



Office of Children's Ombudsman

Annual Report FY 2018

Message from the Ombudsman:

It is an honor of mine to be named Children's Ombudsman for the State of Michigan. I was appointed to the position by Governor Gretchen Whitmer effective January 1, 2019. This report outlines the work of the office from October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018.

Prior to my appointment, I spent 21 years as Prosecutor for Ingham County with the last nine years being served as Chief Assistant Prosecutor. I spent my career advocating for victims whether they be adult or child. One of my proudest accomplishments in those 21 years was recognizing the need for every child to have a safe place for healing and to have a voice. This basic necessity led to me founding Small Talk Children's Advocacy Center during my tenure at Ingham County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. I am excited for the opportunity to advocate for all children across the State of Michigan through my position as Director of the Office of Children's Ombudsman. I welcome the collaboration with MDHHS and other partners to address the needs of our child welfare system as not one singular agency can tackle the task alone. We simply must work as a unified team with the betterment of children and families in mind. I also look forward to recommending strategies and protocols that work best for the individuals whom fight every day to make sure children are safe. The children of today are tomorrow's leaders and I am committed to doing everything in my power to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing.



With gratitude

Lisa McCormick

Children's Ombudsman

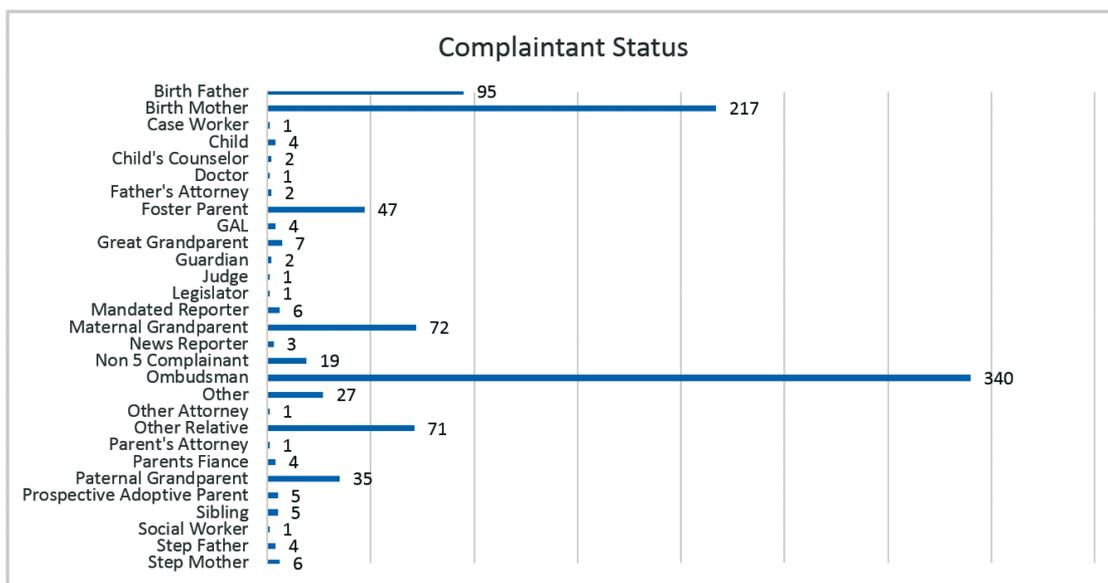


Figure 1

The OCO investigates two types of cases, Complainant Investigations and Child Death Investigations.

The OCO may investigate a complaint from an individual who alleges that DHHS and/or a private agency violated law or policy or made decisions harmful to a child's health and/or safety. Figure 1 shows complaints received broken up by complainant source.

Child Death Investigations focus on determining whether interventions made by DHHS and/or a private agency were handled in accordance with law and policy. The OCO also determines whether a correlation existed between previous agency involvement with the family and the circumstances that led to the child's death. When DHHS is made aware of a Child Death, the Office of Family Advocate (OFA) notifies the OCO via a Child Death Alert. Information in the Child Death Alert is used to determine if the OCO will open up an investigation. The OCO must investigate a child's death when:

- ◆ A child died during an active CPS investigation or open services case, or there was an assigned or rejected CPS complaint within the previous 24 months.
- ◆ A child died while in foster care, unless the death resulted from natural causes and there were no prior CPS or licensing complaints concerning the foster home.
- ◆ A child was returned home from foster care and there is an active foster care case.
- ◆ The foster care case involving the deceased child or sibling was closed within the previous 24 months.

The OCO can be contacted by calling 1-800-642-4326 or 517-373-3077; by fax 517-335-4471; by mail at P.O Box 30026 Lansing, MI 48909 or online at www.michigan.gov/OCO

Please provide your name, telephone number, children's names, dates of births, the agency involved (County DHHS or private), a description of your concern and what you would like the OCO to do.



Figure 4