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Agency Purpose

The Office of Ombudsperson for Families is authorized by M.S. 257.0755 and was created in 1991 to investigate decisions, acts, and other matters of agencies, programs, or facilities providing protection or placement services to children of color. Statute requires the agency to operate independently, but to collaborate with the Indian Affairs Council, the Chicano-Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans, and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans. The applicable community specific board (hereinafter, board) selects the ombudsperson for each community. Each ombudsperson serves in unclassified service at the pleasure of the board. Each board consists of five members appointed by the chair of that specific community council. The board members are required to meet four times a year to advise the ombudspersons on overall policies.

Core Functions

The agency's primary duty is to ensure that all laws governing the protection of children and their families are implemented in a culturally appropriate manner, and that decision-making processes are in compliance with the laws that protect children of color in the state of Minnesota. Each ombudsperson has the authority to investigate individual occurrences and issue reports to highlight where problems exist.

Additional duties of the agency include working with local and state courts, policy makers, and service providers to promote integrated systems to ensure family reunification, stability, security, and permanency. This agency reaffirms the state's commitment of making and keeping the family whole and enhancing the well being of Minnesota's children. Finally, the agency helps develop policy to support and create culturally competent and bilingual social workers in communities of color throughout Minnesota.

Key Goals

- ◆ **Ensure children and families are protected during all child placement proceedings.** This goal comes from the ombudsperson's mission statement.
- ◆ **Our communities will be safe, friendly and caring.** The ombudsperson office's activities support this goal by helping to ensure quality social services are received for each respective community. This goal is from *Minnesota Milestones*, see: <http://server.admin.state.mn.us/mm/goal.html>.

Key Measures

Through the agency's actions, recommendations; and work with state and county officials, the courts, policymakers and service providers; Minnesota has increased the number of children placed with family members – in relative adoptive and relative foster homes. Best practice standards tell us that the best way to ensure safety and permanency in placement is to try to keep children within their families. While the agency's focus is on children of color, our efforts have helped make significant, positive outcomes for all Minnesota children in foster care.

At A Glance

The chart below shows the disparity in Minnesota of children of color in out of home placements compared to white children.

This disparity is carried over into: the decisions of whose children are placed out of home; the accessibility of services; the quality of services; the urgency in service delivery; the cultural and linguistic considerations, particularly for immigrant and refugee groups; permanency considerations; the monitoring and evaluating case plans and family outcomes; and the lack of culturally competent child welfare workers, to name but a few.

	Total Number of Children in Minnesota	Number and % in Out of Home Placement***	
Black/African American*	64,308	3,071	4.78%
American Indian/Alaska Native*	20,607	1,816	8.81%
Asian/Pacific Islander*	53,831	339	.63%
Hispanic**	55,640	1,237	2.22%
White	1,079,278	7,770	.01%
Race Unknown	24,453	525	2.15%

* This includes children with their race indicated as the only race according to the 2000 census.
 ** This number includes children of all races who had the ethnicity "Hispanic/Latino/Spanish."
 *** Data represents unique count of children in care in 2007 from the Minnesota Department of Human Services report on the distribution of race of children in out-of-home care.

- ◆ Out of home placements compared to total population in Minnesota:

	% of Children in 2000 Minnesota population	% of Children in Out-of-Home Care			
		2001	2003	2005	2007
African American/Black	5.0	19.3	21.4	20.0	20.8
American Indian	1.6	11.2	11.8	11.5	12.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.2	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.3
White	83.9	58.3	56.0	56.3	52.5
Unknown race	1.9	1.5	1.8	2.5	3.5
Hispanic*	4.3	5.9	7.0	7.8	8.4

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services 2007 Child Welfare Report to the 2008 Legislature

- ◆ Out of home placements in relative adoptive and relative foster homes in Minnesota:

	2003		2005		2007	
	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children
Relative Pre-Adoptive Home	229	1.8	434	2.3	445	2.3
Relative Foster Home	3097	16.0	3436	17.9	3,186	16.2

Sources: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Relative Placement Settings for Children in Out of Home Care 2000-2005, Minnesota Department of Human Services 2007 Child Welfare Report to the 2008 Legislature

Budget

- ◆ 73% of agency budget is from the general fund, 27% is from a transfer from the Department of Human Services. These funds are generated by activities performed that qualify for federal financial participation, as specified by M.S. 257.0769
- ◆ 75% of the agency's budget is for staffing; a total of 5.0 FTE's including the four ombudspersons and one full-time clerical staff person
- ◆ 25% of the agency's budget is for operating expenses

Contact

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Additional information is also available on the agency website:

<http://www.ombudsfamilies.state.mn.us/>

Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Governor Recomm.		Biennium 2010-11
	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	255	265	265	265	530
Recommended	255	265	252	251	503
Change		0	(13)	(14)	(27)
% Biennial Change from 2008-09					-3.3%
 <u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	255	265	252	251	503
Statutory Appropriations					
Miscellaneous Special Revenue	155	169	141	118	259
Total	410	434	393	369	762
 <u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	327	343	312	299	611
Other Operating Expenses	83	91	81	70	151
Total	410	434	393	369	762
 <u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Ombudsperson For Families	410	434	393	369	762
Total	410	434	393	369	762
 <u>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)</u>					
	4.9	5.0	4.4	4.0	

OMBUDSPERSON FOR FAMILIES

Change Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	FY2009	Governor's Recomm.		Biennium
		FY2010	FY2011	2010-11
Fund: GENERAL				
FY 2009 Appropriations	265	265	265	530
Subtotal - Forecast Base	265	265	265	530
Change Items				
Operating Budget Reduction	0	(13)	(14)	(27)
Total Governor's Recommendations	265	252	251	503
Fund: MISCELLANEOUS SPECIAL REVENUE				
Planned Statutory Spending	169	141	118	259
Total Governor's Recommendations	169	141	118	259

OMBUDSPERSON FOR FAMILIES

Change Item: Operating Budget Reduction

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
General Fund				
Expenditures	\$(13)	\$(14)	\$(14)	\$(14)
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$(13)	\$(14)	\$(14)	\$(14)

Recommendation

The Governor recommends a reduction of \$13,000 in FY 2010 and \$14,000 in FY 2011 to the general fund budget of the Ombudsperson for Families.

Background

The recommended reduction will be taken from salaries. There should be no reduction in FTE because the office will use special revenue fund carry-forward to mitigate the loss of general fund resources.

Relationship to Base Budget

The recommended reduction represents a 5% reduction of the agency's general fund budget.

Key Goals and Measures

This change item may affect the following agency goals and performance measures:

- ◆ Ensure children and families are protected during all child placement proceedings;
- ◆ Out of home placements compared to total population in Minnesota;
- ◆ Out of home placements in relative adoptive and relative foster homes in Minnesota.
(for additional information on key goals and measures, refer to the Ombudsperson for Families agency profile)

This recommended reduction intends to safeguard core activities and reduce administrative overhead. The agency will manage budget reductions through various service level reductions or eliminations, staffing decreases, and/or operating expense reductions. The resulting budget will focus on new ways to operate the department's core functions.

Alternatives Considered

None.

Statutory Change: Not Applicable