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April 10, 2023

TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Oscar Valdez
Interim Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **OMBUDSPERSON FOR YOUTH IN STRTPs SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT –
JULY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2022**

This report summarizes the Los Angeles County (County) Ombudsperson for Youth in Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs)¹ (Ombuds) Program activities for the period of July 1 through December 2022.

Summary of Activities

The Ombuds conducted in-person outreach to **227 youth**, ages **8 to 19**, during **80 site visits** at **35 agencies** and **2 school districts**. This includes all **58 STRTP sites** that housed youth placed by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and also includes Community Treatment Facilities (CTFs), non-contracted Group Homes (GHs), and schools. Three (**10%**) of the 30 visits to STRTP & CTF-contracted agencies were conducted in partnership with the Probation Department Ombudsman (Probation Ombuds).

We also received and addressed **180 requests for assistance (RFA)** during in-person visits and via the helpline (i.e., calls and e-mails). We identified common occurrences within these requests which fell in the categories of Personal Rights, Preparing for Adulthood & Money Management, Education, Family & Social Connections, and

¹ STRTPs are residential facilities that provide an integrated program of specialized and intensive care and supervision, services and supports, and treatment to youth and non-minor dependents.

Communication. We collaborated with child welfare partners to identify and apply best practices for addressing these issues in our service to the youth.

Background

In October 1998, the Board of Supervisors established the Office of the Children's Group Home Ombudsman (now known as the Ombudsperson for Youth in STRTPs) at the recommendation of the Grand Jury and Commission for Children and Families, to provide advocacy and a confidential, independent, and informal process to help youth under DCFS oversight resolve issues while in group home (GH) placement. To ensure independence from DCFS as the placing agency, since its inception the Ombuds has resided in the Department of Auditor-Controller.

How We Connect With Youth

A primary Ombuds responsibility is to meet with youth placed by DCFS in STRTPs (including CTFs) and non-contracted GHs, talk to them about their rights, and provide them the opportunity to share concerns or needs they may have, and to ensure they are aware of the Ombuds as a resource. Visits are planned so that each agency site is visited at least once every six months. Site visits are typically scheduled but may also be unannounced. If an agency does not have any DCFS youth at the time a visit is scheduled, we will reach out again before the end of the reporting period to see if any new youth have been placed by DCFS. We verbally provide youth and STRTP staff with information about the Ombuds function and the California (CA) Foster Youth Bill of Rights (FYBOR) (Attachment I). We also distribute age appropriate FYBOR handbooks or coloring books and highlighters (materials) with the Ombuds helpline number imprinted on them.

The Ombuds also conducts visits to youth placed in non-County contracted GHs from a list provided by DCFS. DCFS relies on these GHs to place youth who have developmental disabilities and when other County-contracted placement options have been exhausted. These youth tend to be non-verbal or have limited communication skills. The non-County contracted GHs are approved as service providers by the Regional Centers, which are community-based, non-profit agencies that contract with the CA Department of Developmental Services to provide or coordinate services and support for individuals with developmental disabilities. For these visits, we speak to those who can communicate, and leave materials for all DCFS youth.

How We Assist Youth With Their Concerns

The Ombuds receives RFAs from youth who are dependents of DCFS through in-person visits with them at schools, STRTPs, and other locations, as well as via a confidential helpline, in direct calls/texts to an Ombuds phone, and through County e-mail. During

this reporting period, most requests were received during in-person outreach visits. Upon receiving a request, the Ombuds interviews the youth/requester to understand the situation and to determine an appropriate response and/or course of action.

The Ombuds categorizes requests based on the initial information shared by the youth/requester. The Ombuds' goal is to be accessible and to assist all requesters, and youth during outreach visits, and accordingly, presumes all requests to be factual until proven otherwise through follow-up.

To properly address and resolve requests within the purview of the Ombuds, we communicate with, and make referrals to DCFS, including but not limited to Children Social Workers (CSWs), Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSWs), the Child Protection Hotline (CPH), Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD), Contracts Administration Division (CAD), Youth Development Services, and the Public Inquiry Unit. In addition, we collaborate with the Probation Ombuds and Placement Permanency and Quality Assurance Unit to resolve issues. We may contact attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), and entities such as STRTP/CTF/GH staff and management, Community Care Licensing (CCL), CA Office of Foster Care Ombudsperson (OFCO), school personnel, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and if needed, other counties, to ensure youth's requests are addressed.

We ensure youth are informed once we have discussed their request with the appropriate parties. Time frames for follow-up vary as the requests may be part of a larger or more complex issue that is not wholly within the Ombuds' purview, but all requests regardless of the duration to resolve them receive follow-up.

