



What is the role of a Youth Ombudsman?

- To act as an independent forum for the investigation and resolution of complaints made by or on behalf of *the youth themselves* and make appropriate referrals.
- So that youth who are experiencing abuse in their biological, foster, adoptive, kinship, respite, residential and group home placements could contact that Office, and their concern would be *independently investigated*.

What are the benefits of having a Youth Ombudsman?

- Serves as a protective measure to safeguard the physical safety and emotional well-being of youth whose lives are entrusted to the foster care system.
- Ensure that foster youth are cared for and receiving the services they need
- Provide a venue so that the voices of foster care youth and teens are heard, without fear of retribution.
- Independent investigation of concerns related to placement, care and services.

What services are provided by a Youth Ombudsman?

- Maintains a toll-free telephone number which foster children and teens may call from anywhere in the state with questions about their rights, their care and well-being, issues with their placement or services received while in foster care.
- Listens to complaints, documents concerns, gathers all relevant information, remains neutral and impartial and provides information on how to help.

Why aren't current systems already working to address this problem?

- Ohio foster youth have shared concerns that their basic needs were not met in certain placements, and that they were being placed in unsafe and/or unsanitary conditions.
- They have reported difficulties in contacting their caseworker and/or GAL.
- They have reported that their local agency hotlines often have long wait times, lack of follow-through on reports made directly by youth, and staff answering the phone who are not youth-friendly.

What are the risks of not establishing a Youth Ombudsman?

- When a child or teen continues to experience abuse without intervention, the greatest risk is death.
- When an abused child or teen runs away, that young person is at risk of human trafficking.