

**VOLUME II: HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES**

OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE

Agency Summary

Office of the Child Advocate

Agency Mission

To monitor the Department of Children, Youth and Families to ensure that it offers children in its care adequate protection and quality services, while affording these children respect for their individual rights and dignity. These activities include, but are not limited to, public education, legislative advocacy, investigation, and litigation. To review and make recommendations regarding the Department of Children, Youth and Families procedures; to investigate institutional abuse allegations and child fatalities; to provide information and referral on matters relating to children; participate in voluntary admissions procedures; to monitor child placements; to conduct site visits at all DCYF licensed placements; and to review the Department of Children, Youth and Families' compliance with licensing regulations.

Agency Description

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is charged with fulfilling a statutory mandate to protect the legal, civil and special rights of all children and youth involved in the care of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). The Office strives to improve conditions and circumstances through monitoring, compliance and advocacy. The Office is staffed with 10.0 authorized full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The Office is responsible for providing oversight to DCYF and the children and families they serve. This includes the monitoring of DCYF licensed facilities. The Office also provides direct legal representation for a portion of children voluntarily placed in state care and youth involved in the VEC program. The OCA can provide legal advocacy in the case of any child open to DCYF. The Office reviews and monitors systematic and individual issues related to residents at the Rhode Island Training School. It provides direct oversight and on-site visits. The OCA also files Victim Compensation claims for children who have been physically and/or sexually assaulted and are in the care of the State. Please see our Agency Narrative for a further description of the work performed by the OCA.

Statutory History

In 1978, the General Assembly created the Office of the Child Advocate. Its powers and duties are codified in R.I.G.L. 42-73. The Office of the Child Advocate possesses a statutory right of access, including subpoena power, to all providers; the Family Court; Department of Children, Youth and Families; and law enforcement records. There is also a right of physical access to all child-care programs and children in care. In 1992, the Office of the Child Advocate's responsibilities with respect to children in state care were statutorily expanded to include review of child fatality cases and representation of child victims of crime pursuant to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act. In 2016, a bill was signed into law mandating the OCA to review every child fatality and near fatality, when the child's family, caretaker, or household member currently has or previously had involvement with DCYF.

Budget

Office of the Child Advocate

	2022 Actuals	2023 Actuals	2024 Enacted Budget	2024 Revised Budget	2025 Recommended
Expenditures by Program					
Central Management	1,088,617	1,271,513	1,649,914	1,637,931	1,641,426
Total Expenditures	1,088,617	1,271,513	1,649,914	1,637,931	1,641,426
Expenditures by Object					
Salary and Benefits	1,007,391	1,116,756	1,479,339	1,421,327	1,486,377
Contract Professional Services	3,016	972	2,700	2,700	2,700
Operating Supplies and Expenses	78,210	145,182	165,875	211,904	150,349
Subtotal: Operating	1,088,617	1,262,909	1,647,914	1,635,931	1,639,426
Capital Purchases and Equipment	0	8,603	2,000	2,000	2,000
Subtotal: Other	0	8,603	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total Expenditures	1,088,617	1,271,513	1,649,914	1,637,931	1,641,426
Expenditures by Source of Funds					
General Revenue	1,033,943	1,259,570	1,649,914	1,625,931	1,641,426
Federal Funds	54,674	11,942	0	12,000	0
Total Expenditures	1,088,617	1,271,513	1,649,914	1,637,931	1,641,426
FTE Authorization	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0

