

Table of Contents
Office of Ombudsperson for American Indian Families

Agency Profile 1

Agency Expenditure Overview 4

Agency Financing by Fund 5

Agency Change Summary 6

<https://mn.gov/oaif/>

AT A GLANCE

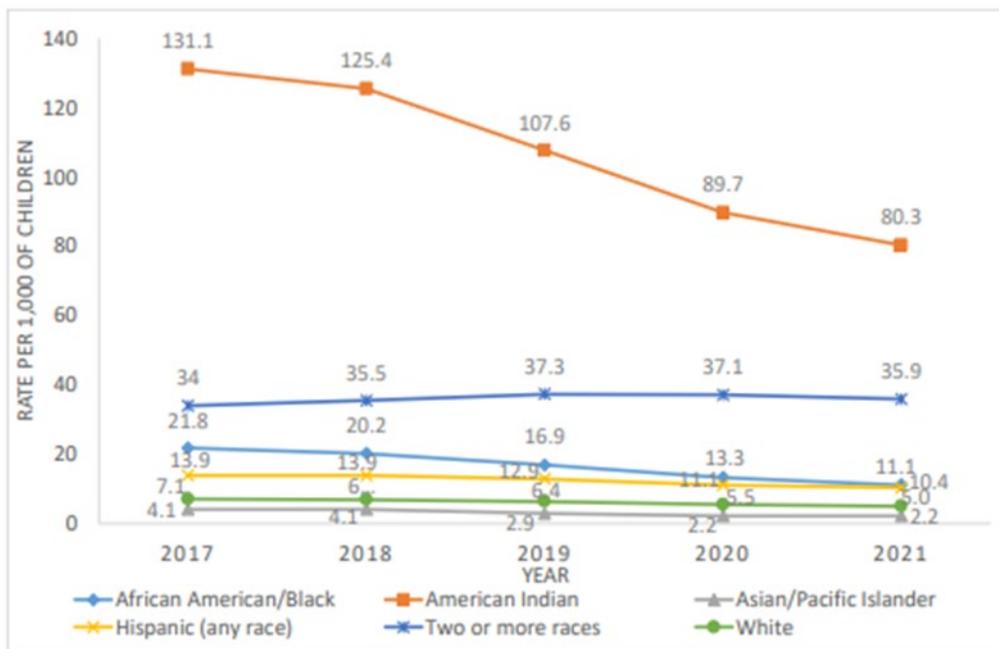
- New agency created by the Legislature in 2021
- Collaborates with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
- Monitors cases and investigates complaints of non-compliance from American Indian families negatively impacted by child welfare social service agencies

PURPOSE

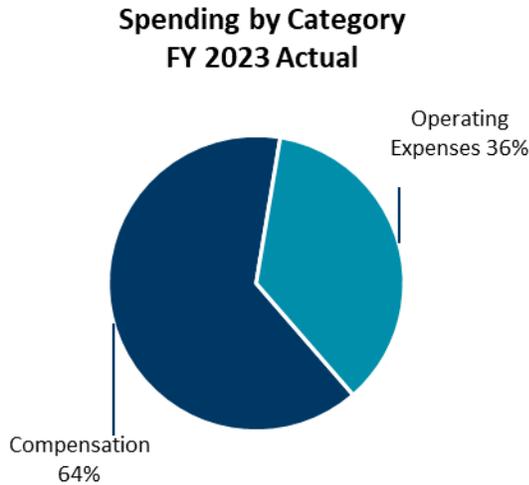
The Office of Ombudsperson for American Indian Families (OAIF) is a new independent agency, created by legislation in July 2021. However, since 1991, there has been an Ombudsperson for American Indian Families working to serve American Indian Families involved in child protection. The OAIF works independently and in collaboration with the American Indian Community-Specific Board. The Board is appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. The Ombudsperson monitors cases and investigates complaints of non-compliance of statutes, rules, and laws, and educates the legal community and the American Indian Community about the Child Protection Process. The OAIF mission is “Preserving the Indian Family.”

As shown in the figure below, the rate per 1,000 children in out-of-home care has been declining since 2017, and the rate of American Indian children has seen a dramatic reduction from a high of 131.1 per 1,000 children in the Minnesota population in 2017 to 80.3 per 1,000 in 2021. (DHS Legislative 2021 Report, published June 2023.) [Note: Native children remain the most likely group in the state and nation for removal from their homes.]

