



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Foster Care Ombudsman

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Managing HHS Foster Care Ombudsman

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Statutory Requirements

The Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO) assists foster youth (ages 17 and under) with inquiries and complaints about programs and services.

- Senate Bill 830, 84th Legislature
- House Bill 3462, 88th Legislature

Statutory Requirements

- Impartial party
- Youth only
- Investigation of unreported complaints
- Inform youth and CPS of results
- Consent and confidentiality
- Outreach collaboration with DFPS and HHSC
- Response from programs
- Collaborate with agencies on retaliatory actions
- Judicial proceedings
- Publish annual report

Our Goals

- Address complaints and inquires.
- Help youth report abuse and neglect.
- Work to identify and address individual and systemic issues.

Our Expectations

- Collaborate with us for positive outcomes for children and youth.
- Educate children, youth, and providers about the FCO.
- Ensure children and youth know how to contact us.
- Ensure that placements are reasonable and fair when implementing the rights of children and youth.





About the Team

- FCO started with one ombudsman in 2015.
- Through a budget rider, the Texas Legislature created three more ombudsman positions in 2017.
- In 2023, HHSC created an additional ombudsman position, bringing the total staff to five.
- Collectively, the FCO team has 26 years of experience.

Our Work

- We follow up with youth within one business day of the date of contact, and then at least every five business days after, until the case is closed.
- We maintain a record of all inquiries and complaints in the HHS Enterprise Administrative Report and Tracking System (HEART).

Complaint Process

- Assist only youth in foster care
- Review policies
- Review Information Management Protecting Adults and Children Texas (IMPACT)
- Document findings
- Make recommendations
- All reports of abuse and neglect are reported to Statewide Intake

Complaint Process

FCO is required by statute to serve as an “impartial party” in assisting youth with complaints.

- **Investigate Unreported Complaints**
 - If we discover unreported violations of policies during the investigation of a complaint, we’re required to investigate those unreported violations.
- **Confidentiality**
 - We must keep information confidential unless a child or youth gives permission to share with others.
- **Privacy**
 - Calls to us should be made in private to ensure calls are kept confidential.

Annual Report

FCO is required to publish an annual report every Dec. 1 with:

- A description of FCO activities.
- Trends in complaints, recommendations to address them, and an evaluation of the feasibility of those recommendations.
- DFPS and HHSC changes made in response to substantiated complaints.
- FCO outreach activities and a plan for the next year.
- Public feedback on the previous FCO annual report.

Common Complaints

Fiscal Year	Total Contacts
2021	911
2022	956
2023	1,361

Three most common complaints:

- Rights of children and youth in foster care
- Case recording
- Other

Examples of Common Complaints

Rights of children and youth in foster care. Youth complains about a specific right listed in policy, such as not being able to visit and have contact with persons outside of the foster care system or interacting with friends who are not in foster care.

Case recording. Caseworkers did not document pertinent information in IMPACT as required by Child Protective Services policy.

Other. Complaints not associated with the Child Protective Services Rights for children and youth in foster care. This includes complaints about hospital treatment, Home and Community-based Services (HCS) group homes and health care facilities (HCF).

Outreach



Have a question or problem with your foster care placement?

**FOSTER CARE
OMBUDSMAN
CAN HELP!**

Call to make confidential reports:
844-286-0769
hhs.texas.gov/foster-care-help

Foster Care Ombudsman
P. O. Box 13247, Austin, Texas 78711-3247
Fax: 888-780-8099

As a youth in foster care, you have a right to ask a question or file a complaint with the Foster Care Ombudsman if any of your rights have been violated or ignored. You cannot be punished or threatened with punishment for making a complaint, and you have a right to make an anonymous complaint, if you choose. If you are not sure how we can help, please call.

To report abuse or neglect at any time day or night, call
800-252-5400

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¿Tienes alguna pregunta o problema con tu colocación bajo cuidado temporal?

**¡EL OMBUDSMAN
PARA EL CUIDADO TEMPORAL
PUEDE AYUDARTE!**

Llama para hacer una denuncia confidencial:
1-844-286-0769
hhs.texas.gov/foster-care-help

Foster Care Ombudsman
P. O. Box 13247, Austin, Texas 78711-3247
Fax: 1-888-780-8099

Como joven bajo cuidado temporal, tienes el derecho de hacer preguntas o de presentar quejas ante el Ombudsman para el Cuidado Temporal si alguien ha violado o ignorado tus derechos. Nadie puede castigarte ni amenazarte con castigarte por presentar una queja, y tienes el derecho de presentar una queja anónima si lo prefieres. Si no sabes cómo te podemos ayudar, llámanos.

Para denunciar el abuso, maltrato o descuido a cualquier hora del día o de la noche, llama al:
1-800-252-5400

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Office of the
Ombudsman



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hhs.texas.gov/foster-care-help

Foster_Care_Ombudsman@hhsc.state.tx.us

Toll Free: 1-844-286-0769