

Attachment D

*Office of Colorado's*  
CHILD PROTECTION  
OMBUDSMAN



*Working to ensure the protection of Colorado's children.*  
*Trabajando para asegurar la protección de los niños de Colorado.*



*Office of Colorado's*  
**CHILD PROTECTION  
OMBUDSMAN**

**DO YOU HAVE ISSUES OR CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION IN COLORADO?**

Anyone can contact our office. We're here to help. And it's confidential.  
¿Tiene problemas ó preocupaciones acerca de la protección del niño en Colorado?

**Contact to share your:**

- Complaint
- Concern
- Suggestion
- Compliment

We also provide information and resources.

**Contact the Ombudsman Office any of the following ways:**

Call (303) 864-5111 or Toll-Free at 1-855-5SAFEKIDS  
[www.protectcoloradochildren.org](http://www.protectcoloradochildren.org)

**Póngase en contacto con nosotros para compartir su:**

- Queja o preocupación
- Sugerencia

También tenemos información y recursos para asistirle a encontrar la ayuda que Usted necesita.

**Póngase en contacto con la oficina de Ombudsman:**

Llame al 303-864-5111 o gratis al 1-855-572-3354  
En el internet al [www.protectcoloradochildren.org](http://www.protectcoloradochildren.org)

La información que nos proporcione será confidencial.  
No importa su situación en este país y no reportamos al gobierno.

Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (OCCPO) is an independent and neutral organization working to address grievances about child protection, seek system improvements, & serve as a resource to serve the best interest of Colorado's children. The OCCPO is a program of the National Association of Counsel for Children.

## FACT SHEET

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (OCCPO) was established through the passage of Senate Bill 10-171 and opened in May 2011.

The OCCPO has the power and duty to facilitate a process of independent, impartial review of family and community concern; request independent, accurate information and to conduct case reviews to help resolve child protection issues and overall systemic issues.

The OCCPO reviews and/or investigates complaints from citizens, families, mandatory reporters, foster parents employees of the State and Counties, judicial personnel, law enforcement and children.

### AUTHORITY

According to **C.R.S. 19-3.3-103 (II) (A)**, in investigating a complaint, The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman shall have the authority to request and review any information, records or documents, including records of third parties, that the OCCPO deems necessary to conduct a thorough and independent review of a complaint so long as either the State Department or County Department would be entitled to access or receive such information, records or documents. For example, if Human Services has the records or is entitled to have the records, the Ombudsman's Office can review those same records.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

In accessing and reviewing those records, the OCCPO will comply with the confidentiality provisions of **C.R.S. 19-3.3-103 (a) (I)(B)** and **19-3.3-103(a)(II)(A)** and applicable federal laws with regard to the use and review of the documents produced by this office for the purpose of The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman's investigation.

### A RESOURCE

The Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman also serves as a resource and "systems navigator" to stakeholders and the general public by assisting in specific cases while also providing ongoing public education and resources to promote the best interest of children and families.

The OCCPO does not have the authority to intervene in any criminal or civil proceeding or in any criminal investigation.

Complaints related to the Judicial Department and Judicial proceedings and procedures or personnel must be referred to the Judicial Department.

For more information on our office or an electronic copy of the **Senate Bill 10-171**, please contact our office at 303-864-5111 and/or visit our website at [www.protectcoloradochildren.org](http://www.protectcoloradochildren.org).



**Office of Colorado's  
CHILD PROTECTION  
OMBUDSMAN**

**Report from the Ombudsman Office:  
History, Progress, and Growing into the Future**

Presentation for:  
Joint Health Committee  
Denver, Colorado

November 5, 2013  
Presented by Dennis Goodwin and Sabrina Byrnes  
[www.coloradochildprotection.org](http://www.coloradochildprotection.org)

The OCCPO is a program of National Association of Councils for Children




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### What is an Ombudsman?

- An Ombudsman is an independent, unbiased and trusted intermediary between the public and some entity. In this case, the entity is child protection.
- Ombudsmen exist in many countries and serve several sectors including and not limited to government, higher education, long term care, media and others. (For example, NPR and ESPN have Ombudsmen.)
- The Ombudsman concept dates back hundreds of years with roots in Scandinavia.




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### History of CO's Child Protection Ombudsman




- In 2008, Gov. Bill Ritter released an Executive Order to establish a Child Welfare Action Committee to address systemic issues in the child protection system.
- The CWAC worked for a year and released 29 recommendations for systemic improvement including a recommendation to create a Child Protection Ombudsman.
- Senator Linda Newell (D) and Representative Sara Gagliardi (D) sponsored SB 10-171 to establish the Ombudsman Office.
- The bill passed both the House & Senate with unanimous consent with new general fund dollars attached.

