

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 00-58

August 25, 2000

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL CALIFORNIA PUBLIC ADOPTION AGENCIES  
ALL CALIFORNIA GROUP HOMES  
ALL CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES

**REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL**

- State Law Change  
 Federal Law or Regulation  
Change  
 Court Order  
 Clarification Requested by  
One or More Counties  
 Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: California State Ombudsman for Foster Care

This All-County Letter (ACL) provides information regarding the Office of the California State Ombudsman for Foster Care established as part of the implementation of Senate Bill 933 (Chapter 311, Statutes of 1998).

SB 933 added Chapter 2.5, Section 16160 through Section 16167, to the Welfare and Institutions Code. These sections establish the State Ombudsman for Foster Care Program within the California Department of Social Services. We are pleased to announce the opening of the Office of the Ombudsman for Foster Care, both in Sacramento and Los Angeles, and the establishment of a toll-free telephone line, 877-846-1602, to receive concerns regarding issues affecting foster youth.

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 16167 requires county social workers to provide foster children with the toll-free number for the Office and verbal or written information regarding the existence and purpose of the Office. To assist counties in providing this information, enclosed are camera-ready copies of flyers and a copy of our brochures, one in English and one in Spanish, for distribution by county agencies to all foster youth and other concerned parties. Please contact us if you would like this material via e-mail or disk in order to reproduce these materials in color.

The Office of the State Ombudsman for Foster Care is mandated to perform three main functions:

- 1) Disseminate information on the rights of children and youth in foster care and the services provided by the Office. The information shall include notification that conversations with the Ombudsman may not be confidential, and that all reports of child abuse will be reported.

- 2) Investigate and attempt to resolve complaints made by or on behalf of children placed in foster care, related to their care, placement and services. All fact-finding inquiries will be conducted in a neutral and objective manner.
- 3) Compile and make available to the Legislature all data collected over the course of the year including, but not limited to, the number of contacts to the toll-free telephone number, the number of complaints made, the number of investigations performed by the Office, the number of referrals made, and the number of unresolved complaints.

The Ombudsman and staff are authorized to:

- Meet or communicate with any foster child in his or her placement or elsewhere.
- Access any record of a state or local agency that is necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the Office.
- Investigate any and all complaints received by the Office, and decide whether to investigate a complaint further or refer the complaint to another agency.
- Report all findings to the California Department of Social Services and to the Legislature.

The authority of the Ombudsman Program is limited as follows:

- The Ombudsman does not have the authority to challenge court decisions.
- The Ombudsman can recommend case reassessments but is not empowered to change case plans.
- The Ombudsman does not have any authority regarding personnel issues. Complaints regarding discrimination shall be referred to the appropriate Civil Rights Office.

Given the nature of the Ombudsman Program, every attempt will be made to resolve complaints voluntarily and informally. When complaints are outside the authority of the Ombudsman, appropriate referrals will be made.

The Ombudsman Program has hosted two meetings of the statewide Advisory Committee of the Ombudsman for Foster Care. This committee includes representatives from county child welfare agencies, members of the judiciary, child and youth advocates, foster youth, foster family agencies, care providers, the California Department of Social Services and other groups interested in the care and services provided to foster children and youth. The committee has assisted the Ombudsman staff in the development of protocols and procedures and has provided input concerning the development of brochures, a database and related issues.

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The Ombudsman staff look forward to working with you and other agencies, advocacy groups, care providers and individuals committed to the well being of California's foster children and youth. If you have further questions contact: Karen Grace-Kaho, California State Ombudsman for Foster Care, (916) 263-3547.

Sincerely,

SYLVIA PIZZINI, Deputy Director  
Children and Family Services Division

Enclosures

# FOSTER CARE HELP LINE

# 1-877-846-1602



- The Foster Care Ombudsman is here to help you!
- We can help with any problem or concern you have with your services or your treatment in foster care.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA \* HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY \* DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
Gray Davis, Governor Grantland Johnson, Secretary Rita Saenz, Director

California State Department of Social Services  
Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman  
744 P Street M/S 19-25, Sacramento CA 95814

# FOSTER CARE HELP LINE

## 1-877-846-1602



- Do you have concerns with your care or services in foster care?
- Call toll-free. The Foster Care Ombudsman is here for you, and can help you!

California State Department of Social Services  
Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman  
744 P Street M/S 19-25, Sacramento CA 95814



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# FOSTER CARE HELP LINE

1-877-846-1602



**If you are a foster youth with concerns about your care, treatment or services, we can help!**

**The call is free!**

California State Department of Social Services  
Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman  
744 P Street M/S 19-25, Sacramento CA 95814



STATE OF CALIFORNIA \* HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY \* DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
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# IF YOU NEED HELP OR HAVE QUESTIONS CALL THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN



## TOLL FREE 1-877-846-1602

### Foster Youth Have Rights!

As a foster youth, you have the right to:

- Live in a safe, healthy and comfortable home where you are treated with respect.
- Be free from physical, sexual or mental abuse by anyone.
- Be given adequate and healthy food, adequate clothing, and receive medical and dental care.
- Keep your own money and have your own bank account (unless prohibited by your case plan).
- Make and receive confidential phone calls and send and receive unopened mail (unless prohibited by court order).
- Receive and attend Independent Living Skills Programs if you are 16 or older.
- To attend your court hearing and speak to the judge.
- Visit and have contact with your brothers and sisters (unless prohibited by court order).
- Contact your social worker, probation officer, attorney or CASA at any time.
- See your social worker or probation officer once a month.
- Attend school and religious services and activities of your choice.
- Complain to Community Care Licensing or the Foster Care Ombudsman if you feel any of your rights have been violated or ignored, and to be free from threats or punishment for making complaints.

