State of Minnesota
Office of Ombudsperson
for Families

Contact Information
and mailing address:

1450 Energy Park Drive
Suite 106
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108-5227

Out-State toll free number:
1-888-234-4939

Office of Ombudsperson for Families

Who We Are and What We Do

Ombudsperson for African-American Families
Ombudsperson for American Indian Families
Ombudsperson for Asian-Pacific Families
Ombudsperson for Spanish-Speaking Families

What is an Ombudsperson?

- The idea of an Ombudsperson comes from Scandinavian origins when the King's representative was appointed to help citizens in their dealings, complaints or concerns with the government.
- In Minnesota, the Office of Ombudsperson for Families, an independent agency, was created by the Minnesota legislature in 1991 under Minn. Statute §257.0755-257.0762. The Office of Ombudsperson for Families responds to families that have been negatively affected by the intervention of child placing social service agencies.
- The Office of Ombudsperson for Families was created to ensure that agency decisions, acts, rules, programs, procedures and any other form of policy and decision making processes are in compliance with the laws that protect children of color in Minnesota.
- The Ombudsperson does not take sides in any dispute. Our job is to help people resolve problems with social service agencies and officials and investigate complaints by the public who believe they have been treated unfairly.

How Does the Office of Ombudsperson for Families Work?

If you have a question or complaint you may call the specific Ombudsperson for your community directly.

For calls out of the metro area the toll free number is 1-888-234-4939. You may also write a letter, or contact us via e-mail.

There is no charge for our services.

When calling please be ready to give:

- your name, address and telephone number,
- a description of your situation,
- names, dates of birth of children involved in the case,
- Tribal affiliation of your children, if applicable,
- Names and contact information of social workers and other agency or service providers.

After reviewing your case and discussing it with agency officials when necessary and researching state laws, policy, and agency regulations, the Ombudsperson will call or write you with answers to your questions.

Your questions and complaints are kept confidential, although, we may have to discuss your case with agency officials to resolve your situation.

If you require or feel more comfortable discussing your problem in a language other than English let us know and we will arrange it.

What Kinds of Problems Can We Help You With?

- Child Protection matters
  - -child out of home placements
  - -foster care issues
- Social Service Issues
  - -delays in service or lack of services provided
  - -lack of cultural specific services provided,
  - -failure to provide interpreters during social service intake, investigations, meetings, court appearances, etc.
- failure to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) or the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA)
- unjust or discriminatory treatment by child protection services.

What We Don't Do

- We cannot give legal advice
- We cannot investigate court decisions
- We do not investigate attorneys, police, judges or elected officials, neither their decisions or actions
- We do not investigate federal agencies

When Can We Help You?

Before you call the Ombudsperson it is important that you have done the following:

- Try to solve the problem on your own by talking with your social worker or the worker's supervisor;
- If the worker or the worker's supervisor is unresponsive or does not give you a resolution to your situation that is satisfactory to you, then go to the head of the agency/organization to try to solve the issue;
- Make sure you have gone through all possible appeals.

What Else Should You Do?

- Be pleasant when discussing your problem and concerns.
- Be prepared and write down your questions before calling a government office and have all of your information at hand that you may need in your discussions.
- Do not be shy about calling or writing government offices for help.
- Keep good records, take notes, and ask for names of employees you talk to and save all important papers.
- Do not ignore mail from your social worker, court system, or service providers.
- Keep in touch with your social worker and attorney.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions.
- If you are having problems getting answers to your questions or concerns do not be afraid to talk to a supervisor.

If you have questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact our office Monday thru Friday from 9:00 AM–5:00 PM.