives for a term of four years and may be reappointed.

The Ombudsman must be a U.S. citizen, an Iowa

The Ombudsman has access to confidential information; maintains confidentiality; investigates complaints; issues subpoenas; makes recommendations; publishes conclusions; provides annual and public reports.

resident, and qualified to analyze problems of law, administration and public policy.

KENTUCKY

Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 194A.030(A)

Kentucky Office of the Ombudsman for the Cabinet for Health and Family Services

The Ombudsman is established within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services .

The Ombudsman is appointed by the Secretary of the Cabinet For Health and Family Services, with Governor approval.

The Ombudsman receives and reviews citizen complaints; has access to confidential records; emphasizes research and best practice; program accountability; monitors federal compliance.

MAINE

Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 22 § 4087-A

Maine Child Welfare Services Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is established as an independent program within in the Executive Branch, and contracted to a non-profit organization for operation to oversee the Office of Child and Family Services.

Contract to a nonprofit organization by the Governor. Current contract is with Maine's Children's Alliance.

The Ombudsman may not be actively involved in state politics.

The Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; provides public outreach; has access to persons, files, and records, does not have the power to subpoena; maintains confidentiality; provides annual and public reports.

MARYLAND

FOSTER PARENT OMBUDSMAN, John J. Bertulis, Foster Parent Ombudsman (410) 767-7561 e-mail: jbertuli@dhr.state.md.us

Not Independent. Autonomous within the Department of Human Resources and reports directly to the Secretary.

The Foster Parent Ombudsman is hired by the Secretary of the Department of Human Resources.

The Foster Parent Ombudsman reviews and mediates inquiries made by or on behalf of Maryland's public foster parents' and is responsible for a quarterly newsletter to foster parents.

MASSACHUSETTS

Mass Gen. Laws ch. 18 § 1-13

Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate

The Child Advocate is an independent office within the Executive Branch with the jurisdiction to oversee children served by the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

The Child Advocate is appointed by the Governor and a nominating committee and serves a term coterminous with that of the governor.

The Child Advocate investigates critical incidents; receives and investigates complaints; reviews and makes recommendations for system-wide changes; educates the public; has access to facilities and records; has the power to subpoena; provides

<p>MICHIGAN</p> <p>Mich. Comp. Laws § 722.921 et.seq.</p>	<p>Michigan Office of the Children's Ombudsman</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is independent and autonomous within the Executive Branch Department of Management and Budget, with the jurisdiction to oversee child welfare functions.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is appointed by the Governor with consent of the Senate and serves at the pleasure of the Governor.</p> <p>The Ombudsman shall be qualified by training and experience.</p>	<p>annual and public reports.</p> <p>The Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; advocates to the legislature; makes recommendations; has access to confidential records; issues subpoenas; holds informal hearings; maintains confidentiality; provides annual and public reports.</p>
<p>MINNESOTA</p> <p>Minn. Stat. § 257.0755 et.seq.</p>	<p>Minnesota Office of Ombudsperson for Families</p>	<p>The Office of Ombudsperson for Families is an independent state agency. There are four ombudspersons working with four different communities of color. Each Ombudsperson works independently from, but in collaboration with, each of the following groups: the Indian Affairs Council, the Chicano Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans, and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans.</p>	<p>The Ombudsperson for each community shall be selected by the applicable community-specific board and serves at the pleasure of the respective communities.</p> <p>Each Ombudsperson shall be highly competent and qualified to analyze questions of law, administration, and public policy regarding the protection and placement of children from families of color; must be experienced in dealing with communities of color and knowledgeable about the needs of those</p>	<p>The Ombudsperson monitors agency compliance with all laws regarding child protection and placement as to the impact on children of color; provides cultural diversity training to state and local courts; receives and investigates complaints; has access to confidential information; has subpoena power; makes recommendations; provides annual and public reports.</p>

communities;
must not hold
any other public
office.

MISSOURI

State of Missouri Office
of Child Advocate

The Office of
Child Advocate is
part of the
Executive Branch
Office of
Administration
and operates as
an independent
agent of
accountability
regarding
Children's
Protection and
Services. The
Child Advocate
shall report
directly to the
Commissioner of
the Office of
Administration.

The Child
Advocate is
appointed jointly
by the Governor
and the Chief
Justice of the
Missouri
Supreme Court
with the advice
and consent of
the Senate. The
Child Advocate
shall hold office
for a term of six
years.

The Child Advocate
receives and
investigates complaints;
has access to
confidential information;
has the power to
subpoena; makes
recommendations;
educates the public;
maintains
confidentiality;
coordinates mediation
efforts between school
districts and students
when allegations of
child abuse arise in a
school setting; provides
annual and public
reports.

