

FIRST QUARTER REPORT

Foster Care Ombudsman

July 2025 - September 2025





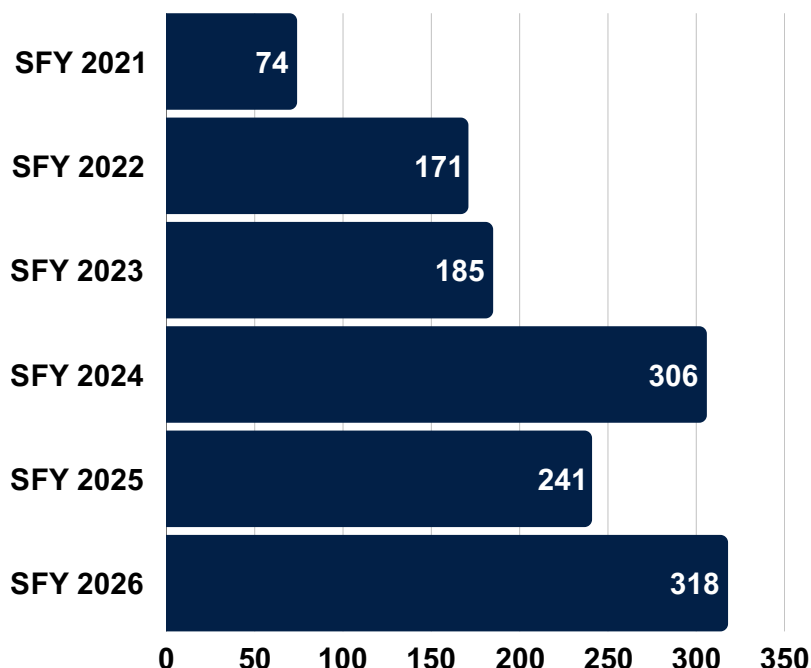
The Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO) Division operates under the Office of Inspector General. Its mission is to receive and investigate concerns and complaints from foster children, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and other stakeholders regarding the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Based on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

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter

In the first quarter of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025, the Foster Care Ombudsman Division received requests for assistance from 318 individual complainants. The data below reflects the number of complainants by month and quarter for SFY 2026. Unless otherwise specified, the complaint data in this report pertains to complaints that were closed and completed as of September 30, 2025.

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter SFY 2026													
2025						2026							
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	SFY End Running Total	
104	112	102											
Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Total	
318													

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 State Fiscal Year.

Outreach & Education

In the first quarter of SFY 2026, the Foster Care Ombudsman Division exhibited in multiple events, including the Student Success Summit and the Youth Services System's Annual Celebrate Youth Festival. The Foster Care Ombudsman Division also participated in or presented information to over 70 meetings and events.



Complaint Count by Complaint Theme

The Foster Care Ombudsman Division 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 withdrew their case after reaching a resolution, prior to the Ombudsman's investigation or involvement.

When individuals contact the Foster Care Ombudsman Division, they often submit multiple complaints. In this quarter, the Foster Care Ombudsman Division received assistance requests from 318 individual complainants. However, a total of 465 specific complaints were actually investigated by the Foster Care Ombudsman Division, categorized under the primary, secondary, or tertiary complaint themes. Further breaking down the complaint theme of "Financial Issue/Reimbursement," the Foster Care Ombudsman Division assisted complainants in recovering \$6,277.96 in benefits during this quarter.

