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November 3, 2025

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Supervisor Janice Hahn

FROM: Oscar Valdez
Auditor-Controller

Robert G. Campbell
Assistant Auditor-Controller / Chief Audit Executive

SUBJECT: **OMBUDSPERSON FOR YOUTH IN STRTPs SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT –
JANUARY 1 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025**

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 January 1 through June 30, 2025.

Summary of Activities

The Ombuds conducted in-person outreach to **229 youth**, ages **8 to 19**, during **100 site visits** at **33 agencies** and **1 school district**. This includes **47 STRTP sites** that housed youth placed by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), as well as Community Treatment Facilities (CTFs), non-contracted Group Homes (GHs), and schools. In addition, we were able to incorporate visits to **3 Transitional Shelter Care Facilities (TSCF)**.

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. STRTPs must adhere to federal Qualified Residential Treatment Program (also known as “Q RTP”) requirements.

We also addressed **133 requests for assistance (RFAs or requests)** received during our outreach (i.e., in-person and over the phone) and via our helpline (i.e., phone calls, web submissions, and e-mails). We identified common occurrences within these requests which fell in the categories of Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management, Personal Rights, Education, and Family and Social Connections. 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 (Board) 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

One of the primary responsibilities of the Ombuds is to engage with youth under the care of DCFS, whether placed in STRTPs, including CTFs, or non-contracted GHs. This engagement involves discussing their rights, providing a platform for them to express any concerns or needs they may have, and ensuring they are aware of the Ombuds as a resource to support them.

We plan site visits, which we typically schedule but may be unannounced, at each agency site at least once every six months. In cases where an agency does not have any DCFS youth at the time of a scheduled visit, proactive measures are taken to reconnect before the end of the reporting period concludes, ensuring comprehensive coverage. We verbally provide youth and STRTP staff with information about the Ombuds function and the CA Foster Youth Bill of Rights (FYBOR) (Attachment I). We also distribute age-appropriate materials (i.e., FYBOR handbooks, coloring books, and/or highlighters) complete with the Ombuds helpline contact details and a Quick Response (QR) code linking directly to our webpage for assistance requests.

The Ombuds also conducts visits to youth placed by DCFS in non-County contracted GHs and STRTPs, and we rely on a list provided by DCFS to identify such placements. DCFS utilizes some of these non-County contracted GHs to place youth who have developmental disabilities. These youth tend to be non-verbal or have limited communication skills. Some 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 youth under DCFS supervision. Other times, DCFS utilizes non-County contracted GHs when other County-contracted placement options have been exhausted or to place youth in substance use treatment programs.

We also visit youth at certain schools that have several students placed in STRTPs. We continue to evaluate additional schools and districts that can be incorporated into 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 their rights and exercise them.

We continued to expand our outreach via resource tables at community events for youth, such as the Youth Commission's Youth Listening Sessions. Being present at such events for youth provides us another time and place to connect with youth and their supporters about their rights and to share about our office as a resource.

We opened a social media account on Instagram to provide an additional and more contemporary channel to share information with youth about our office, the FYBOR, and other resources. This is part of our strategy to address the needs of youth who might be reluctant to interact with an unknown adult they perceive as being part of the dependency system. Publishing content on Instagram provides a one-way channel for youth to receive information without having to interact with County staff if that is their preference. They can access our information and resources on their own time and terms, when they may be more emotionally and/or mentally receptive, in a medium with which they are intimately familiar. Our hope is that this leads to greater engagement, and better retention of the information. In addition, the videos and posts may help build rapport with youth, who could then decide to contact our office if they have specific needs or requests.

How We Assist Youth With Their Concerns

Upon receiving an RFA, the Ombuds interviews the youth/requester to understand the situation and to determine an appropriate response and/or course of action. The Ombuds categorizes RFAs based on the initial information shared by the youth/requester. The Ombuds' goal is to be accessible and to assist all youth and other requestors, and accordingly, presumes all requests to be factual until proven otherwise through follow-up.

