

Agency Purpose

The Office of Ombudsperson for Families is authorized by M.S. 257.0755 and was created in 1991 to investigate decisions, acts, and other matters of agencies, programs, or facilities providing protection or placement services to children of color. Statute requires the agency to operate independently, but to collaborate 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 community council. The board members are required to meet four times a year to advise the ombudspersons on overall policies.

Core Functions

The agency'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. Each ombudsperson has the authority to investigate individual occurrences and issue reports to highlight where problems exist.

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

Key Measures

Out of home placements in relative adoptive and relative foster homes in Minnesota:

	2000		2003		2005	
	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children
Relative Pre-Adoptive Home	291	1.3	229	1.8	434	2.3
Relative Foster Home	2676	11.6	3097	16.0	3436	17.9

Source: Minn Department of Human Services, Relative Placement Settings for Children in Out of Home Care 2000-2005

Through the agency's actions; recommendations; and work with state and county officials, the courts, policymakers and service providers; Minnesota has increased the number of children placed with family members – in relative adoptive and relative foster homes. Best practice standards tell us that the best way to ensure safety and permanency in placement is to try to keep children within their families.

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.

	Total Number of Children in Minnesota	Number and % in Out of Home Placement***
Black/African American*	64,308	2,945 4.58%
American Indian/Alaska Native*	20,607	1,696 8.23%
Asian/Pacific Islander*	53,831	307 0.57%
Hispanic**	55,640	1,153 2.07%
White	1,079,278	8,291 0.77%
Race Unknown	24,453	445 0.19%

* 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."
 *** Data represents unique count of children in care in 2005 from the Minnesota Department of Human Services report on the distribution of race of children in out-of-home care.

Specific information for children of color is still being developed, but the improvement in relative placement has surely a positive impact for the populations the agency serves. While the agency's focus is on children of color, our efforts have helped make significant, positive outcomes for all Minnesota children in foster care.

Budget

- ⇒ 73% of agency budget is from the General Fund, 27% is from a transfer from the Department of Human Services. These funds are generated by activities performed that qualify for federal financial participation, as specified by M.S. 257.0769.
- ⇒ 75% of the agency's budget is for staffing; a total of 5.0 FTE's including the four ombudspersons and one full-time clerical staff person.
- ⇒ 25% of the agency's budget is for operating expenses.

Contact

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Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2008-09
	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	
<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 2006-07					0%
 <u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	247	304	245	245	490
Statutory Appropriations					
Misc Special Revenue	97	111	184	200	384
Total	344	415	429	445	874
 <u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	278	318	334	350	684
Other Operating Expenses	66	97	95	95	190
Total	344	415	429	445	874
 <u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Ombudsperson For Families	344	415	429	445	874
Total	344	415	429	445	874
 <u>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)</u>					
	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0	