

Fiscal year 2023 Annual Report

To Chairman Mendelson and Members of the Council of the District of Columbia:

I am pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report for the District of Columbia's Office of the Ombudsman for Children (OFC or the Office). Statutorily, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children is required to submit an annual report to the Council on December 31 each year including data and information collected in the prior fiscal year (D.C. Law 23-270, Sec. 108). This report covers the fiscal year ending on September 30, 2023.

On January 31, 2023, the OFC launched its website, online complaint form, and database. The newly implemented system has allowed the Office to receive complaints online from residents who have knowledge and concerns about actions taken by the child welfare system. The Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) transferred its internal Ombudsman functions to the Office on February 6, 2023. We partnered with CFSA to ensure a smooth transition of responsibilities, and to communicate this transition internally and to external organizations.

This reporting year, the OFC received 49 cases and closed 32 cases, typically after completing an investigation. There are two case types that the Office receives; cases that require an investigation; and cases that require information or a referral. Most constituents submitting complaints were biological parents, specifically biological mothers. Of the 32 cases closed within FY 2023, there were 41 children involved in these cases.

Regarding the Office's operations, five full-time positions were approved and budgeted for the OFC. From October 1, 2022-March 13, 2023, three positions were filled: the Ombudsman, Chief Deputy Ombudsman, and the Deputy CFSA Ombudsman. Effective March 13, 2023, the Ombudsman position became vacant. I assumed the position of Acting Ombudsman at that time per D.C. Law 23-270. In July 2023, the Ombuds Analyst positions were filled, adding two additional employees to the Office.

Thank you for your support in establishing the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and your commitment to improve the lives of the families in DC. I am excited about the work of the Office and looking forward to continuing our partnership to help strengthen child and family serving systems in the district.

Respectfully Submitted,

Petrina L. Jones-Jesz

Petrina L. Jones-Jesz

Acting Ombudsman

Office of the Ombudsman for Children

District of Columbia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Page 3
II.	OFFICE IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES	Page 4
III.	OFFICE OPERATIONS DATA	Page 7
IV.	CFSA DATA	Page 12
V.	CROSSOVER YOUTH	Page 17
VI.	APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF CASE RECOMMENDATIONS	Page 23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

D.C. Law 23-270, the “Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020,” was introduced in the Council and assigned Bill No. 23-437 which was referred to Human Services. The bill was adopted on first and second readings on Dec. 1, 2020, and Dec. 15, 2020, respectively. After mayoral review, it was assigned Act No. 23-617 on Feb. 2, 2021, and transmitted to Congress for its review. D.C. Law 23-270 became effective Apr. 5, 2021.

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children was legislatively established as an independent, impartial office responsible to the Council and tasked with improving outcomes for children involved with the Child and Family Services Agency, and by holding agencies accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities under the law.

Core Duties of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

- 1) Facilitate interagency communication and coordination related to issues impacting CFSA children;
- 2) Investigate on the Office’s own initiative:
 - (A) Systemic concerns relating to CFSA children, including issues relating to interagency communication and coordination; or
 - (B) An administrative act of CFSA or a CFSA affiliate, without regard to the finality of the administrative act, that the Office believes to be:
 - (i) Inconsistent with District or federal law, regulation, or policy, or standards of good practice;
 - (ii) Based on mistaken facts or irrelevant considerations;
 - (iii) Unsupported by an adequate statement of reasons;
 - (iv) Performed in an unprofessional manner that is detrimental to the safety, permanency, or well-being of a CFSA child or the CFSA child's family; or
 - (v) Unreasonable, unfair, not aligned with standards of practice and care, or otherwise objectionable, even though in accordance with law;
- 3) Provide recommendations to policies and procedures, staff training, regulations, and strategies based on investigations performed;
- 4) Submit Annual Reports;

- 5) Develop regulations and standard operating procedures;
- 6) Develop and maintain a database that tracks complaints;
- 7) Create and maintain a website that allows for online submission of complaints.

Office Implementation Updates for the First Fiscal Year of Operations

Website Creation

During FY 2023, the OFC partnered with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to create a website for the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, complaints email address, and general email address. A mockup of the website's design was submitted to the Ombudsman for review and feedback on December 28, 2022.

Launch date for the OFC website, complaints, and general email addresses occurred on January 31, 2023.

Database Development

The OFC also partnered with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to develop a database for the Office of the Ombudsman for Children. The complaints form and database were made available in a test environment to the Office of the Ombudsman on December 21, 2022, to review for feedback, submit test cases and review data samples from the test cases. The form went live on January 31, 2023.

We continue to partner with OCTO to enhance the database. Target completion date is January 2024.

Policies and Procedures

A review of policies and procedures implemented in Ombuds offices located in other states, while considering enabling legislation and the governing standards of the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA), is ongoing. The OFC created core operating policy and procedures effective on February 1, 2023. This core policy covers the responsibilities of the Office, key principles of operation, confidentiality, conflict of interest, intake process, information and referral, investigation and resolution and access to case information.

Administrative procedures for entering complaints received in person, by phone and email into the database were created and went into effect on May 4, 2023. Additional policies and procedures will be developed to provide supportive governance to the Office's work.

Staffing

Five (5) full-time employee positions were approved and classified for the Office of the Ombudsman for Children during the fiscal year. Three of the five positions are described

statutorily – Ombudsperson, Chief Deputy Ombudsperson and Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson. The remaining two (2) positions were not specified by title or duty in enabling legislation. During FY 2023, these remaining positions were classified as Ombuds Analysts. Onboarding dates during the fiscal year for the positions are as follows:

- Chief Deputy Ombudsperson (Staff onboarded on December 5, 2022)
- Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson (Staff onboarded on February 27, 2023)
- Two Ombuds Analysts (Onboarding for both positions in July 2023)

The following are the professional summaries for OFC employees as of September 30, 2023:

Petrina Jones-Jesz serves as the Acting Ombudsperson for the District of Columbia’s Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC). Ms. Jones-Jesz brings over 20 years of experience in child welfare and social services programs. She has served in the leadership of the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) as an Assistant Commissioner and a Deputy Commissioner. In these roles, Ms. Jones-Jesz had organizational leadership responsibilities for social services programs, administration, and performance and quality improvement. Petrina has also held positions in the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (DCS), providing leadership as the Director of the Policy, Planning and Research division; management of federal programs and reporting; and State lead for the Tennessee Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program and Children’s Trust Fund. She holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Middle Tennessee State University, Master of Education degree from Vanderbilt University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Oberlin College.

