

THIRD QUARTER REPORT

Foster Care Ombudsman

January 2026 - March 2026





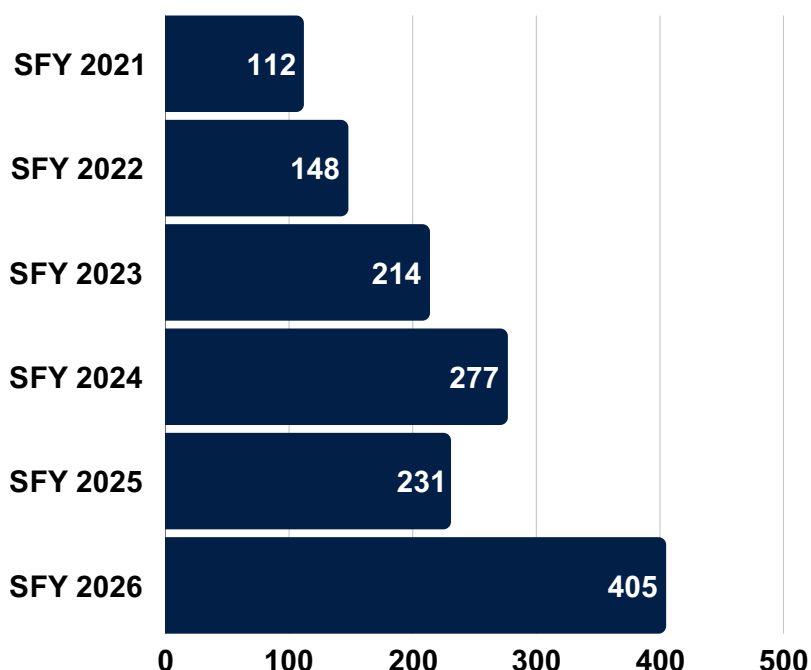
The Foster Care Ombudsman Division operates under the Office of Inspector General. Its mission is to receive and investigate concerns and complaints from foster children, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and other stakeholders regarding the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Based on its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

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter

In the third quarter of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026, the Foster Care Ombudsman Division received requests for assistance from 405 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 March 31, 2026.

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	100	75	118	113	133	159				1,016
Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Total
318			293			405						1,016

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 State Fiscal Year.



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 Foster Care Ombudsman Division'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 405 individual complainants. However, a total of 587 specific complaints were investigated by the Division, categorized under the primary, secondary, and tertiary complaint themes. Further breaking down the complaint theme of "Financial Issue/Reimbursement", the Foster Care Ombudsman Division assisted complainants in recovering \$67,694.48 in benefits during this quarter.

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 involve intervention or investigation by the Foster Care Ombudsman Division are classified as either substantiated or unsubstantiated.

This quarter, the Foster Care Ombudsman Division substantiated 162 out of the 587 complaints reviewed. Cases may be substantiated if there are significant delays in the child's case processing or procedures, or if there is deviation from applicable policies, procedures, or laws.

Finally, the five cases 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.

Complaint Count by Complaint Theme					
Main Complaint Theme	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Action/Inaction of Agency/Employee	104	128	149	381	25.7%
Placement of Children	29	31	40	100	6.7%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	53	43	57	153	10.3%
Lack of Communication	46	38	46	130	8.8%
Policy/Regulation Issue	67	49	52	168	11.3%
Decision of Agency Employee	3	4	10	17	1.1%
Not Applicable	43	48	54	145	9.8%
Removal of Children	61	40	110	211	14.2%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	32	28	36	96	6.5%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	16	17	28	61	4.1%
Information and/or Referral to Resources	11	4	5	20	1.3%
Total	465	430	587	1,482	100%

Complaint Count by Closure Type					
Closure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Declined by FCO	5	5	4	14	0.9%
Information & Referral to Resources	103	80	102	285	19.3%
Research Only	30	3	4	37	2.5%
Substantiated	83	118	162	363	24.5%
Unable to Contact	33	21	26	80	5.4%
Unable to Determine Substantiation due to Lack of Information	21	9	19	49	3.3%
Unsubstantiated	182	188	256	626	42.3%
Withdrawn by Complainant	8	6	12	26	1.8%
Total	465	430	585	1,480	100%



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.

