



# Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office

Mike DeWine, Governor  
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Jenny Stotts, Youth Ombudsman  
Jennifer Sheriff, Family Ombudsman

June 1, 2022

Dear Directors and Administrators:

As you know, the safety and welfare of Ohio's children is a top priority of Governor Mike DeWine. This is precisely why we are very pleased to announce that Ohio's first-ever Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office began operations yesterday, the effective date of Amended House Bill 4. This new "virtual" statewide program, whose creation was recommended in Governor DeWine's Children Services Transformation Advisory Council report, is currently housed within the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

As your appointed Family and Youth Ombudsmen, we are excited for this opportunity to join the team of dedicated professionals working tirelessly across Ohio to ensure that the children services system provides a safe and welcoming environment for our youth, as well as an enriching experience for the countless families directly impacted by this critical system.

While we share the same title of "ombudsman" and the same passion for serving Ohio youth and families, our designated roles are necessarily distinct. In developing this office, feedback from our youth was clear. They want a resource that is independent. We are equally committed to helping all interested parties navigate the system and, where necessary, investigate and resolve issues brought to the attention of our respective teams.

Under existing Ohio law, we will operate as one office; however, we have implemented various internal mechanisms to ensure that both youth and families will have access to their own ombudsman to report case-specific and/or system-wide concerns. These strategic "intake" procedures will include maintaining one centralized telephone number, but two separate online pathways to funnel complaints or other inquiries to the appropriate team. Accordingly, we sincerely appreciate your willingness to widely share the following contact information with your various local community partners and potential stakeholders:

**General inquiries or specific concerns may be submitted directly to the Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office by visiting our website at [YouthandFamilyOmbudsmen.ohio.gov](https://YouthandFamilyOmbudsmen.ohio.gov) or by calling us at 1-877-649-6884 (1-877-OH-YOUTH) Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Youth seeking to report concerns to the Youth Ombudsman may also submit a complaint form online at [YouthOmbudsman.ohio.gov](https://YouthOmbudsman.ohio.gov). Individuals or families seeking to report concerns to the Family Ombudsman may also submit a complaint form online at [FamilyOmbudsman.ohio.gov](https://FamilyOmbudsman.ohio.gov).**

There are many “start-up” objectives and urgent programmatic needs to resolve during this very early stage of our new statewide endeavor. While our ODJFS colleagues did a tremendous job ensuring that our office would be open for business on day one, we are also hopeful that you and your staff will understand that there is much more to do as we learn and adapt, as often as necessary, to evolving circumstances.

We also hope you share our eagerness to partner with all Ohio agencies to develop this office into a safe space in which reported conflicts may be fairly resolved and where we can collectively build upon Ohio’s already strong children services system. We are committed to maintaining an open line of communication, particularly on what we are doing well and how we can improve operations as well as any forthcoming office policies. To that end, we respectfully ask you to consider completing a short survey [here](#) to provide the name of someone employed by your agency who can serve as a primary point of contact for future requests for case information or time-sensitive complainant inquiries.

Thank you, in advance, for your patience and future collaboration. We look forward to working together to build and strengthen community partnerships and explore practical methods to improve the lives of the youth and families we collectively serve.

Respectfully,



Jenny R. Stotts  
Youth Ombudsman



Jennifer A. Sheriff  
Family Ombudsman