William Thomas is the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson with the DC Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC). William brings 28 years of child welfare experience to the position of Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson, beginning his career as a Child Protective Services Investigator in North Carolina. He has served in various child welfare leadership positions with the Gaston County Department of Social Services and the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services in North Carolina, and the Division of Family and Children Services in Georgia. William has served in professional leadership roles as a Supervisor, Field Program Specialist/Consultant, Social Services Administrator, Deputy Director, and County Director. He comes to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children from Georgia, after serving as the Deputy Director for the Fulton County Department of Family & Children Services in Atlanta, GA. William is a graduate of the Howard University School of Social Work.

Raeshonda Swales is an Ombuds Analyst with the DC Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC). Prior to this role, Raeshonda spent 10 years working in the social work field for the Core Service Agencies (CSA) in the District of Columbia. Raeshonda’s last four years was with Hillcrest Children & Family Services where she served dual roles as a community support worker and team housing specialist. The roles she held allowed for collaboration with public agencies, government agencies, law enforcement and people in the local community. She worked with individuals to promote optimum mental health stability and address behavioral health issues, with the goal of reducing hospitalizations and sustaining independent living in the community. Raeshonda’s

years of work experience include crisis intervention and assertive community treatment/case management for youth and adults who struggle with mental health and community living. Ms. Swales is a graduate of Lincoln University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology, and a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice, with a focus on Juvenile Justice from the University of Baltimore.

Adrian Sinclair is an Ombuds Analyst with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC) in the District of Columbia. Prior to joining the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Mr. Sinclair worked in child welfare as a Foster Care Supervisor and Administrator with Georgia’s Department of Family and Children Services. As a Foster Care Supervisor and Administrator, he was responsible for ensuring the safety, well-being, and timely permanency of all children in foster care. In addition to his child welfare experience, Adrian has an extensive history of providing services to children and families who have child welfare involvement. As a service provider, Mr. Sinclair worked with families towards reunification when children have been placed in out of home placements due to neglect or abuse. He has also worked with families who are experiencing difficulties by providing resources that will stabilize and strengthen them to prevent out of home placements. In his work with families, Mr. Sinclair has held positions such as Clinical Supervisor, Case Coordinator and Health Educator. As an undergraduate, Adrian studied Early Childhood Education and Psychology at Medgar Evers College – CUNY and will obtain a Master of Social Work degree from Georgia State University in 2024.

Office space for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children partnered with the Department of General Services (DGS) to identify an office space for the OFC. A lease agreement was signed to secure an office suite in April 2023. The address for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children is:

955 L’Enfant Plaza SW, Third floor
Washington, D.C. 20024

Furthermore, and per enabling legislation, the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson was provided an office at the CFSA main office in the Summer 2023.

Connecting with Organizations and the Community

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has worked to connect with community and government agencies to introduce the Office and its mission. We presented at meetings organized by the Mother’s Outreach Network and Child Welfare Advocates. We have provided training to the Guardians ad litem through the Children’s Law Center. Employees of the Office regularly attend CFSA’s Executive Leadership team meetings. Members of the OFC team participated in a training provided by the Office of the Attorney General on the District of Columbia’s Juvenile Justice system. Ongoing meetings occurred during the fiscal year with staff of District Council members.

During the FY 2023, the Acting Ombudsperson and employees of the OFC have met with organizations and agencies including: DC Public Charter School Board, Students in the Care of DC, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), Office of the Attorney General, Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC), Juvenile Justice Initiative at Georgetown University Law School, Council on Court Excellence, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Community Services for Autistic Adults and Children (CSAAC) and Safe Shores Child Advocacy Center (CAC).

During FY 2023, the OFC met with other Ombudsman offices from across the nation to learn from their experience, structure, and processes.

Child Fatality Review and Critical Incidents

Critical incident reports are shared with the Office as specified in statute.

The Ombudsperson, Acting Ombudsperson, and Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson attended monthly CFSA Internal Child Fatality Review meetings during FY 2023.

Per enabling legislation, the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson was appointed to the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (MACCAN).

United States Ombudsman's Association (USOA)

The Ombudsperson and Acting Ombudsperson were voting members of the United States Ombudsman's Association (USOA) during the 2023 fiscal year. The Acting Ombudsperson and the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson attended the 2023 USOA annual conference. The conference was held in Atlanta, GA on September 11-15, 2023. We attended the New Ombudsman's preconference training session, and the general conference.

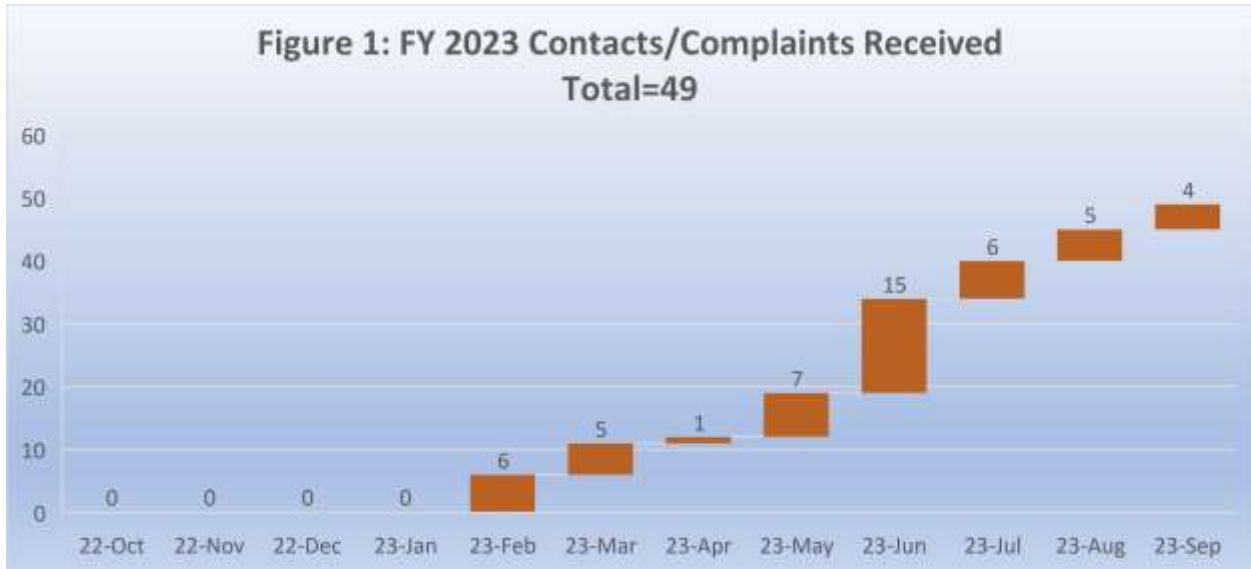
Other operations related developments

Independent procurement and purchasing functions were established for the Office in partnership with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) in the Summer 2023.