To effectively handle and resolve requests under the jurisdiction of the Ombuds, we coordinate with key personnel in various functional areas within DCFS. This includes but is not limited to collaborating with Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSWs), and utilizing resources such as the Child Protection Hotline (CPH), Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD), and Out-of-Home Care Investigations Section (OHCIS). We also interact with the Contracts Administration Division (CAD), Education Section, Youth Development Services Independent Living

Program (ILP), and the Public Inquiry Unit as necessary. In addition, we work closely with the Probation Department (Probation) Ombuds and the Placement Permanency and Quality Assurance Unit to address and resolve issues that arise.

Our efforts may also involve reaching out to legal representatives, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), and personnel from facilities such as STRTP/CTF/GH and their management, Community Care Licensing (CCL), the California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson (OFCO), school staff, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). When required, we extend our collaboration to include other counties to ensure we effectively address the requests and concerns of youth in these facilities.

We inform youth 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 **100** in-person **outreach visits to 229 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 **68 sites** (32 sites were visited twice), operated by 33 agencies and 1 school district as follows:

- **47 STRTP and 2 CTF sites** operated by 26 agencies
- **13 GH sites** operated by 7 non-contracted agencies
- **3 school sites** in one school district
- **3 TSCF sites**

229 Youth Visited

68 STRTP, CTF, GH, School, and SYTF Sites
Visited at Least Once

32 Sites
Visited 2 Times

26 STRTP and CTF
Agencies Visited

7 Non-Contracted GH
Agencies Visited

1 School District Visited

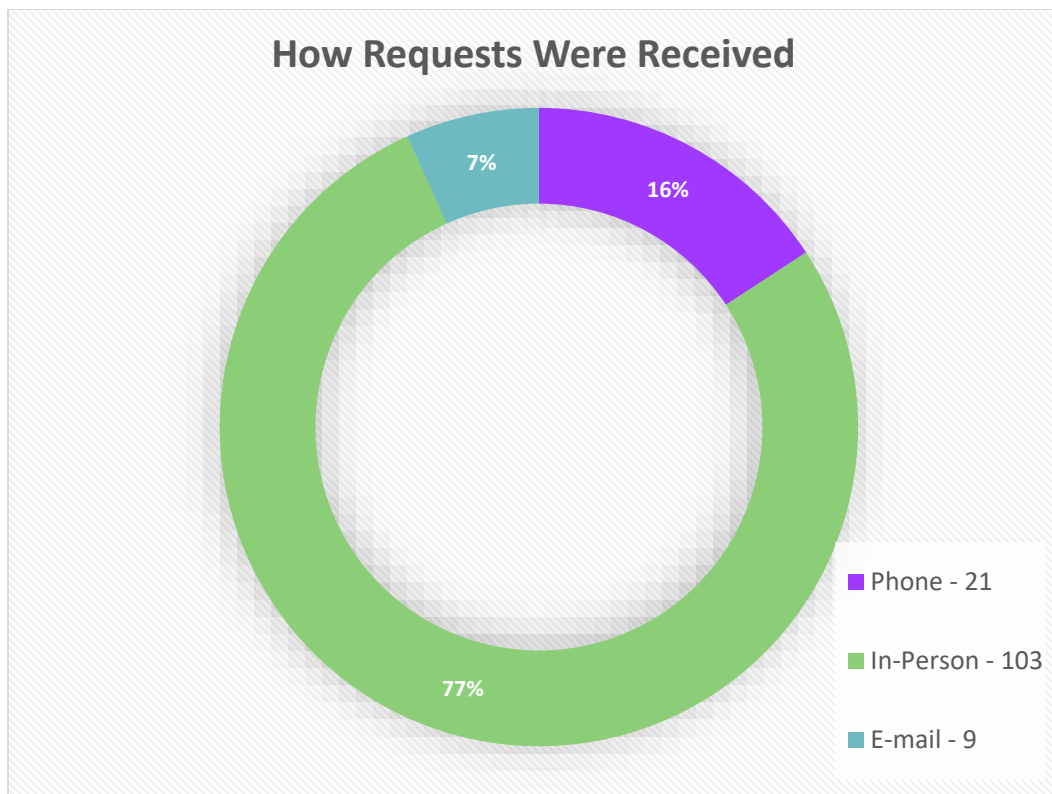
We conducted in-person outreach visits to all the STRTP, CTF, and group home agencies in Southern California housing youth under the care of DCFS. There were two youth placed in non-contracted STRTPs outside of Southern California (Lompoc and Fresno), and we conducted outreach to them via phone.

