



What will the Ombudsman do when I ask for help?

Once a request is received, it will be reviewed for appropriateness and completion. The Ombudsman may call and collect additional information. The Ombudsman will then determine how best to help. This process is called intake. The Ombudsman will address requests based on urgency and needs of the children involved.

What ways can the Ombudsman help me?

- **Resource & Referral**
In many cases, the Ombudsman will help by finding the right person or service to address the request. The Ombudsman will connect individuals seeking help with contact information for the right service.

- **Informal Mediation**
Sometimes, an individual follows through on a service or referral and feels their needs are still not fully addressed. The Ombudsman may offer to mediate the concern with the parties involved. This will look different from case to case.

Investigation and Report

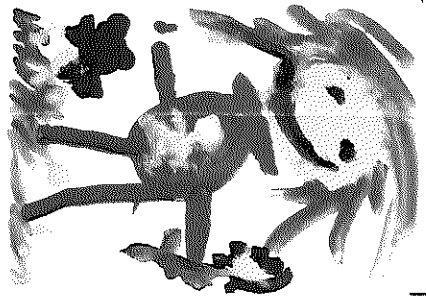
In other cases, a request will come to the Ombudsman with larger concerns and a good deal of work already tried to resolve the issue. If the Ombudsman determines that that request for assistance requires it, an investigation will occur.

The Ombudsman will open an investigation if the following criteria are met:

- 1) The intake process identifies an action or omission by DPHHS;
- 2) The action or omission involves a child served by DPHHS or a child with safety, permanency, or well-being needs;
- 3) The action or omission places a child, parent, or other caregiver at risk of harm or is a violation of law, policy, or procedure with respect to a child or family receiving or in need of services from DPHHS;
- 4) The individual requesting assistance attempted to seek help through DPHHS employees or procedures.

An investigation may include collection of all case documentation, interviews of involved parties, and attendance at meetings and court hearings about the case.

All investigations will conclude with a written report.



How can I request assistance from the Ombudsman?

A request for assistance can be made by filling out a request for assistance form.

The form can be found at <https://doj.mt.gov/childreusjustice/>.

Send the completed form to the Ombudsman by:

- 1) **Email** to dojombudsman@mt.gov
- 2) **Fax** to 406-329-1259
- 3) **Mail** to at 2685 Palmer Avenue Suite E, Missoula, MT 59808



**Office of the
Child & Family
Ombudsman**

How can I ask questions or get help filling out the form?

Call the Ombudsman at **1-844-25CHILD** (1-844-252-4453).

What is the Office of the Child & Family Ombudsman?

The 2013 Montana Legislature passed House Bill 76 to create an **independent, impartial, and confidential** Child and Family Ombudsman.

The Child and Family Ombudsman

responsibilities are to advocate for best practices in working with children and families, investigate issues within the Department of Health and Human Services (specifically the Child and Family Services Division), and provide outreach and education to citizens on how best to protect and serve children and families.

Who can request assistance from the Ombudsman?

Any individual concerned about the interests or rights of a child in Montana may request assistance from the Ombudsman.

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, please call the Child Abuse Hotline at **1-866-820-5437**.

To report a crime, please call 911.

Examples of requests the Ombudsman may address:

- A **concerned citizen** sees a commercial for the need for more foster families' in Montana. A few weeks later the idea is still in her mind, but she cannot remember who to call. She knows about the Ombudsman and calls for information.
- A **grandmother** learns her grandchildren were removed from their parent and placed in foster care. She was in contact with the Child Protection Specialist and given permission to see her grandchildren. She tried to contact the foster parents but received no call back. Now, the Child Protection Specialist is unavailable. Six weeks have passed since she last saw her grandchildren. Grandmother calls the Ombudsman.
- A student shows up to school unclean and hungry. A **teacher** attempts to contact his parents with no response. Concerned for the child's safety he calls the child abuse hotline and files a report. The student continues to appear neglected. The teacher makes several more calls to the hotline and fears nothing is being done. The teacher calls the Ombudsman.

Montana Department of Justice
Children's Justice Bureau

Office of the Child & Family Ombudsman

Promoting the rights of Montana children & families



Child and Family Ombudsman

2685 Palmer Avenue,
Suite E, Missoula, MT 59808
EMAIL: DOJOMBUDSMAN@mt.gov
TOLL-FREE: 1-844-25C-HILD
(1-844-252-4453)
FAX: (406) 329-1259



Office of Child & Family Ombudsman