Personnel Agency Summary

Office of the Child Advocate

	FY 2024		FY 2025	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified	10.0	920,691	10.0	935,322
Subtotal	10.0	920,691	10.0	935,322
Turnover		(40,896)		(12,349)
Total Salaries		879,795		922,973
Benefits				
Contract Stipends		4,500		4,500
FICA		67,305		70,606
Health Benefits		126,706		138,100
Payroll Accrual		5,140		5,354
Retiree Health		39,767		36,364
Retirement		263,362		272,024
Subtotal		506,780		526,948
Total Salaries and Benefits	10.0	1,386,575	10.0	1,449,921
Cost Per FTE Position		138,658		144,992
Statewide Benefit Assessment		34,752		36,456
Payroll Costs	10.0	1,421,327	10.0	1,486,377
Purchased Services				
Clerical and Temporary Services		1,700		1,700
Legal Services		1,000		1,000
Subtotal		2,700		2,700
Total Personnel	10.0	1,424,027	10.0	1,489,077
Distribution by Source of Funds				
General Revenue	10.0	1,424,027	10.0	1,489,077
Total All Funds	10.0	1,424,027	10.0	1,489,077

Personnel

Office of the Child Advocate

Central Management

		FY 2024		FY 2025	
		FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified					
CHILD ADVOCATE	0823 F	1.0	147,245	1.0	147,245
CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY	0822 A	1.0	58,223	1.0	59,617
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION COORDINATOR	0828 A	2.0	147,704	2.0	153,569
SENIOR PLANNING & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST	0328 A	2.0	148,467	2.0	152,606
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR	0333 A	1.0	99,525	1.0	99,525
STAFF ATTORNEY III	8732 A	1.0	85,226	1.0	88,459
STAFF ATTORNEY IV	8834 A	1.0	100,382	1.0	100,382
STAFF ATTORNEY IV	8841 A	1.0	133,919	1.0	133,919
Subtotal Unclassified		10.0	920,691	10.0	935,322
Subtotal		10.0	920,691	10.0	935,322
Turnover			(40,896)		(12,349)
Total Salaries			879,795		922,973
Benefits					
Contract Stipends			4,500		4,500
FICA			67,305		70,606
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Distribution by Source of Funds					
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Performance Measures

Office of the Child Advocate

Central Management

Visits to DCYF Licensed Facilities

The figures below represent the Department of Children, Youth, and Families licensed facilities that the OCA visits. The OCA monitors all facilities licensed by the DCYF including but not limited to group homes, foster homes and the RI Training School. Through thorough site reviews and routine visits by OCA staff the office ensures the appropriateness of the physical living conditions, suitability of clinical treatment programs, compliance with licensing regulations, compliance with contractual obligations and reviews the safety and well-being of children in a particular placement. During drop in visits or site reviews the OCA staff are sure to connect with the children placed in the program and ensure their needs are being met. [Note: This measure was previously combined with another measure - "Face to Face Visits".]

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Target	70	350	375	125	125
Actual	387	487	112	--	--

Resolved Inquiries

OCA receives a variety of inquiries each day, requiring differing levels of response. Each staff member is a vital part of providing a proper resolution, which includes but is not limited to referrals, relaying information, providing notice to DCYF of an issue and assisting with the process to provide an appropriate resolution, a formal investigation, a site review or legal intervention. The figures below represent the number of inquiries resolved.

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Target	300	500	500	500	525
Actual	611	682	517	--	--

Court Hearings

Pursuant to the statutory authority of the OCA, the Rhode Island Family Court can appoint the OCA to any case of a child open to the Department of Children, Youth and Families. The OCA will enter into the case to represent the best interest of the child and ensure that their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional and behavioral needs are met. The OCA will attend meetings and court hearings on behalf of the child, to advocate and ensure that there is an appropriate resolution to the issues presented. The figures below represent the number of court hearings attended by OCA attorneys in pursuit of legal advocacy on behalf of children and youth referred to our office by the RI Family Court. [Note: This performance measure was established in FY 2023 and historical targets and actuals are not available.]

	<i>Reporting Period: Calendar Year</i>				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Target	--	--	--	250	250
Actual	--	--	383	--	--

Face to Face Visits

The figures below represent the face to face visits the OCA performed during drop in visits or site reviews to connect with the children placed in the program and ensure their needs are being met. [Note: This performance measure was established in FY 2024 and historical targets and actuals are not available. This measure was previously combined with another measure - "Visits to DCYF Licensed Facilities".]

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Target	--	--	--	500	500
Actual	--	--	722	--	--