Attachment II details the summary of Outreach Visits Conducted.

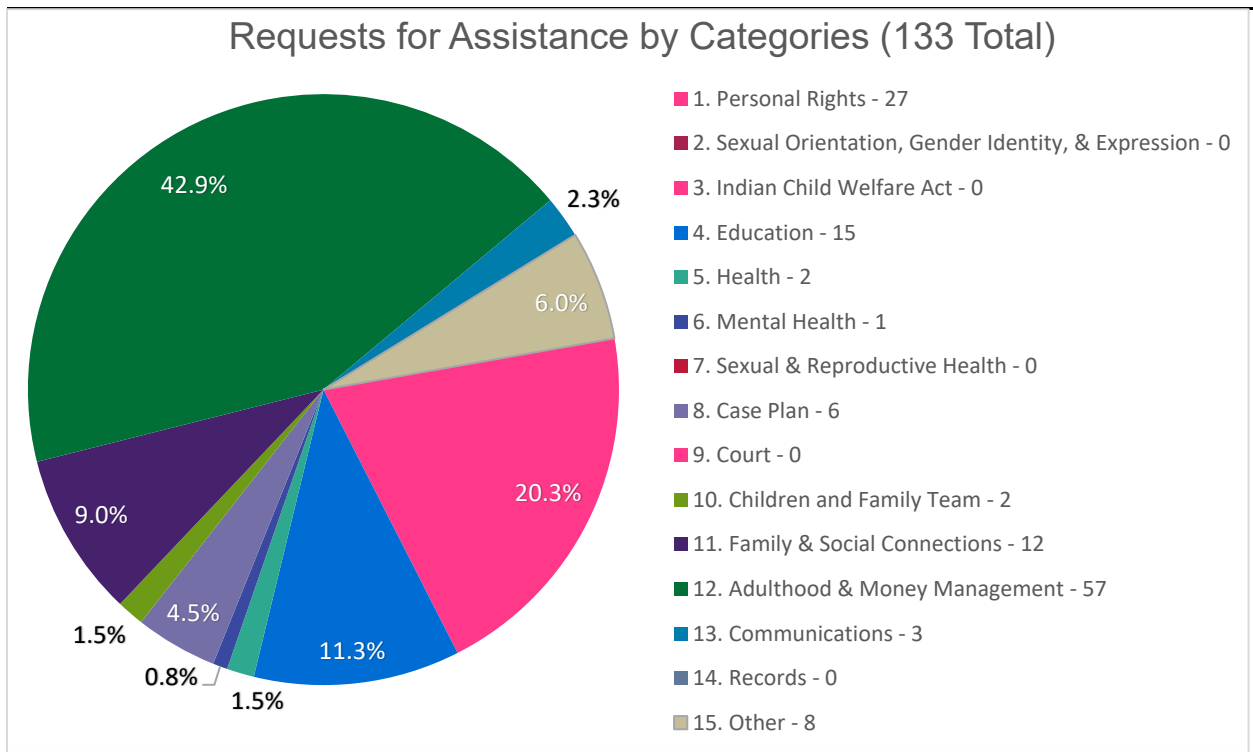
Request for Assistance Activities

The Ombuds received a total of **133 RFAs**. In speaking with youth about their rights during our outreach phone calls and visits, some requests were prompted by a new or better understanding of their rights. We received RFAs via the following channels:

- 103 via in-person outreach (77%)
- 21 by phone (16%)
- 9 via e-mails (7%)



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



The categories associated with the FYBOR with the most RFAs were:

\$ Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management - 57 (42.9%) Requests
In this category, examples of requests included:

Needing Vital Documents	Opening a Bank Account	Referral to a Job Program
ILP Funding	Status of Transitional Housing Application	Connection with ILP

We received 57 requests related to Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management, with 36 focused on obtaining vital documents such as birth certificates, Social Security cards, and identification (ID) cards. This theme carried over from prior reporting periods, as many youth need these documents to secure employment, but without them, they

cannot exercise their right to “work and develop job skills at an age-appropriate level,” as outlined in the FYBOR.