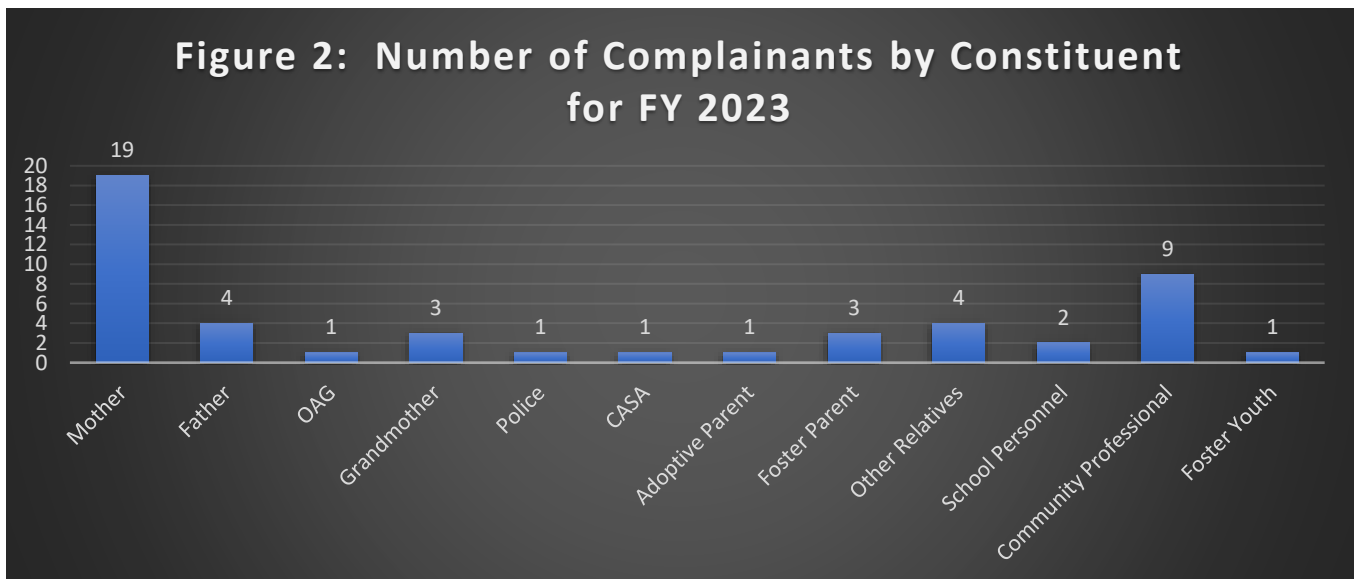
OFC OPERATIONS DATA

Per enabling legislation, D. C. Law 23-270, the Office is responsible for reporting on its work and general operations in the annual report.

This section includes the number, general sources and origins, and the nature of complaints made to the Office and the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson and the methods by which complaints were received.

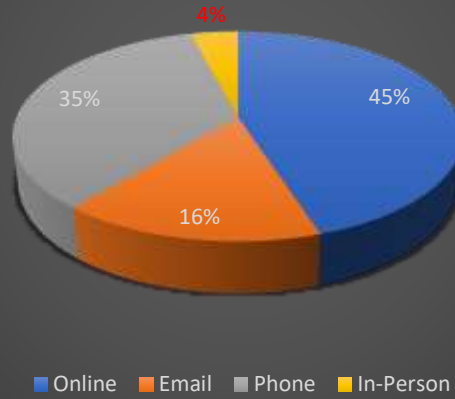


- The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children began receiving constituent complaints in February 2023.
- The nature of complaints received by the OFC included: lack of visitation between the parent and child, lack of resources provided to relative caregivers to support a successful placement, concerns with child’s placement, and lack of communication between CFSA and the parent or caregiver. The OFC also received requests for information and assistance with resources which typically resulted in a referral to an appropriate agency.



- Most constituents submitting complaints to the OFC were biological parents. Mothers contacted the Office with complaints more than any other group. We also received a significant number of complaints from community members, nine total.
- The Office received one complaint from a foster youth during this fiscal year.

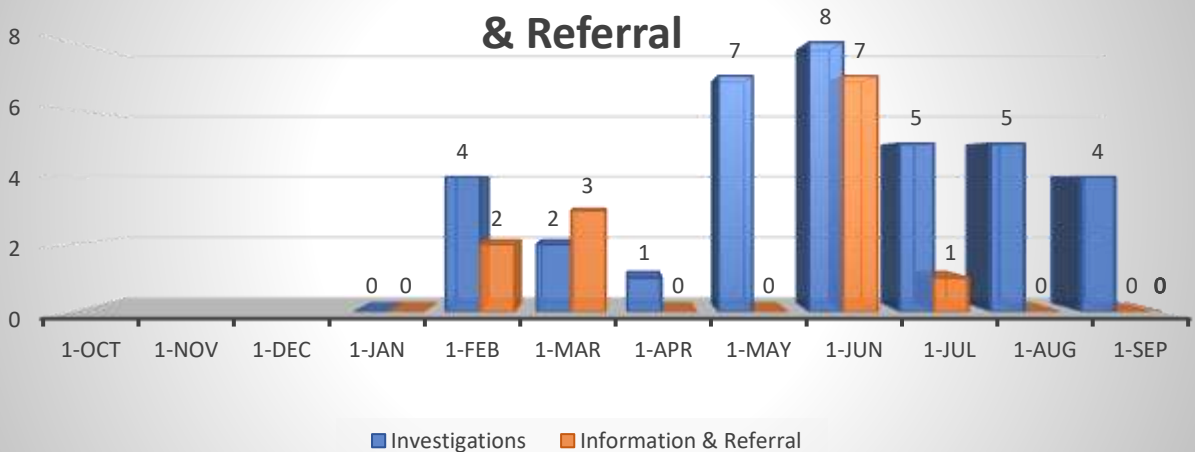
Figure 3: Percentage of Intakes Received by Type for FY 2023



- During FY 2023, most complaints were submitted through OFC’s online system (45%). Thirty-five percent of complaints were filed initially by phone call.