Outreach Activities

During this reporting period, the Ombuds conducted **80** in-person **outreach visits to 227 youth** in STRTPs, CTFs, non-contracted GHs, and schools. The youth ranged in age from **8 to 19** years old. In total, this comprised outreach to **76 sites** (two STRTP sites, one CTF, and one school were visited twice), operated by 37 agencies and 2 school districts as follows:

- **58 STRTP and 2 CTF sites** operated by 30 agencies
- **10 GH sites** operated by 7 non-contracted agencies
- **6 school sites** in two different school districts

We visited **3 (10%)** of the 30 STRTP and CTF-contracted sites in coordination with the Probation Ombuds.



We visited all the currently contracted STRTP agencies housing youth placed by DCFS and conducted all outreach visits in person while adhering to public health guidelines.

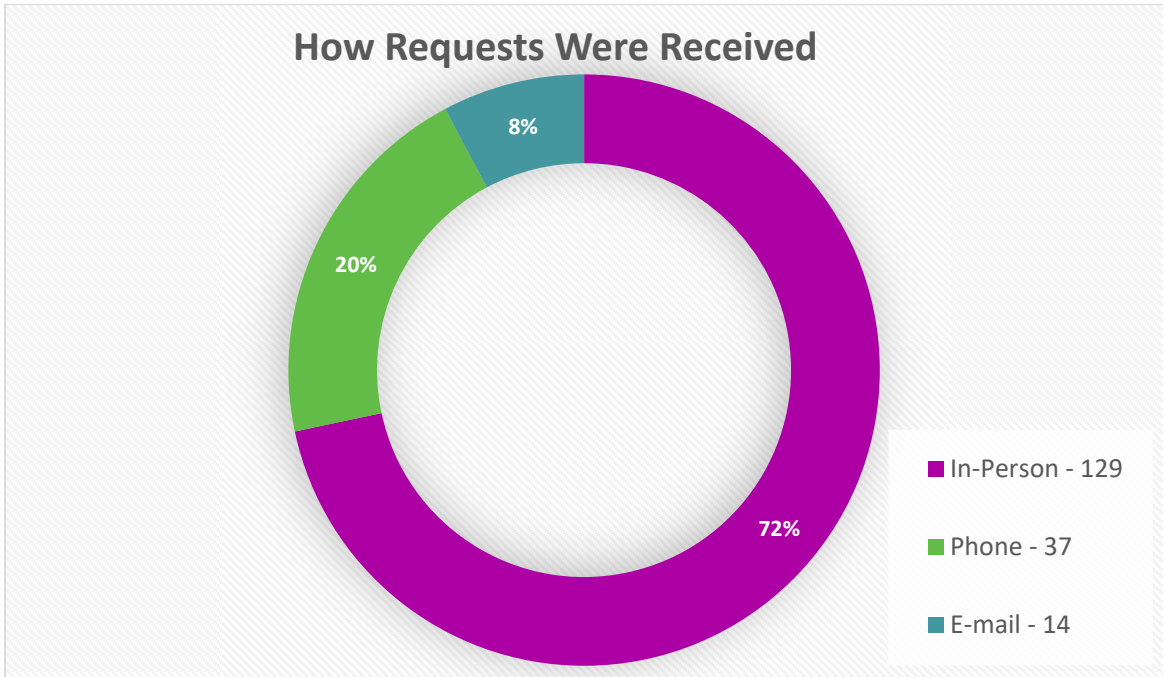
In addition, we continued to build on our outreach to youth at school and visited six (6) high schools in two (2) different school districts. We visited one (1) school twice due to absences on the originally scheduled date. We selected these schools based on the number of youth placed in STRTPs enrolled in the schools. We coordinated visits with each school's Foster Youth Liaison (FYL) who informed the youth and provided a designated private room on campus for those who wanted to meet with us. These outreach visits were scheduled during times the FYL recommended to avoid unnecessary disruption of the students' classroom instruction. The seven (7) school visits were effective and provided an additional opportunity for youth to connect with us in person in a setting outside of their residential placement. We received twelve (12) requests for assistance during these visits. We will continue to evaluate additional schools and districts that can be incorporated in our future visit schedule. Frequent and consistent interactions are essential for rapport-building with the youth, as well as to help them retain information about and exercise their rights.

Attachment II details the summary of Outreach Visits Conducted.

