

OVERVIEW

The Office of the Family Advocate (OFA) has been designated to investigate child welfare-related complaints specifically directed to the OFA, and all fatalities of children and wards who are under the care and supervision of the department. OFA will facilitate development of corrective action plans in cases where non-compliance is identified. This process applies only to those cases **accepted** for investigation by the OFA.

The investigation and case review process is designed to:

- Promote continuous quality improvement.
- Reinforce practice standards.
- Enhance coordination between the field and central office.
- Provide an independent, objective analysis of case facts.
- Provide a mechanism to facilitate immediate corrective action.

INVESTIGATION AND CASE REVIEW PROCESS

The following steps are taken by OFA to complete case reviews:

1. The OFA reviews case facts, conducts phone interviews, reviews law, policy, and/or practice standards in coordination with Child Welfare Urban Field Operations and Field Operations Administration, Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (BCAL), local office management, and/or private child placing agencies.
2. When OFA determines the local office and/or private child placing agency acted in compliance with law, policy and/or practice standards:
 - The complainant may be advised of the outcome of the OFA investigation.
 - The local office and Urban Field Operations and Field Operations Administration will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.
 - The investigation is closed.
3. If the OFA determines the local office and/or private child placing agency did not act in compliance with law, policy,

and/or practice standards and a corrective action plan is required, the following applies:

- When the local office and/or private child placing agency **agrees** with the OFA findings and/or recommendations:
 - The complainant may be advised of the outcome of the OFA investigation.
 - The local office and/or private child placing agency initiates appropriate corrective action.
 - Urban Field Operations and/or Field Operations Administration will be notified of response and corrective action taken.
 - The OFA investigation is closed.
- When the local office and/or private child placing agency **disagrees** with the OFA findings and/or recommendations:
 - The complainant may be advised of the outcome of the OFA investigation.
 - The OFA works with Urban Field Operations and Field Operations Administration to develop and implement an appropriate corrective action plan.
 - The OFA investigation is closed.

OFA REQUEST FOR CASE FILES

All OFA requests for case files regarding children's protective services, foster care, or adoption services must be made in writing by the OFA. Each written request must be sent electronically with high priority and contain the following information:

- Name of the child(ren).
- DHS county/district office and/or private child placing agency involved.
- Date case file is due.

**Response to an
OFA Request for
Case File**

The local office must provide the OFA with the requested information within 10 business days. Case file material must be sent to:

Michigan Dept. of Human Services
Office of the Family Advocate
235 S. Grand Ave., Suite 1512
Lansing, MI 48909
phone: (517) 373-2101
fax: (517) 241-8125

The local office and/or private child placing agency must provide the OFA with access to information including, but not limited to:

- Department and/or private child placing agency staff.
- Case files.
- Personnel information.

When sending confidential information, via facsimile, electronically, or mail, the information should be marked as confidential as outlined in SRM 131, Confidentiality - Children's Services.