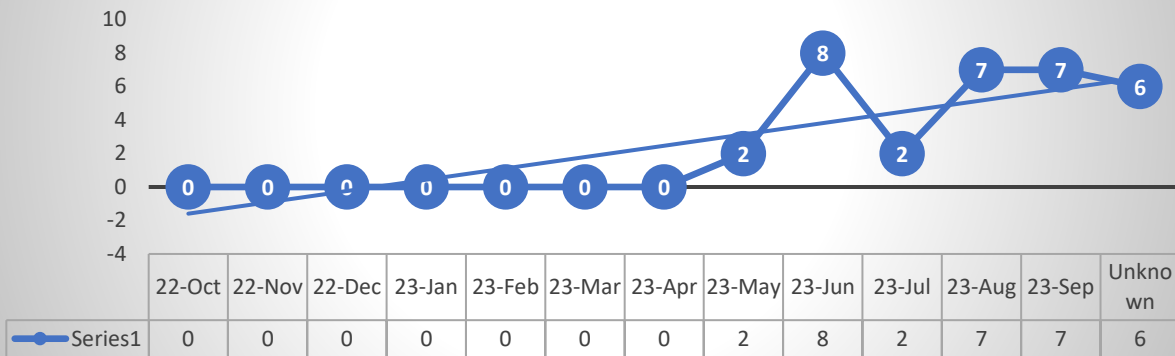
This section includes the number of complaints pending, dismissed, investigated, mediated, and concluded.

Figure 4: FY 2023 Investigations and Information & Referral



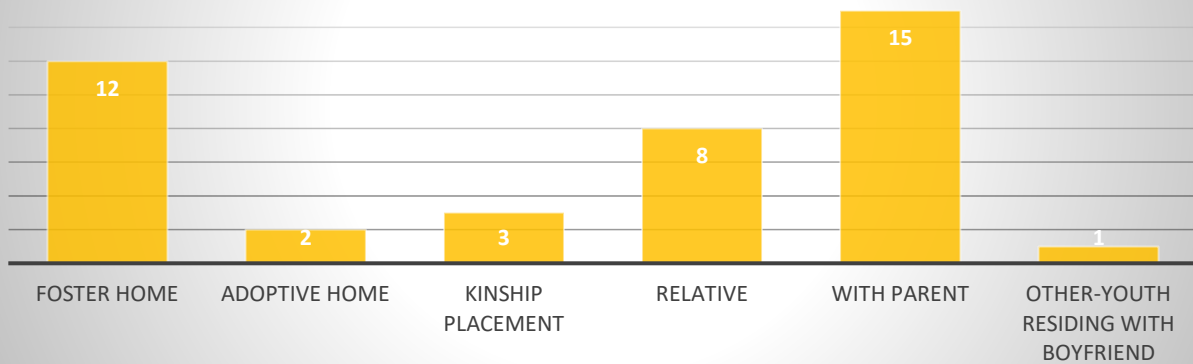
- The office saw a spike in complaints leading to an investigation in May and June 2023.
- The numbers of complaints that lead to an information and referral type was highest in June 2023.

**Figure 5: FY 2023 Closed Cases
Total=32**



- Of the 49 complaints open and active during FY 2023, 32 of the cases closed during the fiscal year, nine remain active, and eight (that opened in FY 2023) were closed in FY 2024.

Figure 6: Placement of Youth at Time of Complaint (by case) for FY 2023



- In most cases, youth included in a complaint regarding the child welfare system were residing with a parent. The second highest placement type was youth living in a foster home.

Trend Analysis

The OFC has identified during its first fiscal year of operations root causes and systemic concerns related to the complaints received. These issues include:

- CFSAs close relative caregiver cases prior to the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment for the family. After the case is closed by the agency, the

relative caregiver is unable to receive the additional resources needed to care for the child, leading to difficulties with providing housing, childcare and other support.

- There exists a deeply rooted mistrust of CFSA amongst families, thus fueling a negative perception of the agency within the community. Children and families do not see CFSA as a helping agency. Efforts should be undertaken to shift this negative perception using prevention efforts with families to support them in addressing such issues as homelessness, poverty, mental health issues of children, and assistance with connections to resources to help them meet their basic needs. OFC is hopeful that the implementation of the Warmline will meet this objective.
- There is a need for enhanced training for the CFSA Hotline staff so that intakes are adequately screened to ensure the safety of children. During FY 2023, OFC received concerns from constituents about intakes that were made to the Hotline and screened out when the constituent felt that the agency should have investigated. OFC had concerns regarding three screened out reports made to the Hotline.
- There is a need to improve communication between the school system and CFSA in reference to CPS reports received from schools. During FY 2023, OFC received concerns from school staff regarding multiple reports made on a child or family to CFSA without follow up from the agency. The schools did not have any information on whether the reports were accepted and investigated. Relationship building with the schools should focus on improving communication and service coordination for children and families.

CFSA’s response to improving communication with the school system:

CFSA has established avenues for communicating and sharing information with the school system. When making a report through the portal there are three points of communication:

- An email is sent when the report is accepted.
- An email is sent about when the assignment is made and to whom.
- An email is sent with the outcome of the report.

CFSA’s Educational Neglect Triage Unit holds office hours for school staff weekly to address concerns and questions about various educational issues. Further, operational procedures were shared with the schools, and other avenues for communication including monthly meetings with school system administrators, also occur.

Solutions or Methods for Resolving Complaints:

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

For FY 2023, OFC completed cases within an average of 52 business days of the receipt of the intake. The office established within policy the completion of cases within 45 business days. Fifteen cases were completed within 45 days, 17 cases closed beyond 45 days, and nine cases remain open for investigation at the end of the fiscal year. The cases that closed beyond the 45-business day requirement needed further investigative steps completed, to include additional meetings with constituents and CFSA staff in addition to further reviews of assessments completed on children, parents, or adoptive families. One of the cases involved extensive engagement with the CFSA's legal team and other District agencies.

