

**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

	2024 Actuals	2025 Actuals	2026 Enacted Budget	2026 Revised Budget	2027 Recommended
Expenditures by Program					
Central Management	1,395,026	1,714,774	2,264,613	2,185,010	2,405,487
Total Expenditures	1,395,026	1,714,774	2,264,613	2,185,010	2,405,487
Expenditures by Object					
Salary and Benefits	1,222,053	1,559,786	2,059,493	1,965,308	2,124,961
Contract Professional Services	5,149	3,420	10,000	10,000	13,300
Operating Supplies and Expenses	167,824	150,888	193,120	207,702	265,226
Subtotal: Operating	1,395,026	1,714,094	2,262,613	2,183,010	2,403,487
Capital Purchases and Equipment	0	680	2,000	2,000	2,000
Subtotal: Other	0	680	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total Expenditures	1,395,026	1,714,774	2,264,613	2,185,010	2,405,487
Expenditures by Source of Funds					
General Revenue	1,429,015	1,707,790	2,264,613	2,185,010	2,405,487
Federal Funds	(33,989)	6,984	0	0	0
Total Expenditures	1,395,026	1,714,774	2,264,613	2,185,010	2,405,487
FTE Authorization	10.0	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0

Personnel Agency Summary

Office of the Child Advocate

	FY 2026		FY 2027	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified	13.0	1,274,303	13.0	1,336,572
Subtotal	13.0	1,274,303	13.0	1,336,572
Turnover		(38,572)		0
Total Salaries		1,235,731		1,336,572
Benefits				
FICA		94,535		102,246
Health Benefits		157,527		190,185
Payroll Accrual		7,202		7,709
Retiree Health		40,161		41,168
Retirement		394,318		406,986
Subtotal		693,743		748,294
Total Salaries and Benefits	13.0	1,929,474	13.0	2,084,866
Cost Per FTE Position		148,421		160,374
Statewide Benefit Assessment		35,834		40,095
Payroll Costs	13.0	1,965,308	13.0	2,124,961
Purchased Services				
Clerical and Temporary Services		1,700		3,000
Legal Services		1,000		1,000
Other Contracts		300		300
Training and Educational Services		7,000		9,000
Subtotal		10,000		13,300
Total Personnel	13.0	1,975,308	13.0	2,138,261
Distribution by Source of Funds				
General Revenue	13.0	1,975,308	13.0	2,138,261
Total All Funds	13.0	1,975,308	13.0	2,138,261

Personnel

Office of the Child Advocate

Central Management

		FY 2026		FY 2027	
		FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified					
ASSISTANT CHILD ADVOCATE	0841 A	1.0	136,324	1.0	146,788
CHILD ADVOCATE	0823 F	1.0	160,792	1.0	165,615
CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY	0822 A	1.0	65,207	1.0	70,257
PRINCIPAL PLANNING AND PROGRAM SPECIALIST	0828 A	1.0	79,080	1.0	84,401
PRINCIPAL PROJECTS MANAGER	0831 A	1.0	87,807	1.0	93,743
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION COORDINATOR	0828 A	1.0	78,533	1.0	83,813
SENIOR PLANNING & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST	0328 A	1.0	85,934	1.0	85,934
SENIOR PLANNING & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST	0828 A	2.0	167,876	2.0	167,876
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR	0333 A	1.0	108,681	1.0	111,942
STAFF ATTORNEY III	0832 A	1.0	95,319	1.0	102,912
STAFF ATTORNEY IV	0834 A	1.0	111,075	1.0	119,013
STAFF ATTORNEY IV	8834 A	1.0	97,675	1.0	104,278
Subtotal Unclassified		13.0	1,274,303	13.0	1,336,572
Subtotal		13.0	1,274,303	13.0	1,336,572
Longevity Pay			19,365		20,242
Regular Wages			1,254,938		1,316,330
Turnover			(38,572)		0
Total Salaries			1,235,731		1,336,572
Benefits					
FICA			94,535		102,246
Health Benefits			157,527		190,185
Payroll Accrual			7,202		7,709
Retiree Health			40,161		41,168
Retirement			394,318		406,986
Subtotal			693,743		748,294
Total Salaries and Benefits		13.0	1,929,474	13.0	2,084,866
Cost Per FTE Position			148,421		160,374
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Clerical and Temporary Services			1,700		3,000
Legal Services			1,000		1,000
Other Contracts			300		300

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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 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 Rhode Island Training School. This includes out-of-state programs DCYF contracts with. [Note: Previously combined with "Face to Face Visits" as of FY 2023.]

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	375	125	125	125	125
Actual	112	103	162	--	--

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>	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	500	500	525	550	575
Actual	517	839	1,064	--	--

Court Hearings

Pursuant to our statutory authority, the OCA can legally intervene in Rhode Island Family Court. The Court also appoints the OCA 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 involved with DCYF.

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	--	250	250	275	300
Actual	383	482	650	--	--

Public Education

Pursuant to 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>	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	--	50	50	60	70
Actual	--	146	181	--	--

Performance Measures

Office of the Child Advocate

Central Management

Face to Face Visits

The figures below represent the number of 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: Previously combined with "Visits to DCYF Licensed Facilities" as of FY 2023.]

	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	--	500	500	525	550
Actual	722	633	1,158	--	--