On April 17, 2025, DCFS re-issued the “For Your Information” document Welfare and Institutions Code Requirements for Vital Documents and Tips on Obtaining Social Security Cards for Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care. This FYI now instructs staff to assist youth in obtaining vital documents beginning at age 13, per our office’s prior request. Though DCFS has updated their written guidance, the change in practice to initiate obtaining vital documents at an earlier age is still not fully implemented.

DCFS’ ILP continues to host Real ID events at the Torrance, West Covina, Bell Gardens, and Antelope Valley Department of Motor Vehicles offices to expedite ID issuance. They have visually engaging flyers for youth and staff about these events and we requested adding information about age to the flyers to support the practice of requesting vital documents earlier.

As an additional means to support this practice change, we continue to recommend amending the electronic Needs and Services Plan (NSP) in DCFS’ Provider Management Information System to collect vital document information along with data on barriers, and interventions for youth aged 13 and up, as it currently only collects the information for youth aged 15 and up. Additionally, we emphasized the importance of including an assessment of youths’ interest and ability to open a bank account. However, DCFS indicated that they have not yet implemented this change due to resource constraints. As previously reported, DCFS did revise the memorandum of understanding with STRTP providers on September 4, 2025, requiring providers to begin obtaining vital documents for youth at age 13, but this requirement remains unchanged in the NSP, which could be impacting implementation of this updated requirement and ultimately youth’s access to their vital documents.

In addition, 18 requests pertained to youth wanting to gain employment or be referred to job programs. Some youth expressed barriers to obtaining a job such as not having their vital documents, a work permit, or transportation, while others were told they could not obtain a job because of their behavior, low Grade Point Average, school suspension, or age. While schools decide whether or not a youth meets criteria to issue them a work permit, a placement should not infringe on a youth’s right to work due to their behavior. In those instances we provided guidance to both staff about the FYBOR, specifically youth’s right to obtain employment.

ILP Funding

We received requests related to ILP funding where youth wanted to apply for funds or were frustrated that their ILP funding request was delayed or denied. Youth whose requests for funds were denied were unaware of ILP’s appeal process. ILP managers

previously shared with us that when a request is denied, ILP did not provide the appeal form or instructions directly to youth because the form is available on their website.

Per our previous recommendation, DCFS publicly published the Transitional Independent Living Planning policy on September 26, 2025. This provides clearer public information on eligibility to request specific funding line items, the application process, and also requires ILP staff to provide youth with the [Request for Review of ILP Funds/Services Decision](#) form should their request not be granted. Since this policy was not published until September 26, 2025, the youth in this review period had not been provided this form and did not have the benefit of the enhanced guidance. Overall, DCFS should continue to look for opportunities to increase assistance to youth in navigating ILP funding applications to maximize their chances of success, and to provide timely and helpful feedback in appealing negative funding decisions.



Personal Rights - 27 (20.3%) Requests

In this category, examples of requests included:

Hygiene Products and
Haircare of Choice

Clothing Allowance

Being Treated with
Respect

Staff taking youth
belongings

A recurring concern expressed by youth who requested assistance in this area is their treatment by staff/employees at their Out-of-Home placements. While agencies typically offer trauma-informed care, there were 11 reported instances of lapses in these practices. Youth reported incidents where staff made disparaging comments about them, used profanity towards them, or caused physical or emotional harm. Such actions can disrupt the environment and compromise the youths' emotional safety.

Our office reported allegations to the CPH, CCL, and DCFS per established protocols and followed up with agencies to track outcomes. Some of the allegations against the staff were found to be inconclusive by CCL and/or DCFS, because there was not always enough evidence to prove the allegations, especially when the only evidence is the youths' statements. However, there was also no reason to doubt the youth's report that they felt they were not being treated with respect by the staff. A few cases remain under investigation by CCL and/or the CPH. We continue to monitor these cases closely to ensure appropriate resolutions.