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

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

A summary of systemic investigations undertaken at the Ombudsperson's own initiative:

The Acting Ombudsperson has initiated core areas for investigation during the fiscal year and will continue to investigate on an ongoing basis. Understanding the root cause of child fatalities and near fatalities in the District will be an ongoing focus. Trends observed have included child fatalities and near fatalities occurring due to lack of supervision, child and parent co-sleeping, and gun violence¹.

In addition, the OFC has initiated a focus on best practice in informal relative caregiver cases. A review of policies was completed during the fiscal year and several in person discussions with

¹ The OFC receives notices from CFSA of Critical Events - child fatalities. OFC also tracks child fatality critical events on an internal tracking document.

relative caregivers of children have occurred. A community roundtable was held in June 2023 with a focus on formal kinship foster placements.

CFSA DATA

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has a responsibility to monitor CFSA’s performance using data metrics to identify strengths and areas needing improvement. This requirement is defined legislatively in D.C. Law 23-270. The legislation outlines the need to specifically monitor the following metrics:

- Placement Stability
- Hospitalizations and placements in residential treatment facilities
- Access to behavioral health service

Placement Stability²

In FY 2023, there were a total of 588 placement moves, not counting temporary periods where youth required respite care or were otherwise absent from placements. Of this number, 134 were decidedly positive, as they included moves to the home of an adoptive resource, placement of siblings together, or discharge to a less restrictive environment. An additional 82 moves were entered as “proximity to family.” This category has ambiguous implications. Although it is often selected by social workers when children are placed with relatives or placed closer to their birth family, it can also involve cases where children are moved because proximity to family is not in their best interests. The remaining 372 moves are presented below as “disruptions” for reporting purposes. They include instances in which the child requested a change, the provider requested a change, the placement provider cannot meet the child’s needs, the provider is temporarily unavailable, there is a change of service, the child requires a different level of care, the provider’s contract ended, or the youth voluntarily left.

It will be important for the OFC to continue to monitor this metric and agency efforts to maintain placements and prevent disruptions as appropriate.

FY 2023 Placement Disruptions by Placement Type	
Placement Type	Total Disruptions
Foster Homes (Kinship)	22
Foster Homes (Traditional)	244
Congregate Care/Independent Living Program	30
Other (not in legal placement, secure institution, residential treatment facility)	76

² Source: Department of Children and Family Services: FACES.Net Management Report: PLC 010 and PLC 257

FY 2023 Placement Disruptions by Placement Type

Placement Type	Total Disruptions
Total	372

Access to Behavioral Health

CFSA continues to provide and support children, youth, and families in obtaining behavioral health services.

In FY23:

- 93 percent of eligible youth (27 out of 29) youths received a behavioral health evaluation within 30 days of entry. Note: Eligible children represent children ages 5 and over not currently connected to mental health services.
- 29 youths completed mental health evaluations, of which 23 were recommended for therapy.
- 63.7 percent (448) of youth in CFSA's care were actively engaged in behavioral health services. The data represents CFSA's in-house services and DBH providers.
- CFSA referred 105 unique youth for behavioral health services.
- CFSA served 67 youth with in-house behavioral health services.

In-house clinicians provide the following therapeutic modalities as part of the treatment array:

- Mental health assessments
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- Grief and Loss Therapy
- Trauma System Therapy (TST)
- Emergency medication management
- Traditional Integrative Therapy
- Child Focused Play Therapy

CFSA teams refer to external providers for the following services:

- Neurological examinations
- Psychiatric Residential Treatment
- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Dialectal Behavioral Therapy
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
- Sex Offender Treatment
- Community Based Intervention
- Ongoing medication management
- Art Therapy
- Equine and Animal Assisted Therapy

Ensuring Continuity and Quality of Care for an External Provider Referral

CFSA ensures continuity and quality of care when behavioral health services are referred to an external provider by having a DBH co-located in the Office of Well Being that supports continuity of care for behavioral health services. DBH helps to coordinate care with external providers in the community, and their liaison works to ensure continuity and quality of care. For CFSA contractual services, contract administrators and the contract specialist team monitor quality of services in accordance with District contract requirements and the Scope of Work.

Behavioral Health Services for In-home Families

CFSA In-Home families access mental health services through DBH, whose responsibility is to ensure there are adequate mental and behavioral health support to children and adults in the District. CFSA and DBH work collaboratively to address families' immediate and on-going mental health needs to achieve better outcomes for families. When an In-home social worker has difficulty with linking clients to DBH services, the DBH staff co-located on site at CFSA can assist. Additionally, CFSA can link In-Home clients to CFSA contracted mental health providers when deemed appropriate.

Residential Treatment

FY23	Total
Acute Hospital	25
Residential Treatment	11

Entries and Re-entries

In FY23, a total of 176 entries and re-entries occurred with 145 entering foster care and 31 re-entering into foster care. There were 171 unique counts of children who entered and re-entered foster care.

Number of Children in Care by Placement Type³

Placement Type	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Kinship Foster Home	138	25%	121	23%	118	23%	106	21%
Traditional Foster Home	274	51%	276	52%	266	52%	260	52%
Group Settings	41	8%	45	9%	42	8%	49	10%
Therapeutic	1	0%	1	0%	2	0%	2	0%

³ Source: Tableau, CFSA Dashboard

*Other settings: includes children who are missing, absent, or abducted, College/vocational placements, Correctional facilities, children in placements paid for by Medicaid such as settings for children with severe developmental disabilities and hospital settings, and not in legal placement. Not in legal placement refers to an unlicensed placement. The individual the child/youth is residing with may be in the process of obtaining licensure or may not meet licensure standards, however there is a court order placing the child in that setting.

Out of town placement	12	2%	10	2%	12	2%	12	2%
Developmentally Disabled/Family Based	2	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Developmentally Disabled/Congregate Care	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
*Other Settings	72	13%	73	14%	70	14%	68	14%

Number of exits from foster care by exit type

Of the 216 FY 2023 foster care exits, 24 percent involved children who had been in care for 12 months or less, 30 percent had been in care between one and two years, and 46 percent had been in care for more than two years.