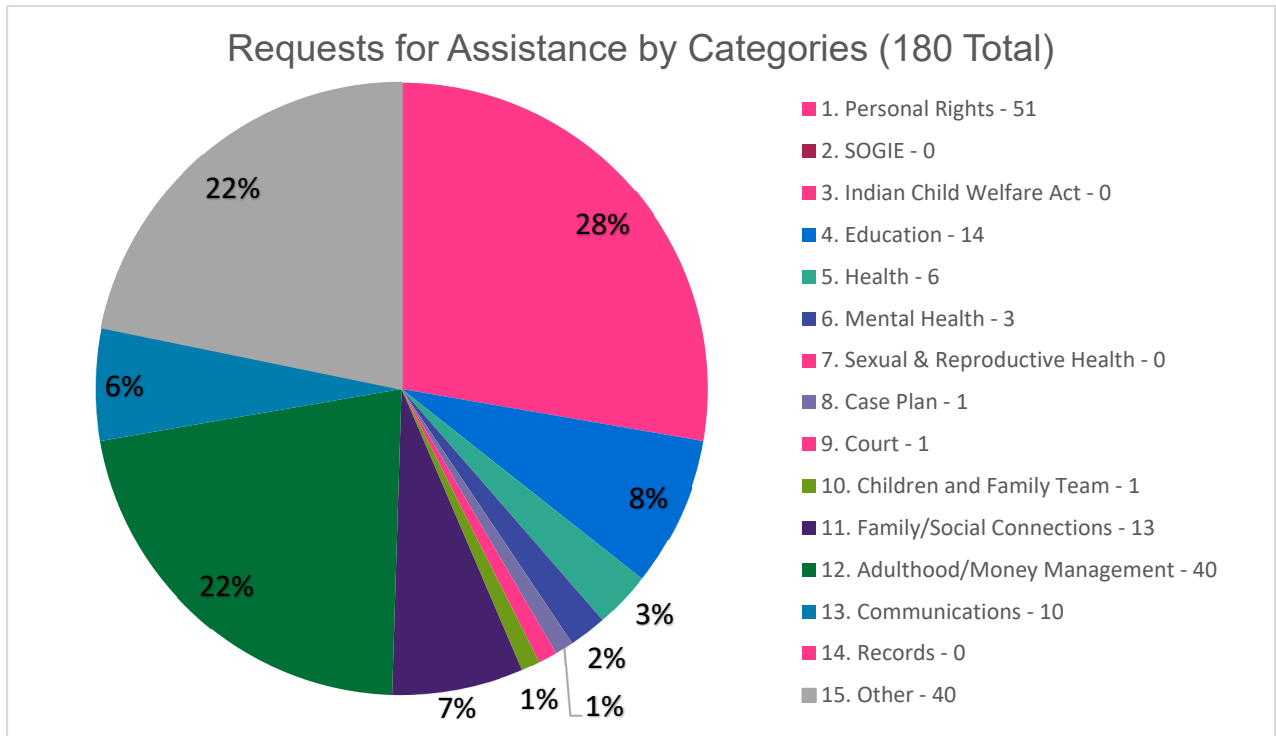
Requests for Assistance Activities

The Ombuds received a total of **180 requests for assistance** made by 124 youth. In speaking with youth about their rights during our outreach visits, some requests were prompted by a new or better understanding of their rights. We received requests for assistance via the following channels:

- 129 during in-person visits (72%)
- 37 by phone (20%)
- 14 via e-mails (8%)



The chart below indicates the number of requests received in each category:



The categories associated with the FYBOR with the most requests for assistance were:



Personal Rights (28%)

In this category, examples of requests included:

Receiving Allowance

Uncomfortable Temperature

Being Treated with Respect

Having Emotional Safety

Issues with food

Eight (8) of the requests in this category pertained to how hot it was inside the homes during the summer months.

Many youth reported feeling excessively hot and worried about not having access to air conditioning or other types of effective cooling. We notified CCL about each individual concern, and they immediately investigated and found some agencies were not meeting the requirements. Those agencies purchased portable air conditioners and/or had their central air conditioning systems repaired.

We also learned that agencies were not aware of the temperature standards since they are not stated in the current 2021 CCL licensing requirements. The following standards were last reflected in the 2010 licensing requirements, and CCL confirmed that they have not been updated and are still in effect today:

- A comfortable temperature for clients shall be maintained in all areas,
- The temperature in rooms clients occupy shall be between a minimum of 65 degrees and a maximum of 85 degrees,
- In areas of extreme heat, the temperature maximum shall be 30 degrees lower than the temperature outside.

In addition, our office met with OHCMD and CAD about the number of requests we were receiving about temperature. During a subsequent STRTP Forum hosted by DCFS in September 2022, and at the request of DCFS, we shared the recent temperature concerns expressed by these youth and reminded the agencies of CCL's licensing requirements.


Going forward, we will work with DCFS to ensure providers receive timely information on this topic to minimize impacts to youth about climate/temperature at their placement.

A second theme that emerged and was also present in our prior reporting period, was concerns with the way youth were treated by staff. While agencies and staff generally provide trauma-informed care and provide supportive homes for the youth, there were twelve (12) reported instances of a lapse in these practices. Specifically, these youth

shared occasions when staff made disparaging comments to them, used profanity towards them, or implied the youth's own behavior is why they are in foster care. The comments or actions of one staff can change the environment and affect the youth's sense of emotional safety. Some youth expressed being comfortable reporting this to us and sometimes felt they would not be believed if they shared this information with other adults.

