

FAST FACTS
Office of Ombudsperson for Families

**“EFFICIENT AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT SERVICES,
STRONG, STABLE, AND SAFE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.”**

Purpose: The Office of Ombudsperson for Families (OBFF) is an independent state agency that was created in 1991 by the Minnesota Legislature in response to requests from families who have been negatively impacted by the intervention of social service agencies.

Mission: To ensure that children and families are protected by law in all child placement proceedings conducted by public and private agencies and organizations.

- ❖ **P**rovide a fair, neutral, and transparent environment between state, county agencies, and families of color and American Indian families in Minnesota.
- ❖ **E**nsure that the laws protecting children and families are implemented in a culturally and linguistically competent manner.
- ❖ **W**ork with state and local courts, policy makers, and service providers to promote integrated systems that ensure family reunification, stability, security, and permanency.
- ❖ **R**educe racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionalities in Minnesota’s Child Welfare system.
- ❖ **I**mprove outcomes for children and families of color and American Indian families involved in child protection cases.

	2013	2014
Number of complaints/calls received:	592	808
Number of consultations/resolutions:	284	310
Number of investigations:	19	29

Problems/challenges:

- 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 (2013).
- Racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionalities in Minnesota’s child welfare system (see table below).

Number of Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care 2013

	African American /Black	American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander	White	Hispanic ethnicity - any race	Two or more races
Total Child Population	106,309	23,857	74,521	1,006,559	107,281	67,865
Total Placement Settings*	2,296	1,979	268	5,380	1,072	1,452
	4 times more likely than white child	15.5 times more likely than white child			2 times more likely than white child	4 times more likely than white child

Source: DHS Minnesota Child Welfare Report - 2013; Report to the 2014 Minnesota Legislature

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

Examples of complaints received and resolved by our office:

- Children are not being placed with family and kin because relatives and families are not considered for permanency placements.
- Mistreatment of children in foster homes.
- Fathers are intentionally being left out of the process and are not being notified or considered as a placement.
- Deliberate non-compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA).
- Lowest rate of placement for Asian and Pacific Islander children in relative foster family compared to all children in foster care settings.
- Lack of culturally and linguistically specific appropriate services to meet the needs of Asian and Pacific Islander families and their children.
- Language barriers for non-English speaking families and children, particularly new refugees.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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