FY 2023 Exits from Foster Care by Permanency Goal and Length of Stay						
Goal	< 1 Month	1 - 6 Months	7 - 12 Months	13 - 24 Months	25+ Months	Total
Reunification	19	15	11	29	9	83
Adoption	0	0	1	29	40	70
Guardianship	0	0	4	5	16	25
APPLA	0	0	0	1	34	35
No Goal ††	0	2	0	0	1	3
Total	19	17	16	64	100	216

FY 2023 Exits from Foster Care by Length of Stay in Months and by Month of Exit ⁴													
Months	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Ma y	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
< 1 Month	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	4	6	1	2	1	19
1-6 Months	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	4	1	7	17
7-12 Months	2	0	0	1	2	0	1	3	2	3	1	1	16
13-24 Months	3	5	5	11	9	3	6	3	6	4	2	7	64
25+ Months	6	6	6	16	8	11	6	7	12	8	10	4	100
Total	11	11	13	30	20	17	15	17	26	20	16	20	216

⁴ Source: Tableau, CFSA Dashboard

FY 2023 Exits from Foster Care by Age and by Month of Exit⁵

Age	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
<1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	0	1	6
1-5	5	2	5	8	9	7	4	6	9	6	8	6	75
6-12	1	1	3	6	3	2	5	3	10	7	4	8	53
13-15	2	3	3	4	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	24
16-18	1	1	0	2	2	3	2	1	1	3	1	2	19
19+	2	4	2	10	3	3	3	3	4	2	2	1	39
Total	11	11	13	30	20	17	15	17	26	20	16	20	216

CROSSOVER YOUTH⁶ DATA

During the fiscal year, to begin meeting the data requirement for crossover youth, the OFC has conducted research, established partnerships, and identified metrics to monitor youth outcomes. The OFC partnered with CFSA and DYRS to develop and institute a data sharing agreement between the two agencies that allows for understanding the full scope of the population of youth served by both agencies (dual status or dual jacketed youth), as well as those youth who have prior history and have crossed over from one system to the other (crossover youth). Data analysis will inform opportunities for collaboration towards improved outcomes for crossover youth and dual status youth. Metrics to monitor outcomes for youth were established during the fiscal year and shared with CFSA, DYRS, as well as other organizations. The following is the list of data metrics identified by the Ombudsperson and the Acting Ombudsperson to guide the information gathered to monitoring this youth population’s outcomes:

- # of youth in dual status – served by both CFSA and DYRS
- Demographics – age, race, gender, ward of origin
- Placement Type
- # of youth who have crossed between systems
- Pathways to involvement trends (i.e. youth has an open child welfare case, youth is arrested, youth enters delinquency system)

⁵ Source: Tableau

Children between the ages of birth and 5 accounted for 38 percent of the FY 2023 exits, while children between the ages of 6 to 12 years old represented 25 percent of exits.

⁶ Crossover youth, as defined in the OFC’s legislation (D. C. Law 23-270), is a CFSA child who is currently or previously been the subject of a petition alleging delinquency filed by the Office of the Attorney General, pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 16-2305, or by another jurisdiction.

- School attendance/truancy concerns
- Involvement with Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)
- HS Graduation rates (18-21)
- Employment (16-21)
- Re-entry/Recidivism rate
- # of placement moves within a (6- or 12-month period)
- Extended Foster Care participation
- Exits from custody for dual status youth
- Time in custody for dual status youth
- Exit type could be included as a metric (i.e., aged out, exit to live with a relative, etc.)

A dual jacketed youth report was created for the periods of FY 2021, 2022, and the first six months of FY 2023 and was provided to the OFC during the Summer of 2023. This report was created as a collaborative effort between CFSA and DYRS. It was included in the Office’s mid-year report⁷ which was distributed and published in July 2023.

The Ombudsperson and the Acting Ombudsperson reviewed governance documents covering confidentiality of Juvenile records and examples of administrative orders. The purpose of this review was to identify the expectations for ensuring the confidentiality of juvenile records, and to determine the next steps for including the Office in existing youth related legislation. A draft administrative order was developed during the fiscal year. Furthermore, we met with agencies that are developing reports on crossover youth, including relevant data analysis on services and needs.

For the fiscal year 2024, the goal will be to finalize the establishment of the OFC in existing confidentiality legislation and identify data sources and develop additional youth focused and cross over youth reports.

Data for young people who were simultaneously committed to CFSA and DYRS during FY 2023.

Methodology, Data Collection Limitations and Recommendation Development Process

Data analysts from CFSA and DYRS gathered and provided data from each agency. Based on the findings, data analysts and program management staff met to discuss the data. At the last submission in June 2023, the CFSA and DYRS teams found that each agency had differing data collection processes, definitions, and procedures. During this period, and due to ongoing collaboration and data reconciliation, the CFSA and the DYRS teams found limited data differences for the dually committed youth. However, there’s one difference that reflects differences in placement definitions by the two agencies. One young person is considered “home” by DYRS and “abscondence” by CFSA.

⁷ OFC’s Mid-Year report 2023 can be found at ofc.dc.gov.

Limitations

- The number of youth is less than one percent of the population (FY 2023 = 8 youth). The low number of youths makes it harder to determine if there are system issues or individual case situations and circumstances.
- For some of the young people, the time that they’re committed to each agency is different, which has an impact on the number of placements captured by each agency.

December 2023 Updates to June 2023 Findings

Through ongoing collaboration and case coordination at the quarterly meetings convened through the Criminal Justice Coordination Council (CJCC), in addition to ongoing case management coordination outside of those meetings between CFSA and DYRS staff, the ability to reconcile data improved where each agency worked to provide the types of services needed to optimize the success of each youth. DYRS and CFSA found that youth who attended DYRS New Beginnings participated in school; however, upon exit from New Beginnings, the commitment to education might diminish.

