

**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 13.0 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 1979, 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

	2023 Actuals	2024 Actuals	2025 Enacted Budget	2025 Revised Budget	2026 Recommended
Expenditures by Program					
Central Management	1,271,513	1,395,026	1,891,426	1,913,740	2,264,613
Total Expenditures	1,271,513	1,395,026	1,891,426	1,913,740	2,264,613
Expenditures by Object					
Salary and Benefits	1,116,756	1,222,053	1,736,377	1,747,971	2,059,493
Contract Professional Services	972	54	2,700	3,000	3,000
Operating Supplies and Expenses	145,182	172,919	150,349	160,769	200,120
Subtotal: Operating	1,262,909	1,395,026	1,889,426	1,911,740	2,262,613
Capital Purchases and Equipment	8,603	0	2,000	2,000	2,000
Subtotal: Other	8,603	0	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total Expenditures	1,271,513	1,395,026	1,891,426	1,913,740	2,264,613
Expenditures by Source of Funds					
General Revenue	1,259,570	1,429,015	1,891,426	1,913,740	2,264,613
Federal Funds	11,942	(33,989)	0	0	0
Total Expenditures	1,271,513	1,395,026	1,891,426	1,913,740	2,264,613
FTE Authorization	10.0	10.0	13.0	13.0	13.0

Personnel Agency Summary

Office of the Child Advocate

	FY 2025		FY 2026	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified	13.0	1,190,073	13.0	1,269,508
Subtotal	13.0	1,190,073	13.0	1,269,508
Turnover		(117,600)		0
Total Salaries		1,072,473		1,269,508
Benefits				
Contract Stipends		4,500		4,500
FICA		82,042		97,116
Health Benefits		168,815		197,797
Payroll Accrual		6,274		7,399
Retiree Health		42,254		41,259
Retirement		340,510		405,099
Subtotal		644,395		753,170
Total Salaries and Benefits	13.0	1,716,868	13.0	2,022,678
Cost Per FTE Position		132,067		155,591
Statewide Benefit Assessment		31,103		36,815
Payroll Costs	13.0	1,747,971	13.0	2,059,493
Purchased Services				
Clerical and Temporary Services		1,700		1,700
Legal Services		1,000		1,000
Other Contracts		300		300
Subtotal		3,000		3,000
Total Personnel	13.0	1,750,971	13.0	2,062,493
Distribution by Source of Funds				
General Revenue	13.0	1,750,971	13.0	2,062,493
Total All Funds	13.0	1,750,971	13.0	2,062,493

Personnel

Office of the Child Advocate

Central Management

		FY 2025		FY 2026	
		FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified					
ASSISTANT CHILD ADVOCATE	0841 A	1.0	122,762	1.0	127,672
CHILD ADVOCATE	0823 F	1.0	154,607	1.0	160,792
CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY	0822 A	1.0	60,790	1.0	65,207
PRINCIPAL PLANNING AND PROGRAM SPECIALIST	0828 A	1.0	74,298	1.0	80,054
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION COORDINATOR	0828 A	2.0	163,007	2.0	173,666
SENIOR PLANNING & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST	0328 A	3.0	234,463	3.0	254,550
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR	0333 A	1.0	104,501	1.0	108,681
STAFF ATTORNEY III	0832 A	2.0	180,943	2.0	196,798
STAFF ATTORNEY IV	0834 A	1.0	94,702	1.0	102,088
Subtotal Unclassified		13.0	1,190,073	13.0	1,269,508
Subtotal		13.0	1,190,073	13.0	1,269,508
Turnover			(117,600)		0
Total Salaries			1,072,473		1,269,508
Benefits					
Contract Stipends			4,500		4,500
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Performance Measures

Office of the Child Advocate

Central Management

Visits to DCYF Licensed Facilities

The figures below represent the number of visits conducted by the OCA at facilities contracted with or licensed by DCYF. The OCA monitors all facilities contracted with or licensed by DCYF including but not limited to residential treatment facilities, group homes, foster homes and the RITS. This includes out-of-state programs DCYF contracts with. [Note: Previously combined with "Face to Face Visits".]

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Target	350	375	125	125	125
Actual	487	112	103	--	--

Resolved Inquiries

The OCA receives a variety of inquiries daily, requiring differing levels of response. Each staff member is vital to achieving proper resolutions, which includes but is not limited to making referrals to additional resources, relaying general information, alerting DCYF of an issue, 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>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Target	500	500	500	525	550
Actual	682	517	839	--	--

Court Hearings

Pursuant to our statutory authority, the OCA can legally intervene in Rhode Island Family Court. The Court also appoints our office to cases that involved DCYF. The OCA ensures that the youth's physical, mental, medical, emotional, and behavioral needs are being met. The figures below represent the number of court hearings attended by the OCA to advocate on behalf of youth open to DCYF.

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Target	--	--	250	250	275
Actual	--	383	482	--	--

Public Education

Pursuant to our statutory authority, the OCA is mandated to perform public education to the community about the function and the role of the office. The figures below represent the number of public education presentations that the OCA provided to the community. [Note: This performance measure was established in FY 2024 and historical targets and actuals are not available.]

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Target	--	--	50	50	60
Actual	--	--	146	--	--

Face to Face Visits

The figures below represent the face to face visits the OCA performed during drop in visits, site reviews, meetings, and court hearings to connect with the youth involved with DCYF. [Note: This performance measure was established in FY 2024 and historical targets and actuals are not available. Previously combined with - "Visits to DCYF Licensed Facilities".]

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Target	--	--	500	500	525
Actual	--	722	633	--	--