In reviewing DCFS records about the above incidents, we also became aware of two additional incidents not reported to us but investigated by DCFS and CCL. In one incident it was determined that a staff taunted a youth and did not practice Trauma-Informed Care, and the agency counseled the staff on his actions. The involved staff subsequently

resigned and no longer works for the STRTP. In addition, during this investigation, the agency stated that it is their policy to not allow youth to hold their allowance. This practice directly violates the FYBOR, and we are following up with DCFS, CCL, and agency staff to ensure that they amend the policy to be compliant. In another incident, an agency was found to lack Trauma Informed Care, conducted searches of youth without documenting a reason, and many other FYBOR-violation issues which the agency was unable to resolve. As a result, DCFS terminated their contract with the agency and youth are no longer placed there.

Hygiene and Haircare

Similar to prior reporting periods, some youths shared that they were unable to select the hygiene products they wanted or were given a budget that did not meet their needs. Specifically, one youth was provided a budget for braids that was below the market cost to get her hair done, so she had to spend her allowance to cover the difference, as well as ask for discounts from the braider. Youth also reported issues obtaining the hygiene products they needed, such as specific body wash, facial cream, body oil, toothpaste and facial cleanser. We attended many of the youth's Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings, as well as provided clarity that each youth's needs are required to be addressed individually, and as such budgets for their haircare and hygiene needs will vary. We reported these issues to CCL and DCFS to work with them to obtain resolutions for the youth. The youth mentioned above was reimbursed what she spent from her allowance, however the agency continued to cite concerns about cost and wanted to continue assigning the same monthly hair "budget" for all youth in the home.

The FYBOR, DCFS contract with STRTP providers, and the state ILS all address youths' access to hygiene products and haircare. These documents require access to grooming and hygiene products that respect culture, ethnicity, gender identity, and expression, and the DCFS contract specifically states that youth should have a choice among brands. However, none of these specifically delineate what hygiene products are considered basic needs, nor a specific dollar amount to be spent obtaining them. While it is essential to individually assess and address the needs of each youth, which is why the laws, contracts, and policies are written in a way for allowing so, it also opens the door to differing opinions on what is considered reasonable and basic necessity. In working on resolutions for individual youth, we observed that interpretations vary.

A lack of access to appropriate haircare and hygiene not only violates youth's rights but can affect youth's self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. As such, we continued to engage in discussions with DCFS about further training and dialogue with providers on the importance of individually assessing youths' needs. On October 3, 2025, DCFS informed all STRTP agencies that they must have at least one to two staff complete the Train-the-Trainer Training curriculum for the "The Intersection of Haircare, Self Esteem, and Trauma for Black Foster Youth" and that those staff are then expected to train the rest of their agency staff no later than May 30, 2026. This curriculum was developed as

a collaboration between DCFS OHCMD, Training Division, the Office of Equity, and the University of California, Los Angeles Academy of Workforce Excellence to address the above-described issues and to help providers recognize both the importance of the subject matter and how to apply it effectively to meet the needs of youth. In addition, DCFS OHCMD and Contract Program Management are issuing a Change Notice to the STRTP contract to include language requiring this training.



Education - 15 (11.3%) Requests

In this category, examples of requests included:

Attending
School of Origin
or New School

Needs Tutoring

Specialized Programs

Youth made 15 requests relating to education, which included a variety of topics. Of these, 9 requests were from youth wanting to attend their School of Origin (SOO) after their placement changed. A few youth remained in SOO, while the rest enrolled in new schools due to an Education Rights Holder (ERH) decision or the youth's change in desire to attend SOO for reasons such as the commute. Other requests from this category included wanting to attend a specific school that was not a SOO, needing tutoring, and wanting to participate in a specialized program at school.

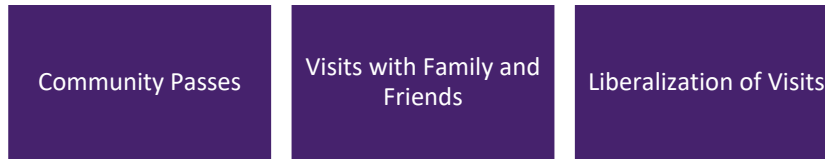
With each of these requests, the Ombuds informed youth about their education rights, their ERH, and the related processes and approvals needed to change schools or remain in SOO. We explained the ERH's role and authority over education decisions so they could have informed conversations about their education or school placement. When necessary, the Ombuds contacted youths' 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 youths' concerns were considered. In addition, there were youth who did not know who their ERH was and requested assistance obtaining this information. In other cases, there was not a current ERH, and one needed to be appointed.

