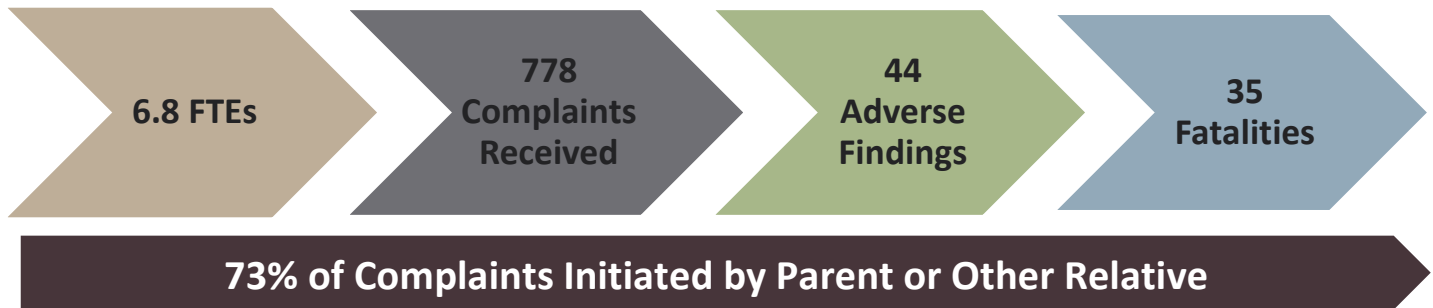


# OFCO: 2015-2016 IN REVIEW

Independent. Impartial. Confidential. Taking action to help children and families.

The Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds (OFCO):

- Promotes public awareness about the child protection and welfare system;
- Investigates complaints and intervenes to prevent harm; and
- Recommends and facilitates systemic improvements.



## TOP CONCERNS IDENTIFIED BY COMPLAINANTS



## ADVERSE FINDINGS

OFCO makes a formal finding against the agency if the complaint issues are substantiated.

Findings fall into 3 categories:

- The agency violated **law, policy, or procedure**;
- the agency's action or inaction was **clearly unreasonable**; and
- the agency's conduct resulted in **harm** to a child or family.

OFCO made **44** adverse findings against the agency in the 2015-2016 reporting year. Findings include:

- **Child Safety** (39% of findings): Unsafe placement of dependent child and failure to conduct monthly health and safety visits.
- **Parent's Rights** (23% of findings): Delay in completing CPS investigation, and failure to communicate with parents.
- **Poor Casework Practice** (23% of findings): Poor communication among CA divisions.

---

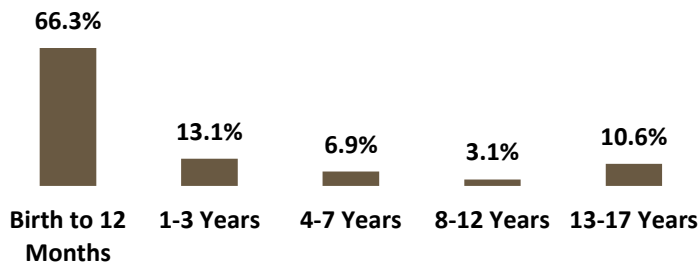
## CHILD FATALITIES AND NEAR FATALITIES

OFCO conducts administrative reviews of all child fatalities and near fatalities, both those involving abuse and neglect and those unrelated to maltreatment, whose family had contact with Children's Administration (CA) within one year prior to the incident.

- From January 1 – December 31, 2016 OFCO examined **35 maltreatment-related fatalities**.
- During this same period OFCO examined **16 maltreatment-related near fatalities**.

### Age at time of death, 2013-2016

**\*Maltreatment related fatalities\***



### Risk Factors

- **Infant Unsafe Sleep**
- **Parental Opiate Use**
- **Other Substance Abuse**
- **Mental Health Disorders**
- **Domestic Violence**

CA conducts Executive Child Fatality Reviews when child abuse or neglect is suspected and the child was receiving CA services at time of death or within the past year. These reviews identify areas for increased education and training, as well as potential policy or legislative changes. OFCO participates in these reviews and issues an annual report to the Legislature on the implementation status of the recommendations. Between August 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016, CA conducted **reviews in the deaths of 20 children** and the **near-deaths of 13 children**.

---

### Other OFCO Highlights, 2015-2016:

- Outreach to youth living in group homes across the state, including interviews and surveys of youth and group home staff.
- Recommendations to improve Washington's group care facilities.
- Commissioner on the Washington State Blue Ribbon Commission on the Delivery of Services to Children and Families.
- Meetings with foster parents to discuss placement and foster parent retaliation issues.
- Tracked the placement of children in state care in hotels and DCFS offices. Made recommendations for improving placement options.
- Initiated internal improvement projects for OFCO's complaint tracking database and telecommunications systems.

*Office of the Family & Children's Ombuds*  
*6840 Fort Dent Way, Suite 125 Tukwila, WA 98188*  
*Phone: (800) 571-7321 or (206) 439-3870*  
*Fax: (206) 439-3877*  
*Website: ofco.wa.gov*