



Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC)

Mid-Year Report

For the period: October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023

Submitted by the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children:

Petrina Jones-Jesz, Acting Ombudsperson

July 31, 2023

Introduction and Executive Summary

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC) is a legislatively established, independent and impartial agency. It was created to help children, families, and other individuals resolve concerns with services provided to children and youth currently or previously involved with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). The OFC's goal is to foster improved outcomes for CFSA children and families.

In accordance with the OFC's enabling legislation, the Office submitted the inaugural annual report in December 2022. The annual report covered the first five months of office operations from July 25, 2022 - December 29, 2022. The submission of the FY 2023 annual report is due by December 31, 2023.

This inaugural mid-year report addresses the period between October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023, unless indicated otherwise within the document. In the future, the Mid-Year report will be submitted in June to cover October 1-March 31. The Mid-Year report is not required statutorily. However, the purpose of this Mid-Year report is to monitor organizational performance and progress on data metrics, indicators, and trends.

The OFC was established by D. C. law 23-270 on April 5, 2021. Creation of the Office began in August 2022, with the hiring of its first Ombudsperson.

Overview of Office implementation

- The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children's website, complaints email address, general email address, and administrative database was launched on February 6, 2023. Linked to the website is the OFC Complaint form.
- The CFSA Ombudsman's functions were transferred to the OFC in February 2023.
- The OFC's core policy was implemented on February 1, 2023. Included in the policy are the OFC's primary duties and investigative procedures.
- Five full time positions are approved and budgeted for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. From October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023, three of the positions were filled: the Ombudsperson, Chief Deputy Ombudsperson, and the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson. Effective March 13, 2023, the Ombudsperson position became vacant. Currently, the Chief Deputy Ombudsperson position is also serving as the Acting Ombudsperson, per D.C. Law 23-270.

Overview of Office implementation

- The office worked with the District of Columbia's Human Resources department to establish and fund the position numbers for the two additional employee roles. The category of staff and title for these positions is Ombuds Analyst. Recruitment for candidates began in April 2023. Candidates were identified for hire in June 2023.
- The Office partnered with the Department of General Services to secure office space. The initial office space walk through occurred in February 2023 and the leasing agreement was signed in May 2023.
- The Acting Ombudsperson is a member of the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) and the Child and Family Chapter of USOA. The Acting Ombudsperson actively attends the chapter meetings.
- The OFC continues to work closely with government departments to identify sources for Crossover Youth data and reporting as defined in the OFC's enabling legislation.

Community and Government Outreach and Collaboration

- Met with Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to develop the complaints form, website, and administrative database for the Office. Launch of these online and electronic functions occurred on February 6, 2023. The OFC continues to work with OCTO in order to make improvements to these functions.
- Participate in bi-weekly meetings with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) Director, Chief of Staff and Special Assistant to the Director beginning in 2022 and ongoing. The OFC has also met with the CFSA Executive leadership team and presented at a CFSA All-Staff meeting.
- Met with local organizations and relative caregivers from the community about concerns with the child welfare system.
- Community outreach is ongoing. The OFC continues to identify and meet with local agencies to inform them of the Office.
- Met with the Virginia Office of the Child's Ombudsman in February and April 2023 to discuss the work of an Ombudsperson's office and participated in a demonstration of their computer based administrative system.
- Meet weekly with Councilmember staff beginning in March 2023.
- Participate in quarterly and ad-hoc child welfare advocates meetings throughout the period to the present.
- Participate in CFSA Internal Child Fatality Review meetings throughout the period to the present monthly.

