

Agency Purpose

The Office of Ombudsperson for Families' (OBFF) mission is to ensure that children and families are protected by law in all child placement proceedings conducted by public and private agencies. Established as an independent state agency (M.S. 257.0755), OBFF seeks to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in out-of-home placements for children of color. To this end, the office assists communities of color to resolve their differences with government and child welfare agencies by bringing a fair and neutral perspective to the proceedings.

At a Glance

Number of Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care, 2008

	African American/Black	American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander	White	Hispanic ethnicity -any race	Two or more races	Unable to determine
Total Placement Settings	5,311	3,054	480	11,021	2,045	2,136	855

Source: Department of Human Services Minnesota Child Welfare Disparities Report – February 2010.

*Placement settings include: Relative and non-relative foster family or pre-adoptive home; juvenile correctional facilities; group home, residential treatment center, foster care with shift staff, and intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded.

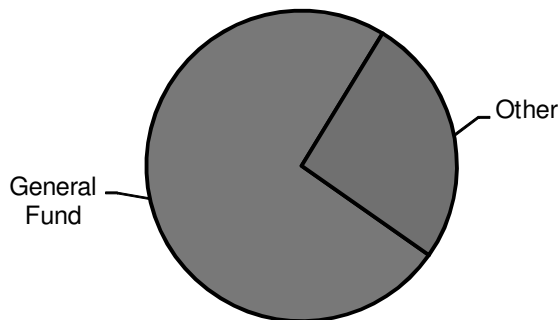
Remark: Children of color and American Indian children make up approximately 20% of Minnesota's child population, but more than half of all children in out-of-home placements.

Percentage of Children in Out-of-home Care (OHC) per 1,000 in the Child Population by Race, 2009

Race	2009	2009: A non-White child is...
African American/Black	27.1	5 times than a White child to be placed in OHC
American Indian	66.1	12 times than a White child to be placed in OHC
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.9	n/a
Hispanic ethnicity-any race	11.8	2 times than a White child to be placed in OHC
Two or more races	26.0	4 times than a White child to be placed in OHC

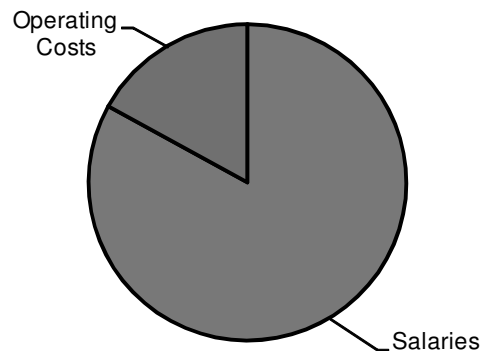
Source: DHS Section II – 2009 Children in Out-of-home Care

Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Fund



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement.

Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Type



Source: Ombudsperson for Families Budget Analysis, 8/10.

Strategies

- Assist counties and state agencies in improving outcomes for all children and in reducing racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionality.
- Ensure fair and transparent processes in the Minnesota child welfare system.
- Monitor social services agencies' compliance with state and federal laws and policies.
- Increase cultural competency and sensitivity of child welfare workers and services providers.

Operations

Four community-specific boards that comprise the full board meet quarterly to advise and guide the office on overall policies, plans, protocols and programs. There are four full time ombudspersons that operate independently but in collaboration with the four state councils of color; and, there is one part-time office administrative specialist.

- Reviews and investigates inquiries and complaints of any family with a child under the age of 18 who is identified by one or both parents or another trusted adult to be of American Indian, Hispanic-Latino, Asian-Pacific, African, or African-American descent in the State of Minnesota.
- Investigates, upon a complaint or upon personal initiative, any action of any agency that may be contrary to law or rule, unfair, unclear, or disregard the rights of a child.
- Assists in the development of policies and practices that help eliminate racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionality from intake to permanency.
- Develop policies to support and create culturally competent and bilingual social workers, and Guardians ad litem in communities of color throughout Minnesota.
- Works with state and local courts, policy makers, and service providers to promote integrated systems to ensure family reunification, stability, security, safety, permanency and well-being of Minnesota's families.
- Issues reports to highlight where systemic problems exist.

Key Goals & Measures

Improve and ensure quality, accessibility, and linguistically and culturally appropriate services are provided to families with disparate outcomes in the child welfare system.

- Through case investigations, the Ombudsperson makes recommendations on cases that involve possible bias or discrimination, lack of cultural sensitivity, lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate services, or non-compliance with State or Federal law and policy.
 - Total number of complaints/calls received, 2005-2009: 3,227

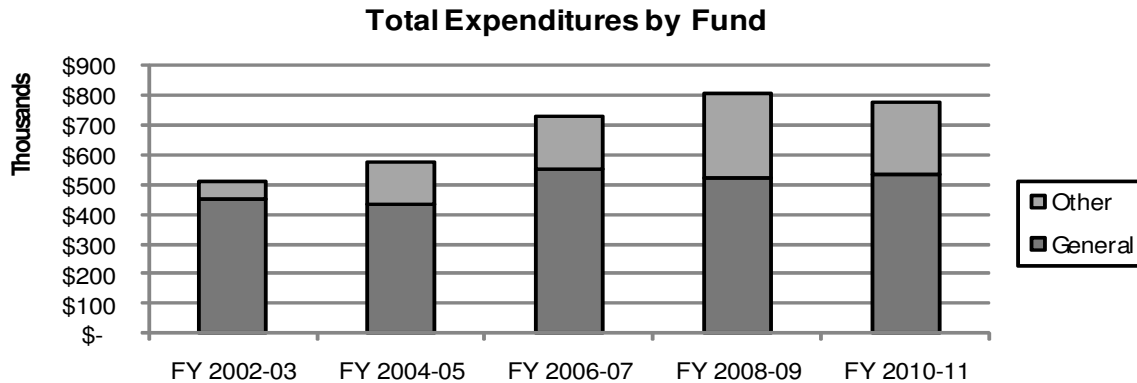
Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Complaints/Calls Received	480	655	610	774	708

- Total number of investigations, 2005-2009: 110

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Investigations	27	14	21	28	20

- Through public policy development, the Ombudsperson works to effect policy changes when those, policies do not reflect current best practices.
 - 2005-2009: Implemented more than 15 initiatives and task forces that have had an ongoing and positive impact on eliminating racial disparities and disproportionality in child welfare, and improving outcomes for children and their families involved in child protection cases.

Budget Trends



Source data: Budget Trends Data FY 2000-2011*.

External factors impacting agency operations include changes in legislation that require modification of state and county policies and practices causing agencies to contain costs by prioritizing; increasing unemployment rates that result in more poverty-related child protection reports; after-school, community and county programs that are being reduced or eliminated; the growing population of new Americans and immigrants with specific cultural and linguistic needs; and an increased focus on intervention (rather than prevention), which sometimes leaves vulnerable children in unsafe surroundings.

Contact

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