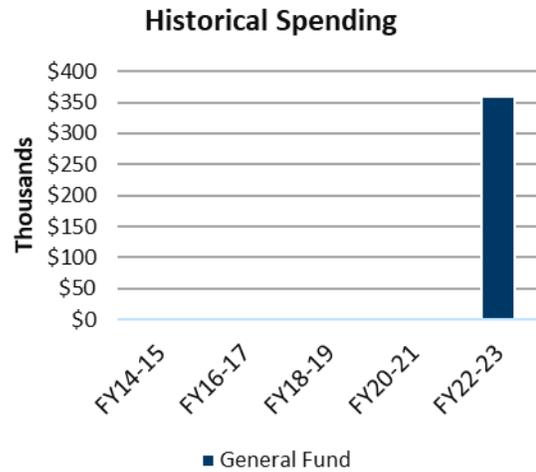
Figure 2. Five-year trend of the rate per 1,000 of children in out-of-home care by race/ethnicity, 2017 - 2021



BUDGET



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

OAIF’s budget was seeded with \$190,000; then increased in FY 24 to \$336,000.

STRATEGIES

As shown in the above figure from the DHS Legislative Report published in June 2023, there is great disparity and over-representation of American Indian children who are in out-of-home care. The OAIF seeks to close the gap and emphasize the importance of an antiracist child welfare system that dedicates resources to enable Minnesota’s American Indian children and families to achieve their full potential. Effective strategies are needed at every stage of the child welfare continuum process: prevention, screening and assessment, decision-making, providing culturally specific and responsive services, ensuring that fathers are being provided notice and a case plan, and including the tribes at every stage when a child is tribally affiliated.

The OAIF is continuing to learn national best practices and develop creative messaging so children are not removed from their homes at such high rates. When and if children need to be removed, it is the Agency’s goal to ensure they are placed with family instead of strangers and to prioritize reunification. The OAIF’s plan is to:

- Continue establishing new networks to build effective coalitions.
- Continue to collaborate with existing networks, stakeholders, and partners.
- Continue to stress the importance of providing culturally specific and responsive services to families.
- Assess strategies to address American Indian over-representation in out-of-home care.
- Continue to implement an action plan.
- Continue to propose legislative packages on policy directions on the county, state and federal levels.

The OAIF continues to take complaints and inquiries, monitor cases for non-compliance, investigate cases when necessary, and continue to develop public policy.

RESULTS

Name of measure	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Complaints and inquiries received*	Quantity	Review of Agency’s 2022 and 2023 case files.	Agency is too new to have historical data to compare.	703

Name of measure	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Cases monitored and investigated	Quantity	Review of Agency's 2022 and 2023 case files.	Agency is too new to have historical data to compare.	97

*This measure tracks the number of calls/complaints to make inquiries, to lodge a complaint, or request information about the child protection system and how to navigate it.

The legal authority for the OAIF is Minn. Stat. 3.9215 <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2021/cite/3.9215>
The legal authority for the American Indian Community Specific Board is Minn. Stat. 3.9216 <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/3.9216>

Ombudsperson for American Indian Families

Agency Expenditure Overview

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base	
					FY26	FY27
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>						
1000 - General	169	191	234	442	340	340
2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue			6			
2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue				100	20	20
Total	169	191	240	542	360	360
Biennial Change				422		(62)
Biennial % Change				117		(8)

Expenditures by Program

Ombudsperson for American Indian Families	169	191	240	542	360	360
Total	169	191	240	542	360	360

Expenditures by Category

Compensation	112	122	133	239	259	263
Operating Expenses	57	68	107	293	101	97
Capital Outlay-Real Property	0					
Other Financial Transaction	1	0		10		
Total	169	191	240	542	360	360

Full-Time Equivalents

	0.73	1.04	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
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Ombudsperson for American Indian Families

Agency Financing by Fund

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base	
					FY26	FY27
1000 - General						
Balance Forward In		49		102		
Direct Appropriation	190	190	336	340	340	340
Transfers Out		42				
Cancellations		6				
Balance Forward Out	21		102			
Expenditures	169	191	234	442	340	340
Biennial Change in Expenditures				316		4
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				88		1
Full-Time Equivalents	0.73	1.04	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue

Balance Forward In			10	4		
Receipts		10		(4)		
Balance Forward Out		10	4			
Expenditures			6			
Biennial Change in Expenditures				6		(6)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures						

2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue

Balance Forward In		163	186	209	132	135
Transfers In	163	23	23	23	23	23
Balance Forward Out	163	186	209	132	135	138
Expenditures				100	20	20
Biennial Change in Expenditures				100		(60)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures						

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Direct				
Fund: 1000 - General				
FY2025 Appropriations	340	340	340	680
Forecast Base	340	340	340	680
Dedicated				
Fund: 2001 - Other Misc Special Revenue				
Planned Spending	100	20	20	40
Forecast Base	100	20	20	40
Revenue Change Summary				
Dedicated				
Fund: 2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue				
Forecast Revenues	(4)			