For these requests, our office reported the allegations to CPH, CCL, and DCFS per established protocols, followed up with the respective agencies about the outcomes, and shared information with the necessary partners. We also circled back with the youth to see if the living environment improved, and most reported they had no further concerns. A few requests remained under investigation by CCL and/or CPH, and we will continue to follow up with those agencies and the affected youth to ensure an appropriate resolution to their concerns.

With our continuing receipt of concerns about staff mistreatment of youth, we will work with DCFS and other child welfare partners to convene meetings about how to reduce such incidents.

 **Preparing for Adulthood & Money Management (22%)**
In this category, examples of requests included:



We received 40 requests related to Preparing for Adulthood & Money Management. For example, 13 requests were about obtaining vital documents (e.g., birth certificates, Social Security cards, and Identification cards) and opening a bank account. In support of Board of Supervisors' motions from August 10, 2021 and January 11, 2022 aimed at ensuring youth in foster care have access to identifying documents and vital records, the Ombuds began formally inquiring with youth and agencies whether they had the identifying documents they needed. Through these inquiries we learned several youth did not have all their vital documents due to barriers (e.g., obtaining birth certificates from other counties, states, or countries, banks not opening accounts to minors without an adult co-signer, and varying practices to initiate the process). We partnered with DCFS, STRTPs, and other agencies to assist youth in this area.

These requests highlight the ongoing need to ensure youth in foster care have access to vital documents to support their transition to adulthood. To further support this access, A-C Executive Management established an Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion goal for the Ombudsperson to explore options for providing foster youth under 18 the ability to open a bank account on their own, without an adult co-signer. The FYBOR states that foster youth have a right "to maintain a bank account and manage personal income, consistent with the child's age and developmental level, unless prohibited by the case plan." Unfortunately, very few banking institutions allow individuals under the age of 18 to open an account without an adult co-owner. Youth in foster care, specifically in STRTPs, receive allowances and can also be employed. However, they may not have a constant adult in their lives who would be willing to be a co-signer on their bank account, leaving them with limited banking options to exercise their right, and depriving them of the opportunity to practice money management skills.

The Ombuds is currently surveying STRTP agencies and youth to determine if: 1) they have their vital documents needed to open a bank account; 2) if they have been able to open a bank account if desired; and 3) specific barriers they have encountered. We will collaborate with the Treasurer and Tax Collector to encourage the County's banking partners to allow the County's foster youth under 18 years of age to open a bank account. This goal will continue through 2024.



Education (8%)

In this category, examples of requests included:

Attending
School of Origin
or New School

Transportation
to School

Education
Rights Holder
Information

Best Interest
Determination
Meeting

We received 12 requests relating to education, which included a variety of topics. Some youth wanted to attend their School of Origin (SOO) after their placement changed and were told there was no transportation available, or the school was too far. Some youth missed days of school when they changed placements, rather than being transported to SOO until a meeting was held to determine what school is in the best interest of the youth. Some youth wanted to change schools but were unaware how to accomplish this. Also, there were youth who did not know who their Education Rights Holder (ERH) was, and requested assistance obtaining this information.

The contracts between DCFS and STRTPs state that every effort should be made to maintain youth in SOO and that agencies shall transport youth to SOO or utilize transportation put in place by DCFS and/or school districts. Although we have seen some

agencies that have deviated from those requirements, there may also be legitimate reasons why a STRTP does not transport the youth to their SOO.

With each of these requests, the Ombuds informed youth about their education rights, their ERH, and the related processes and approvals needed to change schools. We explained the ERH's role and authority over education decisions so they could have informed conversations about their education or school placement. In addition, the Ombuds contacted youth's attorneys from Children's Law Center and/or their CSWs to discuss these concerns so that they could also follow up in court hearings or team meetings respectively, to ensure the youth's concerns are considered.

In addition, DCFS Education Section operates a program called "Triage Meetings," which is optional for STRTP agencies and school districts. These triage meetings bring education team members to the table upon notification of a pending youth placement change, and aim to address many of the same types of concerns mentioned above, prior to placement or immediately thereafter. In support of this model, we began informing non-participating STRTP agencies and school districts of this program, as it could help reduce occurrences of these types of education requests.



Family & Social Connections (7%)

In this category, examples of requests included:

There were 13 requests for assistance about Family & Social Connections, many of which pertained to youths' visits with family members and/or non-relative extended family members (NREFMs). Youth reported they wanted visits with certain people, were not getting visits they were supposed to have, and/or not being transported to visits. These requests highlighted various barriers including:

- Waiting for CSW approval to visit certain people
- Agencies only providing youth with transportation to visit specific parties when the visitation plan is documented in the Child and Family Team Meeting notes, even though such documentation is not generally required
- Distance between placement and location of family members or NREFMs
- Schedule conflicts between the youth and family member or friend