In addition, we remain concerned about the number of school days youth missed when they changed placements, and we continue to work with OCP, LACOE, and DCFS to identify common reasons for these gaps and delays in order to address them. The workgroup wants to obtain additional data to identify the specific circumstances that contributed to gaps in enrollment/continued attendance in their SOO. After this information is reviewed, the workgroup will reconvene to review the results and identify potential strategies to strengthen school stability and prompt/stable school enrollment for youth placed in STRTPs.



Family and Social Connections 12 (9%) Requests

In this category, examples of requests included:



There were 12 RFAs about Family and Social Connections, many of which pertained to youth wanting visits and/or greater frequency and length of visits with family members and/or non-relative extended family members (NREFMs).

As a result of our prior request, DCFS issued an updated version of their Quality of Life in Out-of-Home Care policy on July 30, 2025. These updates clarify youth's ability to visit with family and friends in private unless prohibited by a court order, and state that "the law does not require CSWs to conduct an assessment/background check on (social contacts with people outside of the foster care system)." It further advises that "if the CSW has safety concerns regarding the potential visitor, (they should) consult with the SCSW and bring these concerns to the attention of the CFT or the court."

While this policy was not updated in time to address the RFAs brought forth in this review period, we are hopeful the clearer guidance for staff leads to a reduction in this being an issue for youth in the future. Creating additional barriers for youth in maintaining ties with family and friends compound over time and erodes youths' ability to develop and maintain strong support systems, which is imperative to their success when they age out of foster care.

Other Requests

There were 8 (6%) requests that were not related to the FYBOR, which included requests from youth about changing their CSW and wanting to move to a lower level of care.

Attachment III lists all the RFAs 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

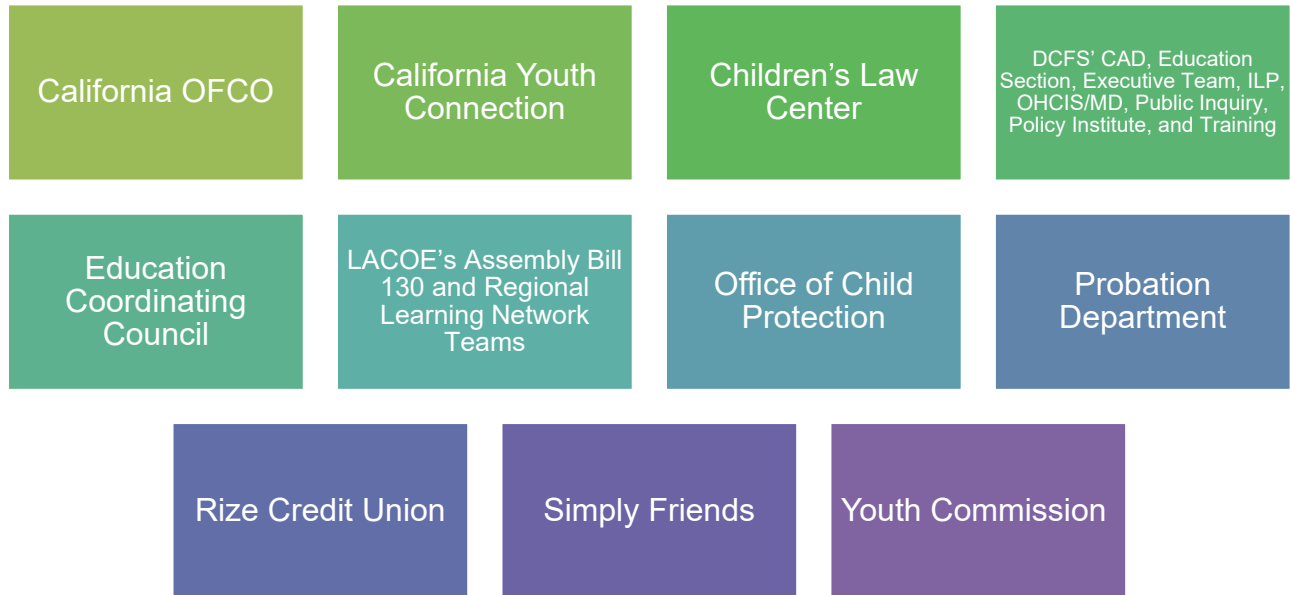
Each youth residing in an STRTP, CTF, or GH has a unique personal experience. Their requests may be reflective of a challenge they are facing in their life, in their current placement, at school, in the child welfare system, or related to something else.

