

Agency Purpose

The Office of Ombudsperson for Families is authorized by M.S. 257.0755. The Office was created in 1991. The legislation requires the office to operate independently but in collaboration with the Indian Affairs Council, the Chicano-Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans, and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans. The applicable community specific board (hereinafter, board) selects the Ombudsperson for each community. Each Ombudsperson serves in unclassified service at the pleasure of the board. Each board consists of five members appointed by the chair of that specific council. The members are required to meet four times a year to advise the Ombudspersons on overall policies. In July 2004 the office added one part-time clerical staff person, increasing its total FTE to 4.75.

Each Ombudsperson has the authority to investigate decisions, acts, and other matters of an agency, program, or facility providing protection or placement services to children of color.

Core Functions

The office's primary duty is to ensure that all laws governing the protection of children and their families are implemented in a culturally appropriate manner and that decision-making processes are in compliance with the laws that protect children of color in the state of Minnesota.

Additional duties of the office include working with local and state courts, policy makers, and services providers to promote integrated systems to ensure family reunification, stability, security and permanency. This office reaffirms the state's commitment of making and keeping the family whole and assisting in the well being of Minnesota's children. Finally, the office helps develop policy to support and create culturally competent and bilingual social workers in communities of color throughout Minnesota.

Budget

Appropriation
FY 2004 and FY 2005

General Fund	\$241,000
Transfer from Special Revenue Fund	<u>92,000</u>
TOTAL FY 2004	\$333,000

General Fund	\$245,000
Transfer from Special Revenue Fund	<u>92,000</u>
TOTAL FY 2005	\$337,000

Current FTEs = 4.75

At A Glance

The chart below shows the disparity in Minnesota of children of color in out of home placements compared to white children.

This disparity is carried over into: the decisions of whose children are placed out of home; the accessibility of services; the quality of services; the urgency in service delivery; the cultural and linguistic considerations, particularly for immigrant and refugee groups; permanency considerations; the monitoring and evaluating case plans and family outcomes; and the lack of culturally competent child welfare workers, to name but a few.

The rate of out of home placement for American Indian children is nine times that of white children. The rate for African Americans is more than five times that of whites. Over the years, the disproportionate rate among children of color has consistently remained high.

	Total number of Children in Minnesota	Number and % in Out of Home Placement	
Black/African American*	64,308	3,573	5.56%
American Indian/Alaska Native*	20,607	1,903	9.23%
Asian/Pacific Islander*	53,831	440	0.82%
Hispanic**	55,640	1,022	1.84%
White	1,079,278	10,613	0.98%

* This includes children with their race indicated as the only race according to the 2000 census.
 ** This number includes children of all races who had the ethnicity "Hispanic/Latino/Spanish."

The statistics come from "All Kids Count! Assessing the Well-Being of African-American, American Indian, Asian, and Latino Children," Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, and Congregations Concerned for Children-Child Advocacy Network at the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition.

Contact

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Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2006-07
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	245	245	245	245	490
Forecast Base	245	245	245	245	490
Change		0	0	0	0
% Biennial Change from 2004-05					0%
 <u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	243	248	245	245	490
Statutory Appropriations					
Special Revenue	49	173	162	162	324
Total	292	421	407	407	814
 <u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	243	296	307	306	613
Other Operating Expenses	49	125	100	101	201
Total	292	421	407	407	814
 <u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Ombudsperson For Families	292	421	407	407	814
Total	292	421	407	407	814
 <u>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)</u>					
	3.9	4.8	4.8	4.8	