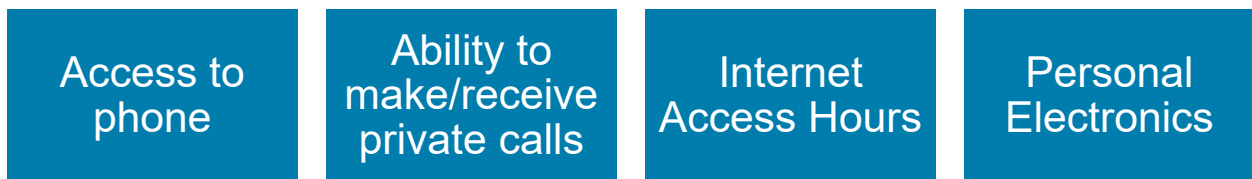
Some requests in this category involved youth wanting community passes, but being told their CSWs had to approve them. We reviewed Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) rules with agencies and CSWs to highlight agencies' ability to approve or deny community passes without DCFS approval based on their own assessment. Despite having the ability to do so, some agencies expressed they were hesitant to allow youth to have community passes without the approval of the CSW.

For example, in one case during this period a youth had a new CSW who felt they could not provide input on issuing the youth a community pass because they did not know the youth well enough, and the agency did not want to proceed without CSW input. We shared information about the discretion provided under RPPS with both DCFS and STRTP staff, and STRTP staff then made their own assessment about community passes for this youth. While a decision was reached in this case, we have noted other instances where agencies are hesitant to make decisions – even those within their discretion and purview – without DCFS approval. We will continue to work with and offer training to STRTP management and DCFS staff to ensure thorough understanding of RPPS and the STRTP’s ability to authorize community passes, and we will continue to advocate for solutions that maximize youth’s ability to exercise their rights.



Communication (6%)

In this category, examples of requests included:



There were 10 requests for assistance pertaining to Communication, many of which were about the ability to make private phone calls to whomever the youth wanted. The FYBOR protects youths’ ability to “make, send, and receive confidential telephone calls and other electronic communications... unless prohibited by a court order.” Youth who have their own cell phones tend to be able to exercise this right easily, but those that do not have cell phones make and receive calls through the residential phone at the agency.

As we followed-up on these requests with the agencies, we became aware that some were operating under an old practice that youth must have an approved list of people they can call and if someone is not on the list, they cannot call them. As mentioned above, that is contrary to current law which allows youth to communicate with anyone in private except specific individuals identified in a court order. Since court orders typically utilize the language of adopting a case plan, this includes contact limitations that have been made in the case plan.

Our office provided information and education about this specific section of the FYBOR to agencies who had non-compliant practices. In addition, some agencies shared concerns about youths’ ability to call people who have a negative influence on their lives, and we encouraged discussing such concerns with the youths’ teams to document any needed restrictions in the case plan or court orders.

Other Requests

There were 40 (22%) requests made by youth that were not related to the FYBOR. Examples of these requests included:

- Assistance retrieving personal belongings from prior placement
- Status of their placement change
- Request to change their attorney, CASA, or CSW
- Issues with other residents

Attachment III depicts all the Requests for Assistance Received By Type.

Requests Seeking Information Only

There were a few contacts made to our office from individuals seeking information not related to the Ombuds function. For those, we documented the requests, provided an answer, or directed the requester to an appropriate party to address their inquiry. These requests are only noted here, and not included in the statistical data.

Youth Voice

Each youth residing in an STRTP, CTF, or GH has a unique personal experience. Their requests may be reflective of a challenge they are facing in their life, in their current placement, at school, in the child welfare system, or related to something else.

During an outreach visit, one youth approached us with multiple requests for assistance as he was newly placed with the agency and was trying to navigate what he needed. First, he expressed wanting to attend his SOO, but did not know who his ERH was. He was also worried a Best Interest Determination (BID) about SOO would not be accomplished in time for the first day of school, which was one week away.

With the youth's permission, we immediately reached out to the youth's attorney to obtain the contact information for the youth's ERH. We connected with the FYL from the youth's SOO to notify them about the youth's desire to attend for the upcoming school year, as well as inform the STRTP of the youth's request as they intended to enroll him in the local high school. The FYL immediately scheduled a BID meeting with the ERH and other members of the youth's team, and a decision was made prior to the end of the week that youth would attend his SOO. This enabled the youth to attend his SOO for the first day of school.

Second, the youth wanted community passes, but was told by the STRTP that his social worker had to decide if he could have them. Our office provided information about RPPS to both the STRTP and the CSW, as the CSW was newly assigned and felt they did not

know the youth well enough to provide input. The STRTP was empowered to assess what was appropriate for the youth without waiting for the CSW to familiarize themselves with the case.