Office of the Ombudsperson for Children: Performance data

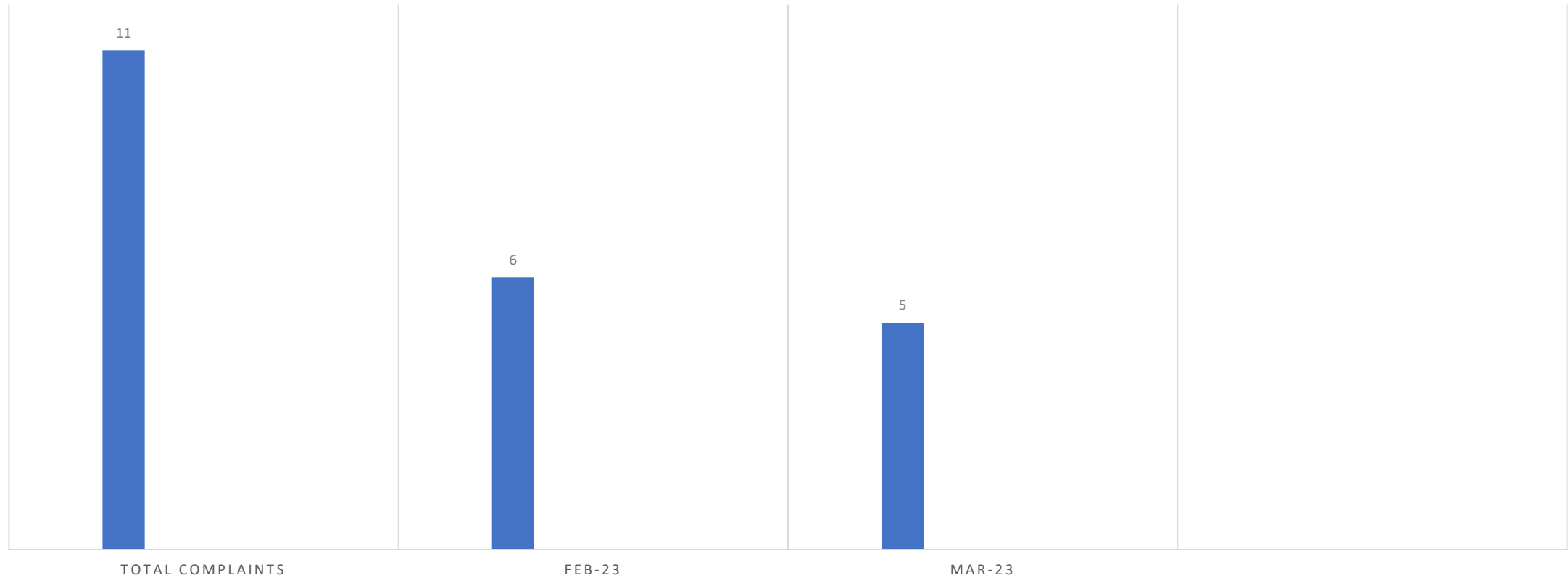
Total and Type of Referrals (Period: October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023)

	Feb 2023	Mar 2023	Total referrals
Total # Referrals	6	5	11
Relative related	2	0	2
Kinship related	1	0	1
Out-of-control teen	1	0	1
Foster/adopt home related	1	0	1
Foster parent related	0	1	1
Foster youth related	0	1	1
Information/resource	1	3	4

The OFC started receiving complaints/referrals from concerned constituents in February 2023.

Office of the Ombudsperson for Children: Performance data (Period: October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023)

CONSTITUENT COMPLAINTS TO OFC

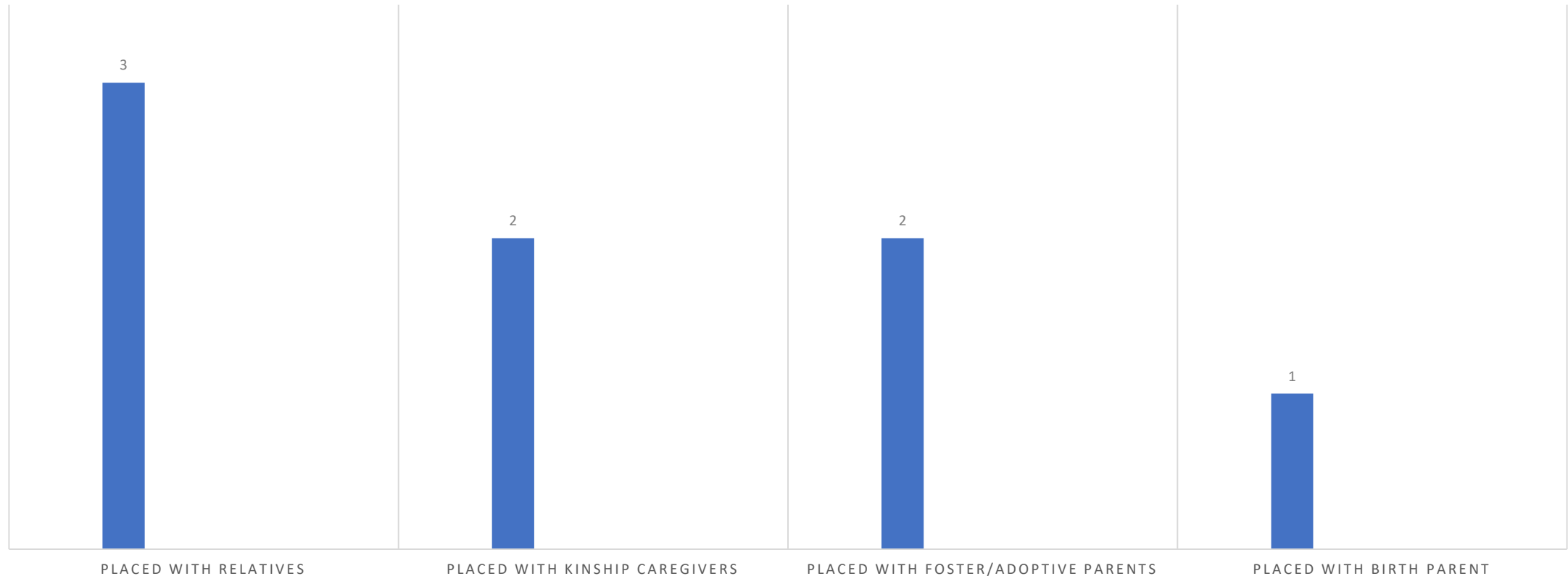


Office of the Ombudsperson for Children: Performance data (Period: October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023)

