

# THIRD QUARTER REPORT

---

**Foster Care Ombudsman**

January 2024 - March 2024





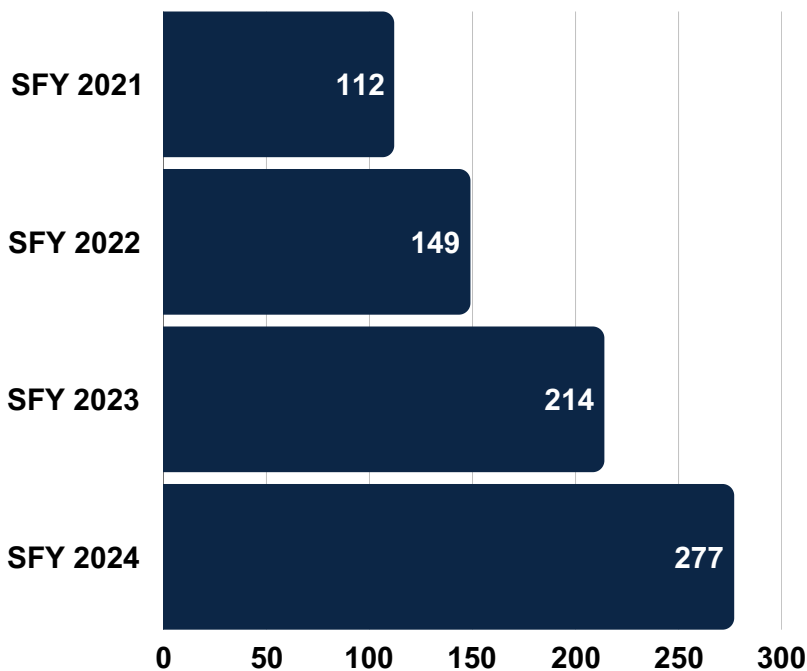
The Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO) division operates under the Office of Inspector General. Its mission is to receive and investigate concerns and complaints from foster children, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and other stakeholders regarding the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Based on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

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

In the third quarter of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024, the FCO received requests for assistance from 277 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 March 31, 2024.

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	101	73	68	72	99	106				
Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Total
306			242			277						825

### **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, please complete the [\*presentation request form\*](#).



### **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 277 individual complainants.

Complaint Count by Complaint Theme					
Main Complaint Theme	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Action/Inaction of Agency/Employee	55	57	58	170	20.1%
Placement of Children	73	41	37	151	18.3%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	56	30	40	126	15.3%
Lack of Communication	34	37	39	110	13.3%
Policy/Regulation Issue	23	14	7	44	5.3%
Decision of Agency Employee	20	15	20	55	6.7%
Not Applicable	15	12	7	34	4.1%
Removal of Children	15	17	14	46	5.6%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	9	10	15	34	4.1%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	6	9	7	22	2.7%
Information and/or Referral to Resources	0	0	33	33	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **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 69 out of the 277 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.

Complaint Count by Closure Type					
Closure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Declined by FCO	1	1	1	3	0.4
Information & Referral to Resources	101	106	112	319	38.7
Research Only	34	0	2	36	4.4
<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>23.9</b>
Unable to Contact	17	8	11	36	4.4
Unable to Determine Substantiation due to Lack of Information	3	2	4	9	1.1
Unsubstantiated	74	52	64	190	23.0
Withdrawn by Complainant	9	12	14	35	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>100%</b>

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.



### **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.

<b>Complainant Case Count by Bureau for Social Services Unit</b>					
<b>Bureau for Social Services Unit</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Adoption	13	11	4	28	3.4%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	2	3	3	8	1.0%
Child Protective Services	228	179	183	590	71.5%
Homefinding	7	8	11	26	3.2%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	1	0	7	8	1.0%
Institutional Investigative Unit	1	2	2	5	0.6%
Legal Guardianship	18	7	16	41	5.0%
Post-Adoption	13	11	9	33	0.4%
Youth Services	6	5	9	20	2.4%
Not Applicable	17	16	33	66	0.8%
Non-BSS	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>825</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.

### **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 31.4% 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.

<b>Counties with Highest Complaint Count in 3rd Quarter</b>		
<b>County</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Kanawha	32	11.6%
Ohio	15	5.4%
Raleigh	14	5.1%
Marion	14	5.1%
Monongalia	12	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>31.4%</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.





Complaint Count by BSS Case County					
County	Q1	Q2	Q3	SFY Total	Percent
Barbour	7	6	11	24	2.90%
Berkeley	10	8	5	23	2.80%
Boone	4	1	6	11	1.30%
Braxton	5	3	4	12	1.50%
Brooke	2	1	1	4	0.50%
Cabell	8	7	8	23	2.80%
Calhoun	0	8	0	8	1.00%
Clay	2	5	0	7	0.80%
Doddridge	1	0	0	1	0.10%
Fayette	9	3	12	24	2.90%
Gilmer	0	0	3	3	0.40%
Grant	2	0	2	4	0.50%
Greenbrier	1	2	2	5	0.60%
Hampshire	4	1	0	5	0.60%
Hancock	4	5	2	11	1.30%
Hardy	0	0	0	0	0%
Harrison	18	14	7	41	5.00%
Jackson	10	4	10	24	2.90%
Jefferson	6	1	0	7	0.08%
Kanawha	27	30	32	91	11.00%
Lewis	3	5	4	12	1.50%
Lincoln	3	2	0	5	0.60%
Logan	4	3	2	9	1.10%
Marion	15	9	14	40	4.80%
Marshall	8	6	3	17	2.10%
Mason	3	4	5	12	1.50%
McDowell	0	0	0	0	0%
Mercer	5	4	4	13	1.60%
Mineral	4	0	2	6	0.70%

Complaint Count by BSS Case County					
County	Q1	Q2	Q3	SFY Total	Percent
Mingo	8	3	5	16	1.90%
Monongalia	12	5	12	32	3.90%
Monroe	0	0	1	1	0.10%
Morgan	2	0	2	4	0.50%
Nicholas	11	4	6	21	2.50%
Ohio	5	9	15	33	4.00%
Pendleton	0	0	0	0	0%
Pleasants	0	0	0	0	0%
Pocahontas	3	0	2	5	0.60%
Preston	9	11	2	22	2.70%
Putnam	3	4	4	11	1.30%
Raleigh	6	4	14	29	3.50%
Randolph	9	6	5	20	2.40%
Ritchie	0	3	0	3	0.30%
Roane	3	7	2	12	1.50%
Summers	1	1	1	3	0.40%
Taylor	7	3	5	15	1.80%
Tucker	1	1	2	4	0.50%
Tyler	1	0	0	1	0.10%
Upshur	5	8	3	16	1.90%
Wayne	6	0	2	8	1.00%
Webster	3	1	2	6	0.70%
Wetzel	9	2	9	23	2.80%
Wirt	3	0	1	4	0.50%
Wood	9	7	9	27	3.30%
Wyoming	3	1	2	6	0.70%
Not Applicable	19	30	1	54	6.50%
Out of State	2	0	4	6	0.70%
Statewide	1	0	0	1	0.10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>100%</b>

# THANK YOU



## Contact Us

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