During a visit to another agency, a different youth expressed frustration that she needed her birth certificate in order to obtain a California Identification Card and open a bank account, and had been requesting it for approximately one (1) year. Our office reached out to DCFS who was able to provide the birth certificate to the youth within a few weeks. This youth was then able to successfully obtain her California Identification Card and open a bank account. In addition, she was concerned about the air conditioning unit in the home's living room area that was not functioning properly and made the temperature in the home very uncomfortable. Our office spoke with agency administrators, DCFS OHCMD, and reported the issue to CCL. These actions led to the agency obtaining new air conditioners and CCL substantiating the complaint. Lastly, this youth shared she did not have access to a phone to use for private calls and that the house phone is taken away from the youth as a consequence for their behavior. During that same visit, we met with agency staff and provided educational materials and FYBOR references about youth's rights to access phones and make private calls, and they confirmed they would immediately implement access to a phone for private calls. They also confirmed that they would no longer prohibit access to the house phone as a consequence for youths' behavior.

Collaboration for Improved Practices

We continued to expand awareness of our Ombuds Program by reaching out to child welfare partners inside and outside the County. We met with individuals from the following agencies to learn and discuss ways to collaborate and better serve youth in STRTPs:

- Board of Supervisors' Children's Deputies
- California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson
- California Youth Connection
- DCFS' CAD, Education Section, Executive Office, and OHCMD
- International Foster Care Alliance
- LACOE's AB 130 Team
- Sacramento Child Welfare Ombuds
- San Diego Child Welfare Ombuds
- San Francisco Child Welfare Ombuds

In addition, since Ombuds work is specialized, strengthening partnerships with those in the same field is invaluable. We continued to regularly communicate with the OFCO to address specific or overlapping requests and discuss themes in our work. On a broader scale, we continued to participate monthly in the United States Ombudsman Association's

Children and Families Chapter Meetings. This forum provides an opportunity to learn about Ombuds work with child welfare agencies across the country, and increase knowledge about best practices, trends, tracking, and reporting etc. that may be incorporated in our work.

Index of Attachments

- Attachment I:** Foster Youth Bill of Rights
Attachment II: Outreach Visits Conducted
Attachment III: Requests for Assistance Received by Type

Acknowledgment

We thank management and staff from the various STRTP, CTF, and GH agencies, schools, the Probation Ombuds, DCFS, and other child welfare partners, for their cooperation and assistance in helping us address the needs of youth served by the Ombuds.

If you have any questions or need additional information please call me, or your staff may contact Michelle Lucarelli-Beltran, Acting Ombudsperson, at (213) 342-5755 or via e-mail at mlucarelli-beltran@auditor.lacounty.gov.

OV:RGC:GH:MLB

Attachments

- c: Fesia A. Davenport, Chief Executive Officer
Celia Zavala, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Brandon T. Nichols, Director, DCFS
Honorable Michael Nash, Executive Director, Office of Child Protection
Karen L. Fletcher, Interim Probation Officer
Tiara Summers, Executive Director, Youth Commission
Special Audit Committee
Children's Deputies
Commission for Children and Families
Board and Commission Relations/Public Inquiry, DCFS
Contract Administration Division, DCFS
Out-of-Home Care Management Division, DCFS
Placement Permanency and Quality Assurance, Probation
Probation Ombudsman
CA Office of Foster Care Ombudsperson
Countywide Communications

FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS



Personal Rights

You have the right to live in a safe, comfortable home where you are treated with respect and to have:

- enough clothes and healthy food
- clothing, grooming, and hygiene products that respect your culture and ethnicity
- a private place to keep your things
- a phone you can use to make private calls (unless a judge says you cannot)
- a caregiver that has special training on trauma and ways to help you

You have the right to:

- go/not go to religious services and activities of your choice
- participate in cultural, racial, ethnic, personal enrichment, and social activities
- fair and equal access to all available foster care services, placements, care, and benefits

No one can:

- lock you in a room or a building (unless you are in a community treatment facility)
- make you stay in juvenile hall because they can't find you a home
- use law enforcement as a threat or retaliation
- abuse you physically, sexually, emotionally, or exploit you for any reason
- punish you by physically hurting you for any reason
- look through your things unless they have a reasonable or legal reason
- treat you unfairly because of your race, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental or physical disability, HIV status, or membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe



Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)

You have rights to protect your SOGIE. You have the right to:

- live in a home or STRTP based on your gender identity
- be called by your chosen name and gender pronouns
- see a doctor or counselor who is gender affirming
- have clothing, grooming, and hygiene products that respect your gender identity and expression
- have a caregiver, social worker/probation officer, and lawyer that have been trained on SOGIE and how to care for LGBTQ+ youth
- keep your SOGIE information private



Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Are you a member, or could you be a member, of a federally recognized Indian tribe?