Complainant Case Count by Bureau for Social Services Unit					
Bureau for Social Services Unit	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percent
Adoption	8	10	9	27	2.7%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	1	1	8	10	1.0%
Child Protective Services	251	237	308	796	78.3%
Homefinding	8	6	10	24	2.4%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	2	0	1	3	0.3%
Institutional Investigative Unit	5	5	5	15	1.5%
Legal Guardianship	9	9	6	24	2.4%
Post-Adoption	17	17	35	69	6.8%
Youth Services	3	3	4	10	1.0%
Not Applicable	8	0	3	11	1.1%
Non-BSS	6	5	16	27	2.7%
Total	318	293	405	1,016	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.

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 34.5% 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.

Counties with Highest Complaint Count in 3rd Quarter		
County	Q3	Percent
Kanawha	55	13.6%
Ohio	24	5.9%
Raleigh	22	5.4%
Marion	20	4.9%
Monongalia	19	4.7%
Total	405	31.4%



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 Division'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	6	4	10	20	2.0
Berkeley	11	4	11	26	2.6
Boone	1	2	3	6	0.6
Braxton	4	2	5	11	1.1
Brooke	1	0	6	7	0.7
Cabell	21	24	24	69	6.8
Calhoun	2	1	1	4	0.4
Clay	3	2	3	8	0.8
Doddridge	2	3	5	10	1.0
Fayette	6	3	9	18	1.8
Gilmer	2	2	1	5	0.5
Grant	2	0	1	3	0.3
Greenbrier	5	4	5	14	1.4
Hampshire	8	2	2	12	1.2
Hancock	6	13	18	37	3.6
Hardy	2	1	3	6	0.6
Harrison	17	13	9	39	3.8
Jackson	2	1	8	11	1.1
Jefferson	4	4	1	9	0.9
Kanawha	35	24	55	114	11.2
Lewis	3	5	6	14	1.4
Lincoln	1	0	0	1	0.1
Logan	11	3	5	19	1.9
Marion	19	19	19	57	5.6
Marshall	6	8	10	24	2.4
Mason	2	4	4	10	1.0
McDowell	3	5	3	11	1.1
Mercer	13	14	12	39	3.8
Mineral	2	2	1	5	0.5

Complaint Count by BSS Case County					
County	Q1	Q2	Q3	SFY Total	Percent
Mingo	2	0	1	3	0.3%
Monongalia	12	10	22	44	4.3%
Monroe	1	0	0	1	0.1%
Morgan	0	2	2	4	0.4%
Nicholas	1	6	3	10	1.0%
Ohio	16	16	18	50	5.0%
Pendleton	0	0	0	0	0%
Pleasants	0	2	2	4	0.4%
Pocahontas	1	2	0	3	0.3%
Preston	7	3	2	12	1.2%
Putnam	12	6	6	24	2.4%
Raleigh	6	5	9	20	2.0%
Randolph	5	0	6	11	1.1%
Ritchie	6	8	3	17	1.7%
Roane	4	5	3	12	1.2%
Summers	3	0	1	4	0.4%
Taylor	2	10	9	21	2.1%
Tucker	0	0	0	0	0%
Tyler	1	1	0	2	0.2%
Upshur	3	3	3	9	0.9%
Wayne	3	7	6	16	1.6%
Webster	3	1	3	7	0.7%
Wetzel	3	2	5	10	1.0%
Wirt	0	0	0	0	0%
Wood	12	9	20	41	4.0%
Wyoming	2	5	7	14	1.4%
Not Applicable	10	19	31	60	6.0%
Out of State	3	2	2	7	0.7%
Statewide	0	0	1	1	0.1%
Total	318	293	405	1,016	100%

THANK YOU



Contact Us

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