

# FIRST QUARTER REPORT

---

**Foster Care Ombudsman**

July 2023 - September 2023





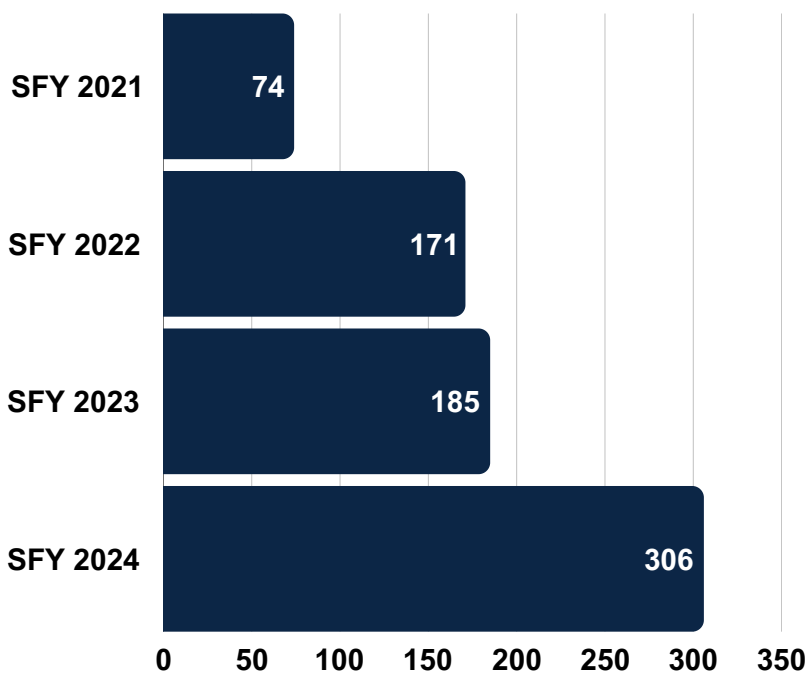
The Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO) division operates under the Office of Inspector General. Its mission is to receive and investigate concerns and complaints from foster children, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and other stakeholders regarding the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Based on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

### **Complainant Count by Month and Quarter**

In the first quarter of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024, the FCO received requests for assistance from 306 individual complainants. The data below reflects the number of complainants by month and quarter for SFY 2024. Unless otherwise specified, the complaint data in this report pertains to complaints that were closed and completed as of September 30, 2023.

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter SFY 2024												
2023						2024						
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	SFY End Running Total
93	82	131										
Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Total
306												306

### **First Quarter Contacts Per SFY**



The bar chart on the left compares the number of individuals who received assistance during the first quarter of each SFY. In both SFY 2024 and 2025, the FCO division exhibited in several events: the Student Success Summit in July, Youth Services System annual Celebrate Youth Festival in August, and Handle with Care conference in September 2023.

Additionally, in SFY 2024 there was a presentation for county school district in the northern region, several direct referrals from the legislature, and three media reports concerning abuse and neglect. These factors may have contributed to an increase in call volume to the FCO.



### **Complaint Count by Complaint Theme**

The FCO 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 FCO, they often submit multiple complaints. In this quarter, the FCO division received assistance requests from 306 individual complainants.

### **Complaint Count by Closure Type**

The FCO 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 FCO are classified as either substantiated or unsubstantiated.

This quarter, the FCO substantiated 67 out of the 306 complaints reviewed. Cases may be substantiated if there are significant delays in the child's case processing and procedures, or if there is a deviation from applicable policies, procedures, or laws.

Finally, the one case classified as "Declined by the FCO" are in accordance with the W. Va. Code §16B-16-2(c). The FCO 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.