At times, there are unprecedented circumstances that affect our youth in care and out of the control of any agency. On January 7, 2025, Southern California experienced devastating wildfires, that significantly impacted three Los Angeles County STRTP placements. While youth did not experience physical damage, they had to be relocated on an emergency basis. The Ombuds visited two of these three affected sites after the youth had returned to their respective placements. One home was completely destroyed and all youth from that site were moved to placements outside the Ombuds' purview.

The Ombuds was contacted by OFCO about a complaint that their office received regarding one of the affected STRTPs and was immediately able to visit the STRTP to address the concern, as well as speak with youth about their experiences and current needs. Several youth raised concerns about the outdoor portable showers that were being used as a result of an [Unsafe Water Alert](#). While the guidance was to limit showers and hot water usage, out of an abundance of caution the STRTP opted to utilize portable showers instead. However, youth noted the water in these portable showers turned cold after two uses, leaving youth who were not first to shower with only cold water. In addition, the youth shared they had to walk outside from the showers to their cottages in cold, rainy winter weather. While the youth understood the need for the showers, they questioned why hot water was not available for all. The Ombuds discussed alternatives with the STRTP administrator to address the concerns and also contacted CCL, so that the youth were able to return to regular showers with hot water.

Collaboration for Improved Practices

Since Ombuds work is specialized, strengthening partnerships with those in the same field is invaluable. 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:



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 also continued to participate monthly in the United States Ombudsman Association's (USOA) 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., to inform our program design and work.

Our office also continued to facilitate a subgroup of child welfare ombuds from the USOA that conduct in-person outreach to youth, since not all child welfare ombuds offices conduct in-person outreach visits. This forum allows us to exchange strategies and ideas with other ombuds who conduct such outreach and talk through issues we encounter.

In addition, we received an achievement award (Attachment IV) from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the Youth Access Banking program created in partnership with Rize Credit Union (formerly SCE Credit Union), which acknowledges innovative programs, policies, and initiatives from counties across the nation that demonstrate creativity, excellence in service delivery, and favorable results for their residents and communities. We continue to partner with Rize Credit Union to remove barriers to youth exercising their right to maintain a bank account and manage their finances.

Index of Attachments

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

Acknowledgment

We thank management and staff from the various STRTP, CTF, and GH agencies, schools, the Probation Ombuds, OFCO, DCFS, LACOE, CLC, 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 us, or your staff may contact Michelle Lucarelli-Beltran, Ombudsperson, at (213) 342-5755 or via e-mail at mlucarelli-beltran@auditor.lacounty.gov.

OV:CY:RGC:GH:MLB

Attachments (4)

- c: Joseph M. Nicchitta, Acting Chief Executive Officer
Edward Yen, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Brandon T. Nichols, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Lisa H. Wong, Psy.D., Director, Department of Mental Health
David J. Carroll, Director, Department of Youth Development
Minsun Park Meeker, Interim Executive Director, Office of Child Protection
Guillermo Viera Rosa, Chief Probation Officer, Probation Department
Armand Montiel, Interim Executive Director, Commission for Children and Families
Tiara Summers, Executive Director, Youth Commission
Akemi Arakaki, Supervising Judge, Juvenile Division, Los Angeles Superior Court
Luciana Svidler, Director of Policy and Training, Children's Law Center of California
Dawyn R. Harrison, County Counsel
Dennis Smeal, Executive Director, Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Inc.
Molly Snow, Interim Chief Executive Officer, CASA of Los Angeles
Special Audit Committee
Children's Deputies
Probation Ombudsman
California Office of Foster Care Ombudsperson
Countywide Communications