Mo. Rev. Stat. §
37.705

MONTANA

Citizens Advocate
Office

The Citizens
Advocate
operates under
Executive order
of the Governor
within the
Governor's
Office, with the
authority to assist
Montanans in
their interactions
with all state
executive branch
agencies.

The Citizens Advocate
takes complaints
regarding state
agencies; operates an
assistance hotline.

Executive Order

NEBRASKA

Public Counsel
(Ombudsman's Office)

As part of the
Legislative
Branch the Public
Counsel
oversees all
agencies and is
independent of
the agencies it
oversees.

The
Ombudsman is
appointed by the
Legislature for a
term of six years.

The
Ombudsman
shall be a person
well equipped to
analyze
problems of law,
administration,

The Ombudsman
receives and
investigates complaints;
has access to
information; issues
subpoenas; makes
recommendations;
publishes annual
reports.

Neb. Rev. Stat. §
81-8,240 to 8-8,254

Office of the Inspector
General of Nebraska
Child Welfare

and public policy and shall not be actively involved in partisan affairs.

NEVADA	Nevada State Advocate for Missing and Exploited Children	The Advocate operates within the Office of the Attorney General.	The Advocate is a Senior Deputy Attorney General.	The Advocate assists other agencies in investigating missing and exploited children; educates the public.
NEW HAMPSHIRE	New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services: Office of the Ombudsman	The Ombudsman is established within the Department of Health and Human Services.		The Ombudsman investigates and resolves complaints; provides mediation; maintains confidentiality.
NEW JERSEY	Department of Children and Families Office of Advocacy	The Ombudsman is established within the Department of Children and Families within the Office of the DCF Commissioner with authority as an independent advocate for children and families.		The Ombudsman provides education; receives and reviews complaints; provides advocacy for families; makes recommendations; and makes reports.
NEW YORK N.Y. Exec. Law § 523b	New York Office of the Ombudsman	The Ombudsman operates within the Office of Children and Family Services.	The Ombudsman is appointed by the Commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services. The Director of the Office of the Ombudsman must be an attorney licensed to practice law. The Ombudsmen staff are either licensed attorneys or persons with	The Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; monitors child welfare policy; advises residential youth; makes recommendations; has access to confidential information; receives critical incident reports; maintains confidentiality; provides monthly reports.

expertise in the areas of juvenile justice or youth rights.

NORTH CAROLINA Foster Care Ombudsman Pilot Program in Gaston County

Gaston County

The Board of County Commissioners shall establish the qualifications for the selection of the foster care ombudsman, including the criteria that the person selected shall have experience in child welfare and State laws and policies governing children in foster care.

OHIO

Lucas County Children Services Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is established within the Lucas County Children's Services.

The Ombudsman investigates complaints; makes recommendations.

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Office of Client Advocacy

The Office of Client Advocacy operates within the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS).

The Office of Client Advocacy takes complaints from: minors in OKDHS custody; youth in voluntary care of OKDHS; and foster parents.

OREGON

Or. Rev. Stat. § 417.810

Oregon's Governor's Advocacy Office at the Department of Human Services (DHS)

The Office of Children's Advocate is established in the Department of Human Services within the Governor's Advocacy Office at the Department of Human Services and is part of the Department of

With the concurrence of the Governor, the Director of Human Services shall appoint the Children's Advocate.

The Children's Advocate shall be a person who has background and experience

The Children's Advocate educates the public; receives and reviews complaints; maintains confidentiality.

Human Services Director's Office. The Children's Advocate specifically responds to concerns regarding child abuse and neglect, child protective services, and issues relevant to individual child welfare cases.

in: law enforcement with particular emphasis on crimes involving child victims; or social work with particular emphasis on child abuse.

RHODE ISLAND
R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-73-1 et seq.

Rhode Island Office of the Child Advocate

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is an independent and autonomous state agency responsible for protecting the legal rights and interests of children in state care.

The Child Advocate is appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Advocate shall have a term of five years.

The Child Advocate shall be a member of the Rhode Island Bar for at least three years and must be qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the office.

The Child Advocate provides an annual report to the Governor and Legislature; insures all children in the child welfare system are appraised of their rights; reviews procedures; reviews complaints; provides training; has access to confidential information; has the power to subpoena; commences civil action against the state on behalf of a child; maintains confidentiality.

SOUTH CAROLINA
Executive Order

The South Carolina Governor's Office of Children's Affairs

The Office of Children's Affairs exists within the Governor's Office of Executive Policy and Programs and advocates for improved services for children and families. There is no statutory authority.

