

The Office of the Child Advocate requests 2 positions:

- Assistant Child Advocate; and
- Children's Service Consultant.

These positions are necessary to allow OCA to fulfill its statutory obligations. OCA has 12 statutory mandates and a total of 8 FTE's. These mandates are broad and deep. They include:

- (1) Evaluate the delivery of services to children by state agencies and those entities that provide services to children through funds provided by the state;
- (2) Review periodically the procedures established by any state agency providing services to children to carry out the provisions of sections 46a-13k to 46a-13p, inclusive, with a view toward the rights of the children and recommend revisions to such procedures;
- (3) Review complaints of persons concerning the actions of any state or municipal agency providing services to children and of any entity that provides services to children through funds provided by the state, make appropriate referrals and investigate those where the Child Advocate determines that a child or family may be in need of assistance from the Child Advocate or that a systemic issue in the state's provision of services to children is raised by the complaint;
- (4) Pursuant to an investigation, provide assistance to a child or family who the Child Advocate determines is in need of such assistance including, but not limited to, advocating with an agency, provider or others on behalf of the best interests of the child;
- (5) Periodically review the facilities and procedures of any and all institutions or residences, public or private, where a juvenile has been placed by any agency or department;
- (6) Recommend changes in state policies concerning children including changes in the system of providing juvenile justice, child care, foster care and treatment;
- (7) Take all possible action including, but not limited to, conducting programs of public education, undertaking legislative advocacy and making proposals for systemic reform and formal legal action, in order to secure and ensure the legal, civil and special rights of children who reside in this state;
- (8) Provide training and technical assistance to attorneys representing children and guardians ad litem appointed by the Superior Court;
- (9) Periodically review the number of special needs children in any foster care or permanent care facility and recommend changes in the policies and procedures for the placement of such children;
- (10) Serve or designate a person to serve as a member of the child fatality review panel established in subsection (b) of this section;
- (11) Take appropriate steps to advise the public of the services of the Office of the Child Advocate, the purpose of the office and procedures to contact the office; and
- (12) Prepare an in-depth report on conditions of confinement, including, but not limited to, compliance with section 46a-152, regarding children twenty-one years of age or

younger who are held in secure detention or correctional confinement in any facility operated by a state agency. Such report shall be submitted, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children not later than March 1, 2017, and every two years thereafter.

In addition to the Child Advocate and Associate Child Advocate, OCA's staff is structured as follows:

- One full time Human Services Advocate dedicates her time to receiving and responding to citizen complaints;
- One full time Assistant Child Advocate is dedicated to resolving citizen complaints through advocacy with state agencies and other entities that receive state funds;
- One full time Assistant Child Advocate dedicated to review of the conditions of confinement in CSSD and DOC facilities;
- One full time Assistant Child Advocate, who also staffs the state's Child Fatality Review Panel, conducts OCA's in-depth investigations related to fatalities;
- One full time Human Services Advocate, dedicated to supporting the Child Fatality Review Panel and the OCA's child fatality review work; and
- One full time Staff Attorney, dedicating to handling legal issues of the office and who conducts OCA's systemic reviews related to educational services.

OCA staff also sits on some 30 committees, task forces, and working groups. All of OCA's staff work diligently to meet OCA's statutory obligations, which far exceed our capacity.

**Explanation for Need for Addition of an Assistant Child Advocate (MP 62; \$91,254.00-\$124,422.00 Yearly):**

OCA has long had responsibility to "[p]eriodically review the facilities and procedures of any and all institutions or residences, public or private, where a juvenile has been placed by any agency or department." In 2016, OCA's statute was amended to add responsibility to provide a biennial report on conditions of confinement for children and youth age 20 or younger in secure detention (under the Judicial Branch-Court Support Services Division (JB-CSSD)) or correctional confinement (under the Department of Correction (DOC)). In 2022, this was amended to include children and youth up to age 21. There are 20 DOC facilities and, on any given day, there are approximately 450 incarcerated youth under age 22. There are 6 facilities where youth are held under the JB-CSSD, and over 500 children are placed in these facilities each year. OCA was not provided with additional staff to carry out these responsibilities and relies on one Assistant Child Advocate to complete review of DOC and CSSD facilities. As a result, OCA has been unable to complete reviews of other facilities, such as those licensed/operated by DCF and DDS (where children may be placed). Adding an Assistant Child Advocate would allow OCA to periodically review these facilities.

**Explanation for Need for Children's Services Consultant (SH25 position; \$82,845.00-\$105,214.00 Yearly):**

The state's delivery of child welfare services is one of the state's most critical services for children. DCF exited the Juan F. consent decree in March 2022. Prior to the exit of the consent decree, the State relied on the Juan F. Court Monitor's office to provide external oversight. Now that this external oversight no longer exists, given OCA's statutory obligations to "evaluate the delivery of services to children by state agencies and those entities that provide services to children through funds provided by the state," to "review periodically the procedures established by any state agency providing services to children . . ." and to "[r]ecommend changes in state policies concerning children including changes in the system providing juvenile justice, child care, foster care, and treatment," it is incumbent on OCA to engage oversight activities related to the delivery of child welfare services. OCA currently does not have an FTE that is dedicated to the review of the state's child welfare work. In order to do the intensive work required, OCA is seeking to add one Children's Services Consultant to support the OCA's child welfare review work.