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

January 1 through June 30, 2025

Agency Visited	NC	JO	SCH	Site Location(s) Visited
1st Supervisorial District				10
Pacific Horizon	X			•Montebello
Eggleston Youth Center				•Baldwin Park (2)
Garces Residential Care				•Claremont
Hillsides Home for Children ¹				•Los Angeles
Hope House	X			•El Monte (2)
Luvlee's Residential Care, Inc., dba New Dawn				•Walnut
San Gabriel Children's Center				•Azusa
St. Anne's Family Services ¹				•Los Angeles
2nd Supervisorial District				24
Abounding Rivers				•Los Angeles
Dangerfield Institute of Urban Problems ¹				•Los Angeles (4)
Dream Home Care, Inc. ¹				•Carson (2)
Fleming & Barnes, Inc., dba Dimondale Adolescent Care ¹				•Carson •Gardena •Hawthorne
Humanistic Foundation, Inc. dba New Concept ¹				•Los Angeles
I am Safe ²	X			•Los Angeles
Mindful Growth Foundation ¹				•Los Angeles (4)
One Care	X			•Compton
Virtuous Woman, Inc./Project Destiny Home of Hope ¹				•Los Angeles (2)
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services STRTP ¹				•Los Angeles
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services Community Treatment Facility ¹				•Los Angeles
Wayfinder Family Services ²	X			•Los Angeles (3)
3rd Supervisorial District				2
Optimist Boys Home & Ranch, Inc. STRTP ¹				•Woodland Hills
Optimist Boys Home & Ranch, Inc. TSC				•Woodland Hills
4th Supervisorial District				5
Dream Home Care, Inc. ¹				•Torrance
Fleming & Barnes, Inc., dba Dimondale Adolescent Care ¹				•Long Beach
Rite of Passage Adolescent Treatment Center, Inc. ¹				•San Pedro •Torrance
Starview Adolescent Center Community Treatment Facility ¹				•Torrance
5th Supervisorial District				14
Blair Middle School			X	•Pasadena
Bourne, Inc. ¹				•Pasadena
Five Acres STRTP ¹				•Altadena •Pasadena
Five Acres TSC				•Altadena (2)
Fleming & Barnes, Inc., dba Dimondale Adolescent Care ¹				•Lancaster (3)
Hathaway-Sycamores Child & Family Services dba The Sycamores ¹				•Altadena
McKinley Children's Center/McKinley Boys Home				•San Dimas
Rose City High School			X	•Pasadena
Sierra Madre Middle School			X	•Sierra Madre
Zoe International dba Zoe Home for Youth				•Acton

Agency Visited		NC	JO	SCH	Site Location(s) Visited
Out of County	County				13
Mary's Shelter dba Mary's Path ¹	Orange				•Santa Ana (2)
Alpha Connection	San Bernardino	X			•Apple Valley (4)
Boys Republic	San Bernardino				•Chino
Fields Comprehensive Youth Services	San Bernardino				•Rancho Cucamonga •Upland
Luvlee's Residential Care, Inc., dba New Dawn	San Bernardino				•Chino
Rite of Passage	Orange				•Costa Mesa
Shirley's Home	San Bernardino	X			•Ontario
Trinity Youth Services	San Bernardino				•Apple Valley

TOTAL **68**

Footnotes:

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

JO = Joint Outreach Visit with the California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson

SCH = School Outreach Visit

¹ Visited twice or more

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

January 1 through June 30, 2025

Foster Youth Bill of Rights (FYBOR)

	1. Personal Rights	27
	2. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)	0
	3. Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	0
	4. Education	15
	5. Health	2
	6. Mental Health	1
	7. Sexual & Reproductive Health	0
	8. Case Plan	6
	9. Court	0
	10. Children and Family Team (CFT)	2
	11. Family and Social Connections	12
	12. Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management	57
	13. Communications	3
	14. Records	0
	FYBoRs Total	124
	15. Other	8
	Total Requests Received by Ombudsperson	133

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

2025 Achievement Award Winner

“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.”—Benjamin Franklin

The National Association of Counties is proud to award
Los Angeles County, Calif.

A 2025 Achievement Award for its program titled:
Youth Access Banking



Matthew Chase, CEO/Executive Director



Supervisor James Gore, NACo President

