

Key Components



Independent

Placed outside children's services state and local agencies



Dedicated

A dedicated toll-free number and office designed for foster youth and not combined with a service for foster parents



Holds accountable

Power to hold people and systems accountable to create change



Offers Resources

Refers youth to resources in addition to investigation and resolution services



Responsive

Starts a relationship with youth who seek help and communicates regularly about the status

Youth Ombudsman

Issue Brief

A Youth Ombudsman office will give youth a voice by investigating their reports of unsafe conditions in the foster care system.

Youth advocates, as part of the Youth Ombudsman Coalition, succeeded in efforts to establish a Youth Ombudsman as part of House Bill 4. Once effective, the governor will appoint a Youth Ombudsman dedicated to serving youth. The OHIO Youth Advisory Board will have a role both in the appointment process and in evaluating the annual report to ensure that youth needs are being met.

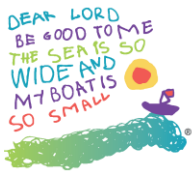


State Spotlight: Texas

The Texas Ombudsman for Children and Youth in Foster Care (FCO) was created in 2015 by [S.B. 830](#).

762

Number of substantiated cases in FY20 [Annual reports](#) show that the office is an effective tool at creating change within the system by empowering youth.



children's
defense fund
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Former Foster Youth Spotlight: Jonathan Thomas

I dedicate my time advocating for foster youth, and other associations to help youth such as Wood County CASA, ACTION Ohio, and The Ohana Project. I would like to share why having an Ohio Foster Care Ombudsman Office is important. When first entering the foster care system at the age of 14 I was placed into a home in Fremont, Ohio. At first, the family was wonderful; much better than my biological family. But, over the course of the two years I lived there, things began to drastically change. As the stress of adding my two brothers, and I to the household began to settle in, so did the neglect, and mistreatment. The three of us, (and 1 other foster boy) were forced to treatment that their 2 biological children did not have to undergo. I begged my caseworker for over a year to remove my brothers, and I from such an environment, and for the longest time, she refused.

I believe issues like that can be eradicated with an Ombudsman office.

With voices in the Ohio Attorney General's office actively advocating, and investigating children's concerns, and issues, then the system will be that much closer to providing children with what they truly need. A loving, and supportive family.

The Ombudsman office will act as an independent forum for the investigation and resolution of complaints made by, or on behalf of the youth.

A Look at the Numbers

An independent and autonomous Youth Ombudsman office will safeguard the physical safety and emotional well-being of youth whose lives are entrusted to the foster care system.

23

States that have statewide ombudsman specific to child welfare

The Ohio Youth Advisory Board will evaluate the annual reports to ensure youth-centered service delivery

4,949

Ohio teenagers were in care in 2020

For three consecutive years, Ohio has missed the mark on national standards around maltreatment of children while in foster care

10.87

Rate of maltreatment while in care, per 100,000 days. States are measured against a national standard of 9.67 or below.