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### The Creation of the Ombudsman Program

- \* In May 2011, the Colorado Department of Human Services awarded the contract for the Ombudsman program to the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC).
- \* NACC is a national organization headquartered in Denver dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through legal advocacy, training and certification.
- \* The NACC is located in (but not affiliated with) the Kempe Center on the Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, CO.
- \* To learn more, visit: [www.naccchildlaw.org](http://www.naccchildlaw.org)



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### The OCCPO Then & Now

Detailed Work Plan	Growing Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Defined Fiscal Note</li><li>* Provided guidelines for the implementation of policies and procedures</li><li>* Set the requirement for Statutory Rules to be created for OCCPO</li><li>* Designated Year 3 as an Audit Year of the program</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* State Audit occurring November 2013</li><li>* OCCPO Rules and Regulation completion</li><li>* Ongoing monitoring of recommendation progress</li><li>* New RFP for OCCPO future contract management</li></ul>

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### The OCCPO Team

- \* Dennis Goodwin: Child Protection Ombudsman
- \* Sabrina Byrnes: Associate Ombudsman
- \* Karen Nielsen: Intake and Administrative Coordinator
- \* Lisa Kreutzer-Lay: Q/A and Research Specialist
- \* Kendall Marlowe: NACC Executive Director

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### OCCPO Program Objectives

- ❖ We are a voice for children and families in Colorado.
- ❖ We exist to assist Colorado's Child Protection System in identifying gaps in services and response, training needs and supervisor and management improvement.

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### Colorado in Context

- ❖ We are one of 12 State Supervised/ County Administered Child Welfare Systems.
- ❖ We have 64 Counties, 22 Judicial Districts and 179 school districts.
- ❖ Colorado counties receive over 75,000 reports of child abuse or neglect annually.
- ❖ Over the past few years, Colorado's fiscal status has forced County Departments of Human Services to do more with less.
- ❖ Colorado has one of the top 5 fastest growth rate for child poverty in the U.S.
- ❖ Poverty is well documented to be the single greatest risk factor to child well-being.

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What Can We Do?	What Cannot We Do?
<p>Facilitate a process of independent, impartial review of family and community concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Request independent, accurate information.</li> <li>❖ Conduct case reviews to help identify and resolve child protection and overall systemic issues.</li> <li>❖ Serves as a resource and "systems navigator" to stakeholders.</li> <li>❖ Provide ongoing public education and resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Directly respond to emergencies regarding child safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Review complaints concerning domestic relations issues (CFI, court rulings, etc)</li> <li>❖ Investigate or overturn the acts or decisions of courts, judges, or their staff.</li> <li>❖ Provide legal advice.</li> </ul> 

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### Where the Rubber Meets the Road.

The OCCPO accepts 3 kinds of input from the public:

- 1) Complaints
- 2) Suggestions
- 3) Compliments



The OCCPO provides 4 basic services:

- 1) Consideration and potential investigation of complaints / inquiries;
- 2) Tracking and analysis of data for public reporting and for systemic recommendations;
- 3) Systems navigation and general assistance to public including system stakeholders; and
- 4) Public education.