You have the right to:

- live in a home or STRTP that maintains the social and cultural standards of your Tribe and tribal community
- live in a home of your relatives or extended family or a home that is licensed, approved, or specified by your Tribe
- live in an Indian foster home that is licensed or approved, or a facility that is approved by your Tribe or an Indian organization that meets your needs
- live in a place that reflects and keeps you connected to the cultural and social standards of your Tribe and/or tribal community
- contact your ICWA advocate and have them attend court
- contact your Tribe, tribal members, and Indian community
- have a social worker/probation officer, and lawyer who is trained in ICWA
- participate in traditional Native American religious practices
- get help becoming a member of an Indian tribe or Alaskan village
- get all the benefits that come from being a member of an Indian tribe or Alaskan village
- be free from discrimination and be recognized for your relationship with an Indian Tribe or Alaskan village
- have protections for your tribal relationship in your case plan



Education

You have school rights. You have the right to:

- go to school every day
- get help with school
- stay at your same school if it's best for you
- enroll right away at a new school
- get partial credits for all classes you were passing if you change schools
- go to after-school activities
- have priority enrollment in pre-school and after-school programs
- have priority enrollment at California State Universities and community colleges
- access information about college and career education programs



Health

You have health rights. You have the right to:

- see a doctor, dentist, eye doctor, or talk to a counselor when you need to
- see a doctor who is gender affirming
- refuse to take any medicines, vitamins, or herbs, and no one can punish you for it
- keep your medical records private
- have the risks/benefits of treatment explained to you in a way that is easy to understand



Mental Health

You have mental health rights too. You have the right to:

- keep your mental health records private
- get gender affirming mental health treatment
- work with your doctor to safely stop taking psychotropic medication
- refuse to take psychotropic medication, and no one can punish you for it
- know about your diagnosis and understand treatment options
- get help with an alcohol or drug problem without permission
- get mental health services in a place that meets your needs
- if you are 12 years or older, choose your own doctor or counselor and make decisions about your mental health treatment



Sexual & Reproductive Health

You have sexual health rights too. You have the right to:

- get information about your sexual health in a way that you understand
- use or refuse services for birth control, condoms, other types of protection, and pregnancy care, including abortion, without telling an adult
- get healthcare services for sexual assault without telling an adult
- if you are 12 years or older, choose your own doctor or counselor and make decisions about preventing, testing, or treating STIs and HIV without permission from any adult



Case Plan

You have the right to:

- help create your case plan
- have a case plan within 60 days of being in foster care
- have your case plan updated at least every 6 months
- be told of any changes to your case plan
- get a copy of it if you are age 10 and older
- have your Tribe involved in case plan decisions

Your case plan will have:

- health and education plans
- the best place for you to live
- the services you need
- a long-term plan for where you will live
- gender-affirming healthcare plans
- plans for visitation with your parents and siblings
- transition to independent living plan (TILP), if you are 16 or older



Court

You have rights at court too. You have the right to:

- be told about court hearings in writing
- go to court and talk to the judge
- tell the judge what you want to have happen in your case
- tell the judge how you feel about your psychotropic medications
- ask the judge for visits with your siblings
- request a hearing if you feel like your lawyer is not acting in your best interest
- ask for people to be in the courtroom or ask for people to leave
- keep your court records private (unless the law says otherwise)
- tell the judge how you feel about your family, lawyer, and social worker/probation officer
- a lawyer, separate from your parents and the county

Your lawyer must:

- keep what you tell them private
- have special training on ICWA and SOGIE
- make sure you are safe and have the services and supports you need
- tell the judge what you want to have happen
- answer questions you have about court, foster care, and other laws



Children and Family Team (CFT)

You have the right to a CFT. You have the right to:

- request CFT meetings
- have support people at your CFT meeting
- talk about your needs in the CFT meeting
- a CFT meeting within 60 days of entering foster care
- a CFT meeting every 6 months
- a CFT meeting at least every 90 days if you are in an STRTP or in a therapeutic foster home
- a CFT meeting at least every 90 days if you are getting certain types of services
- a CFT meeting when any changes are going to be made to your case plan



Family and Social Connections

You have the right to:

- visit and contact your parents, siblings, and other family members in private (unless a judge says you cannot)
- contact people who are not in the foster care system (like friends, church members, teachers, and others), unless a judge says you cannot



Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management

You have the right to do some things on your own. You have the right to:

- have an allowance
- your own bank account (unless your case plan says you cannot)
- learn job skills for your age
- work (unless the law says you are too young)
- earn, save, and manage your money (unless your case plan says you cannot)
- go to Independent Living Program (if you are old enough)
- beginning at age 14, get a credit report every year from 3 major reporting agencies and have help fixing any issues



Communications

You have the right to:

- use a phone to make and get confidential (private) calls
- use a computer and the internet
- privately use email, text messages, or other electronic communication
- send and receive unopened mail

These rights can be changed if there is a safety concern. Only a judge can take these away or stop you from communicating with certain people.