Number of young people in the population: 8

Data Point	Assumptions (if any)	Result
Demographics – age, race, gender	Summarized counts of age, race, gender, as of the end of the fiscal year	<p><u>Age</u> 1 - 15 years old 2 - 16 years old 4 - 18 years old 1 - 19 years old</p> <p><u>Race</u> 7 - Black or African American 1 - White</p> <p><u>Gender</u> 6 - Male 2 - Female</p>
Demographics – ward of origin	<p>Summarized count of ward of origin, as of the end of the fiscal year or most recent data available.</p> <p>Each Agency may work with these young people during different time periods and therefore have different information about them at the</p>	<p><u>CFSA</u> 2 - Ward 2 1 - Ward 5 3 - Ward 6 1 – Ward 7 1 - Ward 8</p> <p><u>DYRS</u> 1 – Ward 1 2 – Ward 2</p>

Data Point	Assumptions (if any)	Result
	<p>end of the report period. This is why we have differing counts here, which we do not find concerning.</p> <p>For example, sometimes a young person will leave one Agency's care while remaining in the care of the other during the report period, resulting in one Agency having more updated info in their system than the other at the end of the fiscal year.</p>	<p>2 – Ward 6 1 – Ward 7 2 – Ward 8</p>
Placement type	Summarized counts of most recent placement types at the end of the fiscal year	<p><u>CFSA</u> 1 - Correctional facility 2 - Abscondence 2 - Residential treatment facility 3 - DYRS Secure Facility</p> <p><u>DYRS</u> 1 - Correctional facility 1 - Abscondence 2 - Residential treatment facility 3 - DYRS Secure Facility 1 – Home</p>
School attendance/truancy concerns	If the young person was in school at any point in time during the fiscal year and any notable truancy concerns during the fiscal year	<p><u>Combined</u> 1 – Not school aged 7 - Enrolled at some point during the fiscal year</p>

Data Point	Assumptions (if any)	Result
Involvement with DBH	Summarized counts of types of involvement with DBH, by the end of the fiscal year	<u>Combined</u> 1 – Completed DBH services 2 – Not enrolled with a DBH provider 2 - Waiting for the provider 1 – Did not receive services 1 – Refused services
HS Graduation rate (18-21)	Numerator is number of young people who graduated as of the fiscal year	<u>Combined</u> 20% (1/5)
Employment (16-21)	Number of young people were ever employed (CFSA) or enrolled in workforce development programming (DYRS) during the fiscal year DYRS: Enrollment in workforce development activities is individualized based on the needs of each youth.	<u>CFSA</u> 0 - employed or in internship experience <u>DYRS</u> 1 - employed or in internship experience
Re-entry rate (CFSA) Re-arrest rate (DYRS)	CFSA: numerator is the number of young people placed again within a 12-month period after the exit date DYRS: whether the youth person was re-arrested after the initial commitment within the fiscal year	<u>CFSA</u> N/A <u>DYRS</u> 5 out of 8
# of placement moves within a 12-month period	CFSA: average number of placement moves after commitment within the fiscal year DYRS: average number of placements for all youth within	<u>CFSA</u> 4 <u>DYRS</u> 7 (6.875) (For some of the young people, the time that they're committed

Data Point	Assumptions (if any)	Result
	the fiscal year once youth is committed.	to each agency is different, which has an impact on the number of placements captured by each agency)
Extended Foster Care participation	CFSA: whether the young person participated in Extended Foster Care in the fiscal year	N/A Extended Foster Care expired after Covid-19 emergency
Exits from custody for dual status youth	DYRS – number of youth whose commitment ended for any reason during the fiscal year	DYRS 2
Time in custody for dual status youth	DYRS – average number of days youth committed in the fiscal year	DYRS 222 days
Exit from custody and commitment types (i.e., aged out, exit to relative, etc.) This was originally “exit types (i.e., aged out, exit to relative, etc.)”	Summarized exit status as of the end of the fiscal year. DYRS – For youth whose commitment ended in the fiscal year, count of the reasons for commitment ending/closing reason	CFSA 2 - Exit to reunification 6 - Still in care of CFSA DYRS 1 – Commitment expired 1 – youth passed away 6 – still in the care of DYRS

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF CASE RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS

Case summary A:

On May 14, 2022, a mother came to the attention of CFSA due to her 5-year-old and 2-year-old child being left alone in her apartment while she took a trip out of town. The case was substantiated for neglect including inadequate supervision, clothing and hygiene, unsafe living conditions and abandonment. The children were removed from the custody of their mother and placed in foster care.

On June 26, 2023, OFC received an email complaint with concerns that CFSA is using the children's behaviors as an excuse to cancel the mother's visits due to reports from the foster parents that the son's behaviors are out of control. There were also concerns that the foster parents have taken the children on frequent trips that have interfered with the mother's visitation, often requiring the parent and child visits to be rescheduled.

On August 3, 2023, OFC met with the social work team assigned to the case. The CFSA team confirmed that the foster parents have taken frequent trips this summer with the children, however, they stated that they have scheduled make-up visits. It was reported that the social work team advised the mother of the trips ahead of time and rescheduled her visits to another date. OFC inquired about the agency's practice when parents voice concerns about the frequency of visits needing to be rescheduled and not agreeing with the children taking frequent trips with the foster parents. It was learned that in this case, the mother does not agree with any of the trips. OFC also inquired about the children being placed in respite while the parents are on a trip. It was shared that due to the trauma from being left alone in the apartment, the agency did not want to place the children in respite.

Parent and child visits were to occur weekly for two hours, and the mother has been engaged in services.

Findings:

- Multiple visits with the children were canceled and rescheduled due to the foster parents frequently taking trips with the children.
- The mother has voiced her concerns to the social work team about her disagreement with the children going on several trips and her visitation with the children being interrupted due to the frequency of the trips.
- The mother has been consistent in attending visits with her children as well as attending their medical appointments.
- The mother has worked with a PEER Advocate and has completed a 12-week parenting class.
- The mother has worked with a therapist since February 2023.

- A social worker included her opinion on how the mother styled her son’s hair in case documentation.

Recommendations:

- OFC is recommending that CFSA staff receive additional training on the CFSA policy outlining the following from the Visitation Policy⁸, **“When the permanency plan is reunification with a parent or legal guardian, the first priority of the social worker shall be to provide visits with the parents or legal guardians, siblings, and any other adults granted visitation by the court”**.
- OFC is recommending that CFSA has in place clear guidance and practice regarding visitation when a parent is not in agreement with the scheduled visitation being canceled or needing to be rescheduled.
- OFC recommends that CFSA staff receive additional documentation training to reinforce that staff should refrain from including personal opinions in their documentation.

CFSA’s Response to Recommendations:

The Social Work team and resource parent follow the guidance outlined in the Child Travel AI. “If the social worker and resource provider agree that the activity serves the child’s best interests, but the parent does not consent to the child’s participation, then the social worker or resource provider shall obtain permission from the supervisory social worker to raise the issue to the program manager, and/or program administrator, as well as the AAG.”

