



# Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman

Presenter: Stephanie Villafuerte  
Child Protection Ombudsman

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**Stephanie Villafuerte, Child Protection Ombudsman**

# What's an Ombudsman?

## Swedish for “Agent/Representative of the People”

- Gender Neutral
- Help citizens navigate government
- Hold governmental systems accountable



# Best Practices & Standards

## Ombudsman Best Practices

- Independent
- Impartial
- Confidential
- Credible Review Process/Transparent

USOA Governmental Ombudsman Standards (2003); American Bar Association



# About the CPO

## Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO)

- Established in 2010 in response to child fatalities
- **Independent State** Agency-- located in State Judicial Department
- Overseen by Advisory Board
- 17 Staff: caseworkers, attorneys, policy experts



# How We Work for Colorado

Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman was created to ensure the state's complex child protection system consistently provides **high quality services** to every child, family and community in Colorado.

[OUR WORK](#)

[FAQS](#)



## Listen

We listen to people about their experience with and concerns about child protection.



## Investigate

We research and investigate concerns reported by any Coloradan about service delivery within the child protection system.



## Resolve

We determine the best way to resolve concerns – that might mean bridging communication barriers or resolving conflicts based on misunderstanding.



## Identify Trends

We identify trends where the community's needs have changed and the system hasn't had the funding, resources or practices to keep up with it. As a result, we make public recommendations for system improvement.



## Lasting Change

We convene lawmakers, professionals and other stakeholders to advance legislation and policies that have a lasting, positive impact on children and families.

# About the CPO

## Role & Responsibilities

- Receive Complaints (Free/Confidential)
- Investigate Incidents
- Case & System-Wide Review
- Compliance Review
- Educate public, stakeholders and policymakers
- Make recommendations for improvement



# About the CPO

## Case Process

- Receive Complaints 24/7
- 1,300 Calls in FY23-24
- Response within 2 Business Days
- Independent Review
- Aim to Complete Case in 30 Business Days
- Outcomes Vary



# About the CPO

## Jurisdiction

- *Child Protection System* vs Child Welfare Services
- Child Fatalities/Near Fatalities/Egregious Incidents
- Unaccompanied Minor Children
- No jurisdiction over conduct of attorneys/judges/judicial decisions/judicial department





# CONFIDENTIALITY

## CASE CONFIDENTIALITY

Pursuant to C.R.S. 19-3.3-103(3) the CPO shall, “comply with all state and federal confidentiality laws that govern the state department or a county department with respect to the treatment of confidential records and the disclosure of such information and records.”

Exception: Statement of credible harm to selves or others; Client Waivers.

## CONTACT CONFIDENTIALITY

Pursuant to C.R.S. 19-3.3-103(1)(a)(I)(B) the CPO shall treat identities of contacts and inquires as confidential, unless the CPO obtains the consent of the contact to release their identity to an agency/provider and/or include the contact’s identity in a public report.



# Confidentiality

- Ombuds staff cannot be subpoenaed
- Staff cannot be compelled to provide oral and written testimony in civil or criminal proceedings
- Ombuds documents are not subject to subpoena

*Exception: Cases in which the ombudsman is a legal party.*



# Who calls the Ombudsman?

- **Parents**
- **Family members-grandparents**
- **Children, birth to age 18, including 21 if in the custody or control of court/county**
- **Concerned citizens**
- **Mandated reporters**
- **Employees of CDHS/DYS/county human services**
- **Employees of public entities that serve children (Behavioral Health Centers, Hospitals, Schools)**



# Why Do People Call the CPO?

- Lack of behavioral health care
- Out-of-home Placements
- Communication with citizens involved with the child protection system
- Systems Navigation
- Child Welfare Case Practice
- Legal Proceedings



# CPO Advantages

- ADR Principles
- Direct Access to Case Managers and Providers
- Access to Realtime Info
- Often Timelier Than Litigation
- Systemic Perspective
- Public Reports and Recommendations



**Youth Who  
Run Away  
from Care**

**Youth Safety  
in DYS**

**Mandatory  
Reporting**

Every call to the  
CPO drives  
systemic change.



# About the CPO

## How We Work for Change

- Complaint Resolution
- Letters of Concern
- Issue Briefs
- Committee Engagement
- Investigations & Monitoring
- Legislation

# Contact Us

24/7 Complaint Form  
Issue & Policy Reports

Visit [coloradocpo.org](https://coloradocpo.org)



## OPEN A CASE

720-625-8640

Web: [coloradocpo.org](https://coloradocpo.org)

## OFFICE CONTACTS

**Stephanie Villafuerte**

Ombudsman

[svillafuerte@coloradocpo.org](mailto:svillafuerte@coloradocpo.org)





# QUESTIONS?