<b>Complaint Count by Complaint Theme</b>		
<b>Main Complaint Theme</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Action/Inaction of Agency/Employee	55	18.0%
Placement of Children	73	23.8%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	56	18.3%
Lack of Communication	34	11.1%
Policy/Regulation Issue	23	7.5%
Decision of Agency Employee	20	6.5%
Not Applicable	15	4.9%
Removal of Children	15	4.9%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	9	2.9%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	6	2.0%
Information and/or Referral to Resources	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Complaint Count by Closure Type</b>		
<b>Closure</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Declined by FCO	1	0.3%
Information & Referral to Resources	101	33.0%
Research Only	34	11.1%
<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>21.9%</b>
Unable to Contact	17	5.6%
Unable to Determine Substantiation due to Lack of Information	3	1.0%
Unsubstantiated	74	24.2%
Withdrawn by Complainant	9	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100%</b>



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

The Complainant Count by BSS Program data shows the number of complaints related to specific BSS programs. Complaints categorized as "Not Applicable" involve issues that do not pertain to BSS. In future reports, the FCO division plans to introduce more detailed categories to better capture additional complaints within this dataset. For instance, the three complaints classified as Non-BSS complaints include one regarding a Child Placing Agency and another regarding a child who was not in BSS 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 (BSS) 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 27.1% of the overall cases and investigations handled by the FCO 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	Percent
Adoption	13	4.2%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	2	0.7%
Child Protective Services	228	74.5%
Homefinding	7	2.3%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	1	0.3%
Institutional Investigative Unit	1	0.3%
Legal Guardianship	18	5.9%
Post-Adoption	13	4.2%
Youth Services	6	2.0%
Not Applicable	17	5.6%
Non-BSS	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

### **Counties with Highest Complaint Count in 1st Quarter**

County	Q1	Percent
Kanawha	27	8.8%
Harrison	18	5.9%
Marion	15	4.9%
Monongalia	12	3.9%
Nicholas	11	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>27.1%</b>



This data may represent past or ongoing outreach efforts from the FCO division, which could have enhanced educational awareness about the FCO'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 FCO division from each county during this quarter, presented in alphabetical order.





<b>Complaint Count by BSS Case County</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>SFY Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Barbour	7	7	2.30%
Berkeley	10	10	3.30%
Boone	4	4	1.30%
Braxton	5	5	1.60%
Brooke	2	2	0.70%
Cabell	8	8	2.60%
Calhoun	0	0	0%
Clay	2	2	0.70%
Doddridge	1	1	0.30%
Fayette	9	9	2.90%
Gilmer	0	0	0%
Grant	2	2	0.70%
Greenbrier	1	1	0.30%
Hampshire	4	4	1.30%
Hancock	4	4	1.30%
Hardy	0	0	0%
Harrison	18	18	5.90%
Jackson	10	10	3.30%
Jefferson	6	6	2.00%
Kanawha	27	27	8.80%
Lewis	3	3	1.00%
Lincoln	3	3	1.00%
Logan	4	4	1.30%
Marion	15	15	4.90%
Marshall	8	8	2.60%
Mason	3	3	1.00%
McDowell	0	0	0%
Mercer	5	5	1.60%
Mineral	4	4	1.30%

<b>Complaint Count by BSS Case County</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>SFY Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Mingo	8	8	2.60%
Monongalia	12	12	3.90%
Monroe	0	0	0%
Morgan	2	2	0.70%
Nicholas	11	11	3.60%
Ohio	5	5	1.60%
Pendleton	0	0	0%
Pleasants	0	0	0%
Pocahontas	3	3	1.00%
Preston	9	9	2.90%
Putnam	3	3	1.00%
Raleigh	6	6	2.00%
Randolph	9	9	2.90%
Ritchie	0	0	0%
Roane	3	3	1.00%
Summers	1	1	0.30%
Taylor	7	7	2.30%
Tucker	1	1	0.30%
Tyler	1	1	0.30%
Upshur	5	5	1.60%
Wayne	6	6	2.00%
Webster	3	3	1.00%
Wetzel	9	9	2.90%
Wirt	3	3	1.00%
Wood	9	9	2.90%
Wyoming	3	3	1.00%
Not Applicable	19	19	6.20%
Out of State	2	2	0.70%
Statewide	1	1	0.30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100%</b>

# THANK YOU



## Contact Us

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