

THIRD QUARTER REPORT

Foster Care Ombudsman

January 2025 - March 2025





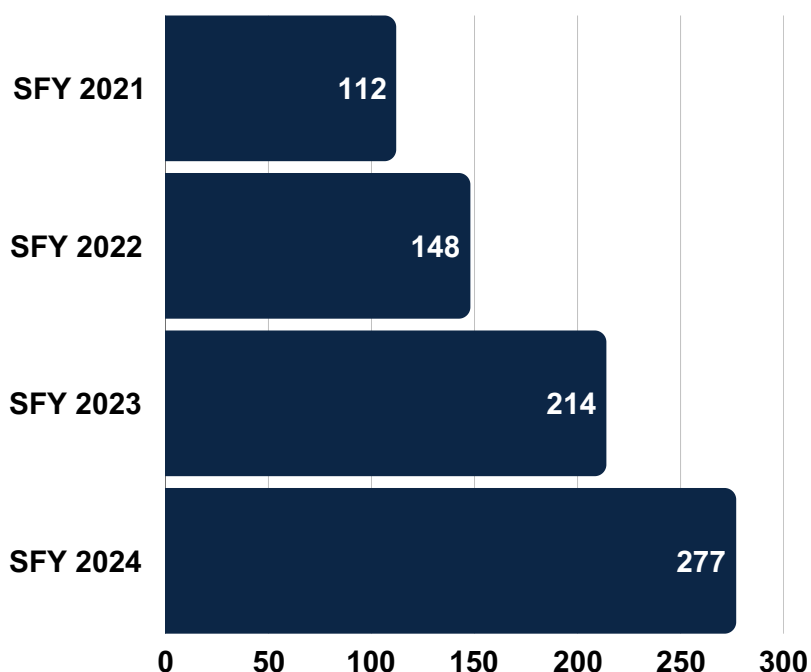
The Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO) division operates under the Office of Inspector General. Its mission is to receive and investigate concerns and complaints from foster children, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and other stakeholders regarding the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Based on its findings, the Foster Care Ombudsman makes recommendations for systemic reform.

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter

In the third quarter of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025, the Foster Care Ombudsman received requests for assistance from 231 individual complainants. The data below reflects the number of complainants by month and quarter for SFY 2025. Unless otherwise specified, the complaint data in this report pertains to complaints that were closed and completed as of March 31, 2025.

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter SFY 2025												
2024						2025						
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	SFY End Running Total
81	95	65	114	89	83	70	94	67				
Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Total
241			286			231						758

Third Quarter Contacts Per SFY



The bar chart on the left compares the number of individuals who received assistance during the third quarter of each SFY. There has been a steady increase in the number of individuals assisted each year.

While weather conditions may affect outreach activities during the third quarter, particularly due to travel constraints, this does not impact the Foster Care Ombudsman division, as it is available year-round to provide virtual presentations. To request a presentation, complete the [presentation request form](#).



Complaint Count by Complaint Theme

The Foster Care Ombudsman categorizes requests for assistance into several groups based on the type of complaint, the level of intervention required, and the resolution achieved. Complaints that fall into the "Not Applicable" category usually involve situations where the complainant could not be contacted after their initial request for assistance, or where the complainant withdrew their case after reaching a resolution, prior to the Ombudsman's investigation or involvement.

When individuals contact the Foster Care Ombudsman, they often submit multiple complaints. In this quarter, the Foster Care Ombudsman division received assistance requests from 231 individual complainants that totaled a 371 investigations this quarter.

Complaint Count by Complaint Theme					
Main Complaint Theme	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Action/Inaction of Agency/Employee	66	101	93	260	21.5%
Decision of Agency/Employee	25	39	25	89	7.4%
Education (Information and Referral)	49	39	31	119	9.9%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	31	63	24	118	9.8%
Lack of Communication	72	69	67	208	17.2%
N/A - Not Applicable	10	9	6	25	2.1%
Placement of Children	72	62	45	179	14.8%
Policy/Regulation Issue	18	14	18	50	4.1%
Removal of Children	16	26	35	77	6.4%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	22	17	17	56	4.6%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	8	9	10	27	2.2%
Total	389	448	371	1208	100%

Complaint Count by Closure Type

The Foster Care Ombudsman has effectively addressed all assistance requests, organizing them based on the type of resolution achieved. The information provided on the right outlines the characteristics of complaints at the time they were closed. Complaints that involve intervention or investigation by the Foster Care Ombudsman are classified as either substantiated or unsubstantiated.

During this quarter, the Foster Care Ombudsman confirmed that 89 out of the 371 investigations reviewed were substantiated. A case may be substantiated if there are significant delays in the processing and procedures related to the child's case, or if there are deviations from relevant policies, procedures, or laws.

Complaint Count by Closure Type					
Closure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Declined by FCO	3	4	1	8	0.6%
Information & Referral (Education)	119	100	102	321	26.6%
Substantiated	69	112	89	270	22.4%
Unable to Contact	21	21	12	54	4.5%
Unable to Determine Substantiation due to Lack of Information	6	13	7	26	2.2%
Unsubstantiated	161	188	155	504	41.7%
Withdrawn by Complainant	10	10	5	25	2.1%
Total	389	448	371	1208	100%

Finally, the one case classified as "Declined by the Foster Care Ombudsman" are in accordance with the W. Va. Code §16B-16-2(c). The Foster Care Ombudsman may decline to take on various cases when they have already conducted thorough investigations into similar cases, and there is no new information available to alter the original case determination.