Know your rights! For a complete list of foster youths' rights, call the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman at 1-877-846-1602 and we will send you a copy of the Youth Law Center's Legal Rights of Teens in Out of Home Care.

California State Department of Social Services, Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman- 744 P Street, M/S 19-25, Sacramento, CA 95814



STATE OF CALIFORNIA \* HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY \* DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
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**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**  
*Gray Davis, Governor*

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
*AGENCY Grantland Johnson, Secretary*  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
*Rita Saenz, Director*



**CONTACT:**

**California State Office of the  
Ombudsman for Foster Care  
CDSS  
744 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814**



**Call: 877 846-1602  
FAX: (916) 263-3367**

California State Office of the  
**OMBUDSMAN**  
for **FOSTER CARE**  
744 P Street,  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**California State**  
Office  
of the  
**OMBUDSMAN**  
for

**FOSTER  
CARE**



An independent resource for  
reviewing issues concerning  
foster care youth



## THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

The Foster Care Ombudsman's Office is empowered to investigate complaints about state and local agencies regarding foster care.

The Office has dedicated, caring staff in both Sacramento and Los Angeles to help address your concerns.

The California Legislature directed that a Foster Care Ombudsman's Office be established to provide an independent forum for review and resolution of concerns related to the care, placement or services provided to children and youth placed in foster care.

The Foster Care Ombudsman Office is an autonomous entity with the California Department of Social Services.

"Ombudsman" is a Swedish term of long and honorable tradition. Ombudsmen help people resolve their difference with public officials.



CONCERNED?

Are you concerned about the care, treatment or services provided to children and youth receiving foster care services?

CALL THE  
FOSTER CARE  
HELP LINE

**877-846-1602**

TOLL FREE

FOSTER CARE

OMBUDSMAN

Listens to your concerns

Documents your complaints

Gathers all relevant information

Remains neutral and impartial

Formulates a process for possible resolution and makes recommendations

Gives feedback on actions and recommendations to every

It is the policy of this Office to maintain -confidentiality of the information provided to the extent possible. Exceptions to this policy will be discussed with complainants and callers will be informed that all reports of child abuse or neglect must be reported by law.





**STATE OF CALIFORNIA (ESTADO DE CALIFORNIA)**

*Gray Davis, Gobernador*

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
(SECRETARIA DE SALUD Y SERVICIOS  
HUMANOS)** *Grantland Johnson, Secretario*

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
(DEPARTAMENTO DE SERVICIOS SOCIALES)**  
*Rita Sáenz, Directora*



Comuníquese con:

**La Oficina del Oficial Mediador y Protector  
de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el  
Cuidado de Crianza Temporal del Estado de  
California a la siguiente dirección:**

**California State Office of  
the Ombudsman for**

**Foster Care**

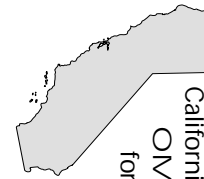
**CDSS**

**744 P Street**

**Sacramento, CA 95814**

**Teléfono: 877 846-1602**

**FAX: (916) 263-3367**



California State Office of the  
**OMBUDSMAN**  
for **FOSTER CARE**  
744 P Street,  
Sacramento, CA 95814

# Estado de California

Oficina del  
OFICIAL MEDIADOR Y  
PROTECTOR DE LOS  
DERECHOS DE LAS  
PERSONAS

bajo

el cuidado de  
crianza  
temporal



Un recurso  
independiente para  
revisar los asuntos relacionados a  
la juventud bajo el cuidado de  
crianza temporal

**PROGRAMA del oficial mediador y protector de los derechos de las personas bajo el cuidado de crianza temporal**

La Oficina del Oficial Mediador y Protector de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el Cuidado de Crianza Temporal está encargada de investigar las quejas en contra de oficinas estatales y locales en relación al cuidado de crianza temporal.

En ambas oficinas, la de Sacramento y la de Los Angeles, hay personal dedicado e interesado en atender a sus preocupaciones.

La Legislatura de California ordenó que se estableciera la Oficina del Mediador y Protector de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el Cuidado de Crianza Temporal para proporcionar un foro independiente para revisar y solucionar preocupaciones en relación al cuidado, colocación o servicios proporcionados a los niños y a la juventud que se encuentran bajo el cuidado de crianza temporal.

La Oficina del Oficial Mediador y Protector de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el Cuidado de Crianza Temporal es una entidad autónoma en el Departamento de Servicios Sociales de California.

El término en inglés "Ombudsman" (oficial mediador y protector de los derechos) es un término sueco de una larga y honorable tradición. Estas personas ayudan a la gente a resolver sus diferencias con oficiales públicos.



¿est a preocupa do?

¿Está usted preocupado acerca del cuidado, tratamiento o servicios que se les proporcionan a los niños y a la juventud que reciben cuidado de crianza temporal?

llame a  
la línea de ayuda  
en relación al  
cuidado de crianza  
temporal

**877-846-1602**

**LLAMADA GRATUITA**

el oficial mediador y protector de los derechos de las personas bajo el cuidado de crianza temporal

escucha sus preocupaciones

prepara documentación sobre sus quejas

reúne toda la información pertinente

se mantiene neutral e imparcial

crea un proceso para la posible resolución y presenta recomendaciones

proporciona a cada una de las personas que presenten una queja información sobre las acciones y sus recomendaciones.

La política de la Oficina es mantener, lo más posible, la confidencialidad sobre la información que se proporciona. Las excepciones a esta política se discutirán con las personas que presenten las quejas y a las personas que llamen se les informará que la ley estipula que todos los casos de abuso o descuido de niños se tienen que reportar.