- OFC contacted the constituent within 48 hours of receiving the complaint in 67% of the cases. Contact was not made with the constituent within 48 hours of receiving the complaint in 33% of the cases.
- In April 2023, the office established the protocol of responding to the constituent complaint within 48 hours of receipt of the complaint. This response entailed contacting the constituent to schedule a time in which to gather additional information and clarity regarding their concerns.
- Of the six complaints open and active during this six month period, four of the cases have been closed and two remain active.
- Of the four cases that closed, one case closed within 45 business days and three cases closed between 72 and 80 days. The cases that closed beyond the 45-business day requirement needed further investigative steps completed, to include additional meetings with constituents and CFSA staff in addition to further reviews of assessments completed on children, parents, or adoptive families. One of the cases involved extensive engagement with the CFSA legal team and other District agencies.

Office of the Ombudsperson for Children: Performance data (Period: October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023)

PLACEMENTS OF CHILDREN/YOUTH AT TIME OF OFC COMPLAINT



The numbers in this graph reflect the number of children and where they were placed. These numbers are connected to the six active investigations during the first six months of FY 2023.

Office of the Ombudsperson for Children: Performance data (Period: October 1, 2022-March 31, 2023)

Source of complaints

Of the open cases being investigated by the OFC, the constituent complaints were received from the following sources:

- Parent=2
- Parent with a resource provider assisting=1
- Kinship caregiver with a resource provider assisting=1
- Foster parent=1
- Foster youth with a GAL assisting=1

Child and Family Outcomes data

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children requested data analysis for the following targeted metrics concerning dual jacketed or crossover youth during the first six months of FY 2023:

- # 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 open cw case, youth is arrested, youth enters delinquency system)
- School attendance/truancy concerns
- Involvement with 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 relative, etc.)

Child and Family Outcomes data

Crossover youth data

Data analysts from CFSA and the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) have worked together to provide the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children with data for the purpose of identifying youth who have had contact with CFSA and DYRS simultaneously during the time period (dual jacketed youth). The work on identifying crossover youth is ongoing with this report being an initial analysis of children who have had contact with both agencies.

Per the OFC's request, the data provided for this population of youth include the periods: FY 2021, FY2022, and FY 2023 (October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023).

[Dually_committed_youth_responses_062323 \(005\).pdf](#)

- **Population:** All young people who were simultaneously committed to CFSA and DYRS during FY 2023 Quarter 2.
- **Number of young people in the population:** 3

DC Child Welfare System: Strengths and Opportunities

Strengths:

- Great coordination with the nursing team in addressing the medical needs of children in care. This was reflected well in the documentation in the cases where medical issues were the focus.
- Excellent coordination in ensuring that sibling connections and bonds were established through visitation when children were placed in separate homes.
- Timely responses from social workers in response to inquiries from OFC. Responses to OFC emails/inquiries were typically received within 24 – 48 hours.
- The internal CFSA Child Fatality Review committee is very effective in assessing child fatality cases in general and those that include CFSA involvement.
- Coordination of efforts to engage the child welfare system on issues affecting children and families through community meetings and roundtables, and participation in CFSA coordinated Community Pop-up meetings, have been successful.

DC Child Welfare System: Strengths and Opportunities

Opportunities:

- Addressing the needs of unruly teens with serious abscondence behaviors: increase referrals to community resources and intensive treatment/placement options such as PRTF. **(1 case)**
- Addressing the needs of kinship and relative caregivers when children are placed in their homes (financial assistance, items like birth certificates, insurance and Medicaid cards, SNAP benefits, furniture, food, clothing, etc. **(3 cases)**)
- Monitoring of the results of referrals to community collaboratives.
- Ensuring foster parent and parent or foster parent and kinship caregiver have opportunities to share information about the child that was placed in the foster parent's home before the child is reunified. **(1 case)**

OFC Contact Information

- Office of the Ombudsperson for Children:
955 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20024
- Website: [Ofc.dc.gov](https://ofc.dc.gov) (Complaint form is linked to the website)
- Email:
Complaints: ofc.complaints@dc.gov
General: ombudsforchildren@dc.gov