

Children's Ombudspersons: Their Work and Responsibilities

Children's Ombuds are independent public officials responsible for protecting children's rights in their interactions with state agencies by hearing complaints, helping resolve legitimate grievances, and reporting findings. While specific duties vary by state and purview, generally, Ombuds for Children may work to promote the rights and interests of children in many ways, including by:

- **Giving Children and Families a Voice**
Children's ombudsman services are designed to hear children and their parents' complaints about the services they receive or do not receive from public child-serving agencies.
- **Investigating Legitimate Complaints about Public Services for Children**
Children's ombudspersons investigate complaints made by children or their advocates about issues that affect children's rights or well-being.
- **Removing Fear of Retaliation**
Children's Ombudspersons independently hear children, parents, foster caregivers, and other stakeholders who may be reluctant to communicate their concerns to child-serving agencies because of feared consequences.
- **Building and Maintaining a Knowledge Base**
Children's Ombudsmen produce a cumulative public record of citizens' complaints and resolutions, providing valuable information to current and future leaders.
- **Advocating for Policy Changes**
Based on systemic findings, children's ombudspersons may advocate for policy changes to improve the lives and well-being of children.
- **Recommending Improvements to Public Services for Children**
Children's ombudspersons may provide recommendations to state legislatures and public child-serving agencies on ways they may improve the lives and well-being of children.
- **Educating the Public about Children's Rights**
Children's ombudspersons may inform the public about children's rights and the importance of protecting and promoting the well-being of children.
- **Monitoring Public Child-Serving Agencies**
Children's ombudspersons may monitor public agencies, programs, and contracted providers that serve children to ensure that they meet children's needs and protect their rights.
- **Collaborating with Other Organizations to Benefit Children**
Children's ombudspersons may cooperate with other organizations, including non-profit groups and advocacy organizations, to advance the rights and well-being of children.