Complaint Count by Complaint Theme		
Main Complaint Theme	Q1	Percent
Action/Inaction of Agency/Employee	104	22.4%
Placement of Children	29	6.2%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	53	11.4%
Lack of Communication	46	9.9%
Policy/Regulation Issue	67	14.4%
Decision of Agency Employee	3	0.6%
Not Applicable	43	9.2%
Removal of Children	61	13.1%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	32	6.9%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	16	3.4%
Information and/or Referral to Resources	11	2.4%
Total	465	100%

Complaint Count by Closure Type

The Foster Care Ombudsman Division 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 involved intervention or investigation by the Division are classified as either substantiated or unsubstantiated. This quarter, the Foster Care Ombudsman Division substantiated 83 out of the 465 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	Percent
Declined by FCO	5	1.1%
Information & Referral to Resources	103	22.2%
Research Only	30	6.5%
Substantiated	83	17.8%
Unable to Contact	33	7.1%
Unable to Determine Substantiation due to Lack of Information	21	4.5%
Unsubstantiated	182	39.1%
Withdrawn by Complainant	8	1.7%
Total	465	100%

Finally, the five cases classified as "Declined by the FCO" are in accordance with the W. Va. Code §16B-16-2(c). The Foster Care Ombudsman Division 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 Foster Care Ombudsman Division plans to introduce more detailed categories to better capture additional complaints within this dataset.

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

The Foster Care Ombudsman Division 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 33% 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	Percent
Adoption	8	2.5%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	1	0.3%
Child Protective Services	251	78.9%
Homefinding	8	2.5%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	2	0.6%
Institutional Investigative Unit	5	1.6%
Legal Guardianship	9	2.8%
Post-Adoption	17	5.3%
Youth Services	3	0.9%
Not Applicable	8	2.5%
Non-BSS	6	1.9%
Total	318	100%

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	35	11%
Cabell	21	6.7%
Marion	19	6.0%
Harrison	17	5.3%
Mercer	13	4.1%
Total	318	33.1%



This data may represent past or ongoing outreach efforts from the Division, which could have enhanced educational awareness about the Foster Care Ombudsman Division's role and functions within a county. As a result, this may lead 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	SFY Total	Percent
Barbour	6	6	1.9%
Berkeley	11	11	3.5%
Boone	1	1	0.3%
Braxton	4	4	1.3%
Brooke	1	1	0.3%
Cabell	21	21	6.6%
Calhoun	2	2	0.6%
Clay	3	3	0.9%
Doddridge	2	2	0.6%
Fayette	6	6	1.9%
Gilmer	2	2	0.6%
Grant	2	2	1.9%
Greenbrier	5	5	0.6%
Hampshire	8	8	0.6%
Hancock	6	6	1.9%
Hardy	2	2	0.6%
Harrison	17	17	5.3%
Jackson	2	2	0.6%
Jefferson	4	4	1.3%
Kanawha	35	35	11.0%
Lewis	3	3	0.9%
Lincoln	1	1	0.3%
Logan	11	11	3.5%
Marion	19	19	6.0%
Marshall	6	6	1.9%
Mason	2	2	0.6%
McDowell	3	3	0.9%
Mercer	13	13	4.1%
Mineral	2	2	0.6%

Complaint Count by BSS Case County			
County	Q1	SFY Total	Percent
Mingo	2	2	0.6%
Monongalia	13	13	3.8%
Monroe	1	1	0.3%
Morgan	0	0	0%
Nicholas	1	1	0.3%
Ohio	16	16	5.0%
Pendleton	0	0	0%
Pleasants	0	0	0%
Pocahontas	1	1	0.3%
Preston	7	7	2.2%
Putnam	12	12	3.8%
Raleigh	6	6	1.9%
Randolph	5	5	1.6%
Ritchie	6	6	1.9%
Roane	4	4	1.3%
Summers	3	3	0.9%
Taylor	2	2	0.6%
Tucker	0	0	0%
Tyler	1	1	0.3%
Upshur	3	3	0.9%
Wayne	3	3	0.9%
Webster	3	3	0.9%
Wetzel	3	3	0.9%
Wirt	0	0	0%
Wood	12	12	3.8%
Wyoming	2	2	0.6%
Not Applicable	10	10	3.1%
Out of State	3	3	0.9%
Statewide	0	0	0%
Total	318	318	100%

THANK YOU



Contact Us

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