Complainant Count by the Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Program

The Complainant Count by the Bureau for Social Services Program data shows the number of complaints related to specific Bureau for Social Services programs. Complaints categorized as "Not Applicable" involve issues that do not pertain to the Bureau for Social Services. In future reports, the Foster Care Ombudsman division plans to introduce more detailed categories to better capture additional complaints within this dataset. For instance, the three complaints classified as Non-Bureau for Social Services complaints include one regarding a Child Placing Agency and another regarding a child who was not in the Bureau for Social Services custody.

Complainant Count By Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Case County

The Foster Care Ombudsman gathers data during the intake process, which includes information about the complainant's county. Additionally, data is collected on the case county, which refers to the county where the child's Bureau of Social Services case is based. When analyzing the total number of complaints by county, it is crucial to recognize that each county has unique characteristics, including its population, demographics, and the number of child abuse and neglect petitions filed.

These five counties included in this quarterly report account for 36.4% of the overall cases and investigations handled by the Foster Care Ombudsman division. These counties with the highest complaint numbers this quarter do not necessarily indicate systemic issues.

Complainant Case Count by Bureau for Social Services Unit					
Bureau for Social Services Unit	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Adoption	6	6	10	22	2.9%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	0	4	0	4	0.5%
Child Protective Services	178	214	176	568	74.9%
Homefinding	17	7	5	29	3.8%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	7	1	1	9	1.2%
Institutional Investigative Unit	4	6	7	17	2.2%
Legal Guardianship	4	16	8	28	3.7%
Post-Adoption	7	4	3	14	1.8%
Youth Services	5	2	9	16	2.1%
Not Applicable	10	21	11	42	5.5%
Non-BSS	3	5	1	9	1.2%
Total	241	286	231	758	100%

Note: The federal Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children regulates the placement of children in other states. The Institutional Investigative Unit within the Bureau for Social Services is responsible for investigating cases of child abuse and neglect in residential facilities, schools, and foster homes.

Counties with Highest Complaint Count in 3rd Quarter		
County	Q3	Percent
Kanawha	27	11.7%
Harrison	16	6.9%
Berkeley	14	6.1%
Cabell	14	6.1%
Mercer	13	5.6%
Total	84	36.4%



This data may represent past or ongoing outreach efforts from the Foster Care Ombudsman division, which could have enhanced educational awareness about the Foster Care Ombudsman's role and functions within that county. As a result, this may have led to an increase in the number of complaints filed by stakeholders or families in those areas.

The numbers listed below indicate the number of cases handled by the Foster Care Ombudsman division from each county during this quarter, presented in alphabetical order.





Complaint Count by BSS Case County					
County	Q1	Q2	Q3	SFY Total	Percent
Barbour	3	9	1	13	1.7%
Berkeley	5	6	14	25	3.3%
Boone	3	1	2	6	0.8%
Braxton	2	6	0	8	1.1%
Brooke	0	1	3	4	0.5%
Cabell	11	13	14	38	5.0%
Calhoun	1	1	1	3	0.4%
Clay	2	0	1	3	0.4%
Doddridge	1	4	0	5	0.7%
Fayette	9	8	10	27	3.6%
Gilmer	3	1	0	4	0.5%
Grant	0	1	1	2	0.3%
Greenbrier	3	4	4	11	1.5%
Hampshire	4	2	3	9	1.2%
Hancock	2	4	2	8	1.1%
Hardy	0	1	1	2	0.3%
Harrison	8	10	16	34	4.5%
Jackson	4	7	2	13	1.7%
Jefferson	8	4	0	12	1.6%
Kanawha	33	32	27	92	12.1%
Lewis	7	8	4	19	2.5%
Lincoln	1	2	0	3	0.4%
Logan	4	7	3	14	1.8%
Marion	16	20	9	45	5.9%
Marshall	0	5	7	12	1.6%
Mason	2	3	4	9	1.2%
McDowell	2	4	2	8	1.1%
Mercer	13	8	13	34	4.5%
Mineral	0	1	1	2	0.3%

Complaint Count by BSS Case County					
County	Q1	Q2	Q3	SFY Total	Percent
Mingo	5	5	2	12	1.6%
Monongalia	6	7	8	21	2.8%
Monroe	1	1	0	2	0.3%
Morgan	0	2	1	3	0.4%
Nicholas	9	2	5	16	2.1%
Ohio	2	8	8	18	2.4%
Pendleton	0	0	0	0	0%
Pleasants	0	1	1	2	0.3%
Pocahontas	2	1	1	4	0.5%
Preston	9	8	4	21	2.8%
Putnam	6	6	2	14	1.8%
Raleigh	1	12	4	17	2.2%
Randolph	6	3	4	13	1.7%
Ritchie	4	0	2	6	0.8%
Roane	2	3	1	6	0.8%
Summers	2	0	2	4	0.5%
Taylor	7	8	6	21	2.8%
Tucker	1	2	0	3	0.4%
Tyler	1	0	1	2	0.3%
Upshur	2	1	1	4	0.5%
Wayne	2	3	3	8	1.1%
Webster	1	4	2	7	0.9%
Wetzel	4	7	5	16	2.1%
Wirt	0	1	0	1	0.1%
Wood	11	16	6	33	4.4%
Wyoming	1	2	2	5	0.7%
Not Applicable	7	5	10	22	2.9%
Out of State	2	4	5	11	1.5%
Statewide	0	1	0	1	0.1%
Total	241	286	231	758	100%

THANK YOU



Contact Us

-  304-558-1117
-  Request for Assistance Form
-  FosterCareOmbudsman@wv.gov
-  OIG Foster Care Ombudsman