You have the right to contact the following people in private, and no one can stop you or punish you for speaking with them:

- your social worker/probation officer
- your lawyer
- service providers
- foster youth advocates and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)
- Education Rights Holder
- Tribe (if you have one)
- Office of Foster Care Ombudsperson (OFCO)
- Community Care Licensing Division (CCL)



Records

You have the right to see and get a free copy of the following until you are 26:

- medical records
- child welfare records
- juvenile court records
- educational records

LOS ANGELES COUNTY OMBUDSPERSON FOR YOUTH IN STRTPs
OUTREACH VISITS
July 1 through December 31, 2022

Agency Visited	NC	JO	SCH	Site Location(s) Visited
1st Supervisorial District				12
Bella Vista at Taylor Group Home	X			•Montebello
Eggleston Youth Center				•Baldwin Park (2)
Garces Residential Care				•Claremont
Heritage				•West Covina (2)
Hope House	X			•El Monte (2)
Luvlee's Residential Care, Inc., dba New Dawn				•Walnut
San Gabriel Childen's Center		X		•Azusa (2)
St. Anne's Family Services ¹				•Los Angeles
2nd Supervisorial District				23
Dangerfield Institute of Urban Problems				•Los Angeles (4)
Dream Home Care, Inc.				•Carson (2)
Fleming & Barnes, Inc., dba Dimondale Adolescent Care				•Carson •Gardena •Hawthorne
Fred Jefferson Memorial Homes for Boys				•Compton (2)
Humanistic Foundation, Inc. dba New Concept				•Los Angeles
I am Safe ²	X			•Los Angeles
Mindful Growth Foundation				•Los Angeles (2)
People's Care Garth	X			•Los Angeles
Virtuous Woman, Inc./Project Destiny Home of Hope				•Los Angeles (2)
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services STRTP				•Los Angeles
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services Community Treatment Facility		X		•Los Angeles
Wayfinder Family Services ²	X			•Los Angeles (3)
3rd Supervisorial District				4
BNI Treatment Center	X			•Agoura Hills
Optimist Boys Home & Ranch, Inc.				•Mission Hills •Woodland Hills
Rancho San Antonio				•Chatsworth
4th Supervisorial District				5
Dream Home Care, Inc.				•Torrance
Fleming & Barnes, Inc., dba Dimondale Adolescent Care				•Long Beach
Rite of Passage Adolescent Treatment Center, Inc.				•San Pedro •Torrance
Starview Adolescent Center Community Treatment Facility				•Torrance
5th Supervisorial District				22
Bonita High School			X	•La Verne
Bourne, Inc.				•Altadena (2) •Pasadena
Chaparral High School ¹			X	•San Dimas
Five Acres				•Pasadena (2)
Fleming & Barnes, Inc., dba Dimondale Adolescent Care				•Lancaster (4)
Focus Point Academy			X	•Pasadena
Hathaway-Sycamores Child & Family Services dba The Sycamores				•Altadena
Haynes Family of Programs				•La Verne
Heritage				•La Verne •San Dimas
Hillsides Home for Children				•Pasadena
McKinley Children's Center/McKinley Boys Home				•La Verne
Pasadena High School			X	•Pasadena
Rose City High School			X	•Pasadena
San Dimas High School			X	•San Dimas
Zoe International dba Zoe Home for Youth				•Acton

Agency Visited		NC	JO	SCH	Site Location(s) Visited
Out of County	County				10
Mary's Shelter dba Mary's Path ¹	Orange				•Santa Ana
Rite of Passage Adolescent Treatment Center, Inc.	Orange				•Placentia
Boys Republic	San Bernardino				•Chino
Casa Esperanza	San Bernardino				•Chino
Eggleston Youth Center	San Bernardino				•Upland
Fields Comprehensive Youth Services	San Bernardino				•Rancho Cucamonga •Upland
Luvlee's Residential Care, Inc., dba New Dawn	San Bernardino				•Chino
Shirley's Home	San Bernardino	X			•Ontario
Trinity Youth Services	San Bernardino				•Apple Valley

TOTAL

76

Footnotes:

NC = Non-Contracted Group Home Agency/Regional Center Providers

JO = Joint Outreach Visit with the Probation Ombuds

SCH = School Outreach Visit

¹ Visited twice

² Includes distribution of materials even if youth unavailable to meet/non-verbal

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY OMBUDSPERSON FOR YOUTH IN STRTPs
REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE RECEIVED*
BY TYPE**

July 1 through December 31, 2022

Foster Youth Bill of Rights (FYBORs)

	1. Personal Rights	51
	2. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)	0
	3. Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	0
	4. Education	14
	5. Health	6
	6. Mental Health	3
	7. Sexual & Reproductive Health	0
	8. Case Plan	1
	9. Court	1
	10. Children and Family Team (CFT)	1
	11. Family and Social Connections	13
	12. Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management	40
	13. Communications	10
	14. Records	0
	FYBORs Total	140
	15. Other	40
	Total Requests Received by Ombudsperson	180

**Requests are categorized based on the initial allegation as described by the youth/caller.*