The Office of Children's Affairs provides arbitration and mediation services; researches constituent concerns.

<p>TENNESSEE</p> <p>Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-3-101 et seq.</p>	<p>Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth's (TCCY) Ombudsman Program</p>	<p>The Ombudsman for Children Youth and Families is part of the Tennessee Commission of Children and Youth, an Independent and autonomous agency with statutory authority to review children in the foster care system, kinship care or CPS and make recommendations for improvement.</p>	<p>The Governor shall appoint one member of the 21- member commission to be chair of the TCCY for a term of three years.</p>	<p>The TCCY shall make recommendations regarding the child welfare system; advocate; publish annual reports; review licensing standards; monitor foster care review boards.</p> <p>The Ombudsman takes referrals concerning the children in state custody; access records and persons; annual reports.</p>
<p>TEXAS</p> <p>Tex. Hum. Res. Code Ann. § 261.001</p>	<p>Independent Ombudsman for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is independent of the Juvenile Justice Department, reports to the Governor and Legislature and is responsible for overseeing the rights of children committed to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is appointed by the Governor with consent of the senate for a two year term and may serve up to three terms.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman receives and reviews complaints; advocates for children in custody; provides quarterly reports; maintains confidentiality; provides public education and awareness; reviews facilities; has access to confidential information.</p>
<p>Texas</p> <p>Tex. Gov't Code § 531.008</p>	<p>Health and Humans Services Commission's Office of the Ombudsman</p>	<p>The Ombudsman is independent within the organization.</p>		<p>The Ombudsman provides dispute resolution services for the Commission and the health and human services agencies; performs consumer protection functions related to health and human services.</p>
<p>UTAH</p> <p>Utah Code. Ann. 62A-4a-208</p>	<p>Utah Office of Child Protection Ombudsman</p>	<p>The Ombudsman was created as an independent office within the</p>	<p>The Ombudsman shall be appointed by and serve at the</p>	<p>The Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; makes recommendations;</p>

Department of Human Services, independent from the Division of Child and Family Services.

pleasure of the executive director.

provides annual reports; has access to confidential information.

The Ombudsman shall have experience in child welfare, and in state laws and policies governing abused, neglected, and dependent children.

VIRGINIA

Office of Juvenile Justice's Ombudsman Program

The Ombudsman exists within the Office of the Inspector General with the authority to help protect the rights of committed youth.

The Ombudsman maintains a relationship with juvenile correction centers; investigates complaints; makes recommendations.

WASHINGTON

Wash. Rev. Code § 43.06A

Washington State Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is established within the Office of the Governor, reports directly to the Governor and acts independently from the Department of Social and Health Services.

The Ombudsman is appointed by the Governor, with confirmation by the Senate, for a term of three years.

The Ombudsman shall be qualified by training or experience, or both, in family and children's services law and policy.

The Ombudsman educates the public; receives and investigates complaints; monitors child welfare procedures; reports annually; Has access to confidential information; maintains confidentiality; makes child fatality review recommendations.

Wyoming

Wyoming Department of Family Services, Complaint Resolution/Ombudsman

[1] Jeffrey S. Lubbers, Ombudsman Offices in the Federal Government—An Emerging Trend? *Administrative and Regulatory Law News*, Vol. 22, No. 7 Summer 1997, available at: <http://apps.americanbar.org/adminlaw/news/vol22no4/ombudsmn.html>.

[2] *Id.*

iii] United States Ombudsman Association, Governmental Ombudsman Standards, Oct. 2003, Available at: http://usoa.non-profitsites.biz/documents/PDF/References/USOA_STANDARDS.pdf.

[iv] Id.

[v] Moira Kathleen O'Neill, Pulling Back the Curtain: State Children's Ombudsmen at Work 107 (Jan. 2011), available at: http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/moira_oneill_dissertation_2011.authcheckdam.pdf.

[vi] Id. at 81.

[vii] Id.

[viii] Id.

Additional Resources

American bar Association, Center on Children and the Law

United States Ombudsman Association

Moira O'Neill- Pulling Back the Curtain: State Children's Ombudsmen at Work

About This NCSL Project

The Denver-based child welfare project staff focuses on state policy, tracking legislation and providing research and policy analysis, consultation, and technical assistance specifically geared to the legislative audience. Denver staff can be reached at (303) 364-7700 or childwelfare@ncsl.org.

NCSL staff in Washington, D.C. track and analyze federal legislation and policy and represent state legislatures on child welfare issues before Congress and the Administration. Staff in D.C. can be reached at (202) 624-5400 or cyf-info@ncsl.org.