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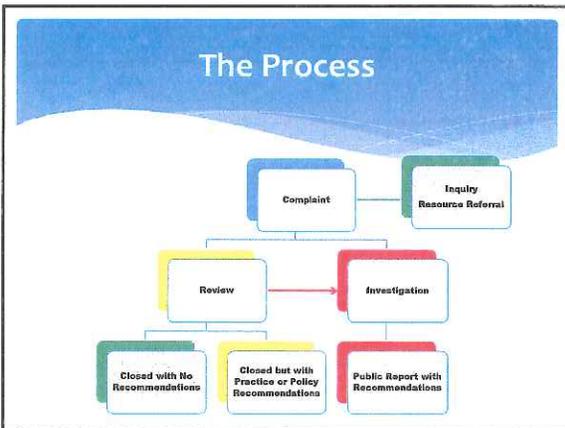
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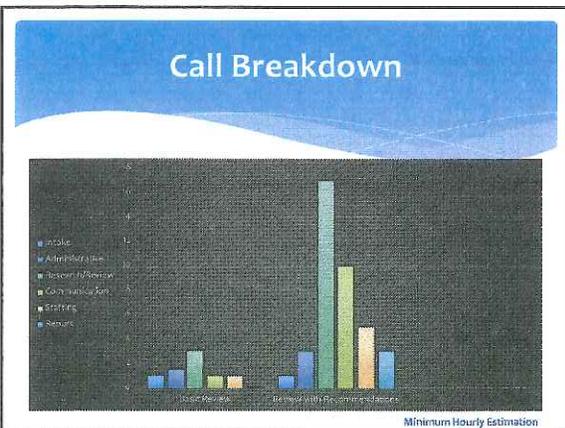
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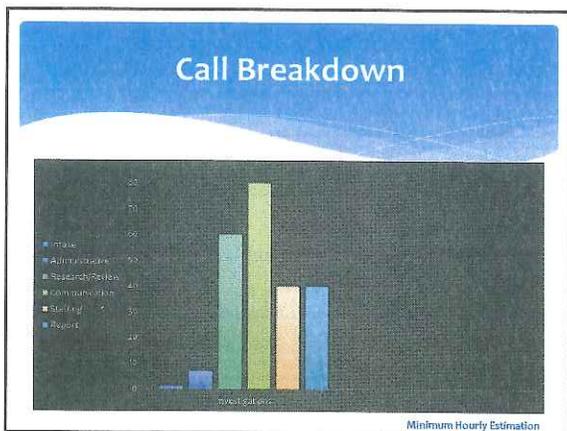
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- ### Year 2 Accomplishments
- \* Established relevance within the child protection community
  - \* Became a consistent resource for the general public and other constituents
  - \* Established a presence publicly through media involvement and outreach
  - \* Established a presence through ongoing involvement in the legislative process
  - \* Facilitated meetings between CDHS and adoption stakeholders regarding ongoing concerns from identified in Year 1
  - \* Facilitated a Grievance Process Roundtable for county and state DHS staff in April 2013
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- ### Year 2 Legislative Involvement
- \* **SB 13-278**
    - \* Created a definition of a "drug-endangered child" with respect to child abuse and neglect.
  - \* **SB 13-255**
    - \* Increased the capacity of Child Fatality Review Teams, clarified responsibilities and processes in both CDPHE and CDHS and added the OCCPO to the CDPHE team.
  - \* **HB 13-1271**
    - \* Created a Child Abuse Reporting Hotline

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### Year 2 in Review

Relationship of Referring Party to the Family or Child on the Case:

- Biological Parent 33%
- Child's Grandparent 16%
- Foster/Adoptive Parent 4%
- Other Relative 14%
- Friend/Neighbor 3%
- DHS Employee 3%
- Community Professional (Attorney/Advocate) 7%
- Medical Professional 2%
- Law Enforcement 2%
- Other 11%
- Unknown 8%

Number (297)

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### Year 2 Nature of Calls

- Lack of Response 17%
- Child Health, Safety, and Wellbeing 16%
- Case Ongoing 15%
- Intake/Assessment 14%
- Placement 13%
- Resource/Information 3%
- Other 22.5%

(number 297)

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### Year 1 Overall Call Volume

Number of Non-Systemic Contacts Received by Ombudsman Office by Month

Month	Number of Contacts
Jan	10
Feb	10
Mar	10
Apr	10
May	10
Jun	10
Jul	10
Aug	10
Sep	10
Oct	10
Nov	10
Dec	10

Number (100)

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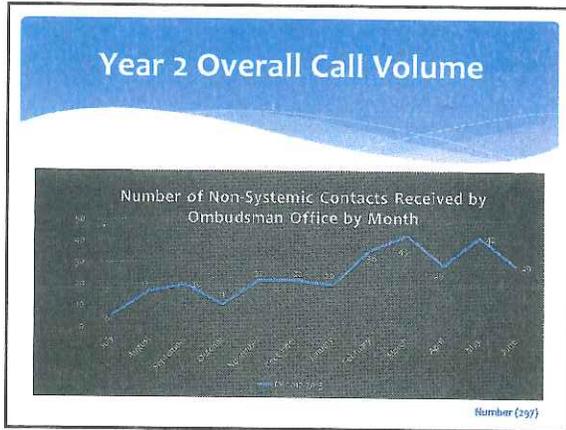
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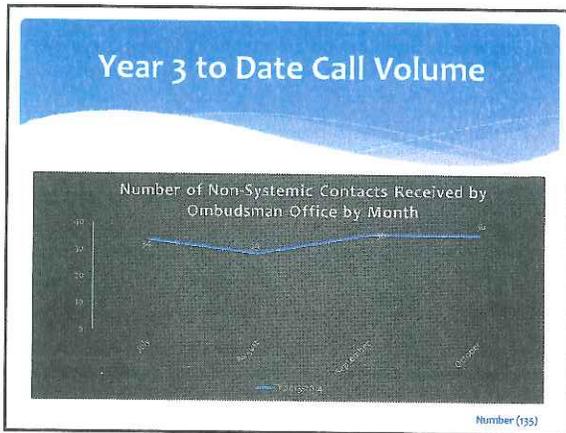
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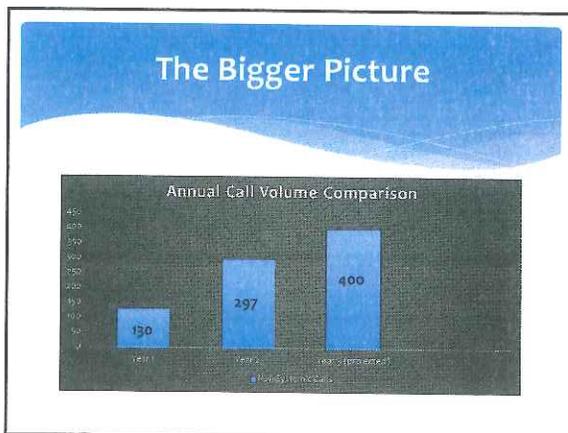
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### Observable Trends