Case Summary B:

The family’s current situation came to the attention of CFSA due to a referral received on March 29, 2023, and an additional referral received on April 16, 2023. The referral on March 29, 2023, detailed the murder of the father in the family home. Four of the children were in the home at the time as well as the 16-year-old’s 1-year-old child. The father was shot by the 16-year-old’s boyfriend when the father and the boyfriend engaged in an altercation due to the boyfriend hitting the youth. The referral received on April 16, 2023, detailed the mother’s homicide.

CFSA contacted the maternal grandmother as she was identified as the family’s contingency plan in a prior investigation. The paternal relatives voiced concerns regarding the maternal grandmother’s alleged mental health issues. There are seven children involved in the case, ages 2, 4, 6, 10, 13, & 16. The 16-year-old has a 1-year-old daughter. The agency held an emergency Family Team Meeting (FTM) on April 25, 2023. The children did not enter foster care at this time. Four of the children were to reside with the maternal grandfather in another city, and two

⁸ Source: Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), Policy Title: Visitation

of the children, along with the 16-year-old's 1-year-old child were to reside with the maternal grandmother. CFSA closed the case on May 8, 2023.

OFC received a constituent concern regarding the family on 06/01/23 as the complainant was concerned that a referral to the Hotline was screened out. The allegations detailed the grandmother making statements that one child could no longer reside in her home. The grandmother was stating that she was unwilling and unable to continue to care for him. The complainant also voiced concerns regarding the grandmother's alleged mental health status and possible inability to care for the children. The OFC reviewed the Hotline report and had questions around the screen out of the intake, specifically with the statement that she was no longer willing to care for the child.

Findings:

- At the conclusion of CFSA involvement on May 8, 2023, there was no documentation in the record detailing the support services provided to the family as developed in the Family Team Meeting.
- There was no documentation detailing the support provided to the maternal grandfather or the maternal grandmother in petitioning for custody of the children. They were informed to contact legal aid society, however, no documentation that this was completed.
- There was no documentation detailing the support to the caregivers in obtaining financial benefits for the children to include social security, Medicaid, SNAP, Grandparent Subsidy, or any other benefits that they might have been eligible to receive.
- The CFSA social worker made a report to the intake line in the other state, however, no documentation detailing if the other agency was able to assist with a "welfare check".
- The maternal grandfather contacted the social worker on 04/26/23 as he needed a few items and wanted to see if the agency could assist. He was inquiring about support with buying clothing for the children to wear so that they could attend their mother's funeral as well as needing assistance in purchasing car seats, bunk beds, and mattresses.
- The social worker made a referral for the grandmother on 05/4/23, however, there was no documentation of follow up with the organization to assess the level of assistance provided.
- In the placement arrangement for the children, out of state placements should go through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process. Since the children were not placed into foster care, CFSA did not place the children through ICPC, thus ensuring that the other state's placement was an appropriate placement for them.

Recommendations:

- OFC is recommending that CFSA conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for all Kinship arrangements for the children and the caregivers prior to case closure.
- OFC is recommending that the closure of all Kinship arrangements have a second level approval process prior to closure. (Supervisor and Program Manager approval).

- OFC recommends that a standard checklist is developed for Kinship arrangement cases to ensure that all areas of need are addressed, and the probability of a need being missed is decreased. The checklist should cover the critical needs of a child during these arrangements (i.e., Medical, Birth Certificates, Financial Benefits, Cribs or Pack N Plays, Formula, Diapers, etc.)

CFSA's Response to Recommendations:

- A newly created internal Relative Caregiver workgroup with representation across programs will address the issue with inconsistencies when communicating with Kin about options and needs. The practices and recommendations that come out of that workgroup will help address the kin caregiver concerns raised by the OFC.
- All Informal Family Planning arrangements require both the supervisor and Program Manager's approval per the Administrative Issuance.
- Would like to discuss further what OFC means by a comprehensive kinship assessment.

CFSA Practice: Services offered (and whether they are accepted or denied) should always be documented in FACES.

Case Summary C:

Executive Summary/Opening

The family came to the attention of CFSA due to a Hotline Report received on 01/09/23 with information that a mother had delivered a newborn. There were serious concerns due to allegations of the mother's known mental health history, non-compliance with medication, and known substance use. There were additional concerns related to the mother's homelessness and inability to care for a newborn. Also, the baby suffered an injury during her delivery. A previous report from the hospital made to the Hotline on 10/26/22 when the mother had not yet delivered her baby, noted concerns that the mother had no prenatal care, was under the influence of substances and was hitting her stomach.

The OFC received a constituent complaint regarding the family's situation on March 1, 2023. The complainant had concerns that the current caregiver for the baby was unable to obtain the baby's birth certificate or obtain other services to meet the baby's needs. OFC worked extensively to attempt to assist the caregiver in obtaining the birth certificate for the baby. OFC contacted the CFSA nurse as well as CFSA attorneys to obtain guidance in assisting the caregiver. On April 5, 2023, OFC met with CFSA to discuss the situation further. It was confirmed that the mother's plan prior to CFSA involvement was for a family friend to obtain custody of the baby once the baby was born. CFSA used their internal process to attempt to obtain the birth certificate from the appropriate agency. The OFC followed up with the CFSA employee on April 13, 2023, on the progress of obtaining the birth certificate. It was learned

that the other agency would not release the birth certificate to CFSA due to the baby not being named at the time of birth.

Findings:

- At the conclusion of the CFSA investigation, the caregiver of the baby did not obtain a birth certificate which was needed to meet the baby's needs.
- The caregiver was unable to apply for any financial benefits without the baby's birth certificate.
- CFSA made the recommendation to the caregiver to contact the court and obtain legal custody of the baby.

Recommendations:

- OFC is recommending that CFSA conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for all Kinship arrangements for the children and the caregivers prior to case closure.
- OFC is recommending that the closure of all Kinship arrangements have a second level approval process prior to closure. (Supervisor and Program Manager approval).
- OFC recommends that a standard checklist is developed for Kinship arrangement cases to ensure that all areas of need are addressed, and the probability of a need being missed is decreased. The checklist should cover the critical needs of a child during these arrangements. (Medical, Birth Certificates, Financial Benefits, Cribs or Pack N Plays, Formula, Diapers, etc.).

CFSA's Response to Recommendations:

CFSA Practice: SSW reportedly completed the internal process CFSA utilizes to obtain birth certificates from Vital Records. However, Vital Records would not release the birth certificate to CFSA due to the baby not being named at the time of birth.