- Mental Health
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Use/Abuse
- Alcohol Use/Abuse

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### Making a Difference

- Discovering areas of needed staff training and/or improvement resulting in performance improvement plans being designed and implemented for staff
- Identifying areas of overall systems errors which resulted in the identification of children at risk and criminal prosecution of abuse occurring
- Enhanced drug screening protocols for children when methamphetamine use is suspected

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### Highlighted Recommendations

- Improved training surrounding the issues of parenting and child safety while assessing families with substance use/abuse issues.
- Overall improved training regarding safety and risk assessments statewide to include mandatory annual testing
- Designation of rule surrounding supervision of caseworkers (how much and when)
- Overall improvement in rule and training surrounding case documentation in TRAILS including tightened timeframes for input of information into TRAILS

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### Highlighted Recommendations

- \* Policy improvements surrounding response and intervention with "high risk" families
- \* Overall improvement in transparency and accuracy of CDHS Child Fatality Review Reports
- \* Policy improvements around overall ongoing training requirements for seasoned caseworkers, supervisors and managers.
- \* Policy clarification regarding assessments that cross program areas (child protection and delinquency)

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### Progress

- \* Monthly meetings with CDHS to discuss recommendations and plans for implementation
- \* New Safety Assessment Tool rolling out January 2014 with training statewide for all staff
- \* New Child Welfare Training Academy awarded to Kempe Center
- \* CDHS implementation of "Safe Care" program

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### Year 3 Overall Goals

- \* Track and monitor intake issues and inconsistencies for trends
- \* Continue strong support of broad and accessible discipline-specific training for all mandatory reporters
- \* Continue to track and monitor training issues and needs for child protection staff
- \* Encourage better training for child welfare professionals and stakeholders around educating clients about system navigation, decision-making and expectations
- \* Continue to monitor constituents reports of retribution or fear of retribution when filing a complaint with OCCPO or another entity
- \* Continued participation in CDHS Child Fatality Review Team
- \* Participation in CDPHE Child Fatality Review Process
- \* Monitor statewide Child Protection Team (CPT) issues and offer assistance when possible.
- \* Continue to explore ways to improve and streamline the grievance processes across child welfare systems

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### Year 3 Program Goals

- Continued improvement of initial response time to the initiating complainant.
- Continued improvement of timeliness for completion of reviews and investigations
- Continued provision of effective and efficient completion of reviews and investigations
- Continued data tracking for developing trends
- Ongoing promotion of best practice standards
- Documentation of compliments and successes within the child protection systems
- Continue to provide an independent forum to register concerns
- Continue to provide adequate resource referrals to callers when necessary.

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### Just Released...

- The Ombudsman Office Annual Report 2012-2013 was released September 2013.
- The legislation creating the OCCPO mandated that a report be delivered to the Governor, the Director of CDHS and the Legislature annually.
- The report is available at:  
[www.protectcoloradochildren.org](http://www.protectcoloradochildren.org)



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### Questions?



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**Contact Information**

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[www.protectcoloradochildren.org](http://www.protectcoloradochildren.org)

Toll Free: 1-855-5-SAFEKIDS

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[sabrina@protectcoloradochildren.org](mailto:sabrina@protectcoloradochildren.org)  
[info@protectcoloradochildren.org](mailto:info@protectcoloradochildren.org)

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