

**CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN**  
of COLORADO

Joint Judiciary Committee  
Fiscal Year 2018-2019  
SMART Act Presentation  
November 29, 2018

Stephanie Villafuerte  
Child Protection Ombudsman

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### History of the CPO

<p><b>PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Response to the deaths of 12 Colorado children in 2007 who were known to child welfare services</li> <li>▶ Public wanted more accountability and oversight</li> <li>▶ Established in June 2010</li> <li>▶ Existed as a "program" through a contract with a local non-profit.</li> <li>▶ Program was issued and managed by the Colorado Department of Education</li> </ul>	<p><b>GAINING INDEPENDENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Legislators determined CPO needed independence from the agencies it was designed to review</li> <li>▶ Legislation was signed into law in June 2015</li> <li>▶ Original "program" was transformed into independent state agency</li> <li>▶ Created CPO Board</li> <li>▶ CPO housed in Judicial Branch</li> <li>▶ Current Ombudsman took office in January 2016</li> </ul>
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### Responsibilities and Role

- ▶ **ROLE**
  - ▶ Serves as an independent, neutral problem solver charged with helping citizens navigate a complex child protection system and educating stakeholders and the community.
- ▶ **RESPONSIBILITIES**
  - ▶ Provide citizens free and confidential services.
  - ▶ Objectively research and investigate concerns about the delivery of services to children and families.
  - ▶ Illuminate issues within the child protection system that are directly impacting the safety, well-being and permanency of children and families.
  - ▶ Educate the public, legislators, stakeholders and citizens about issues affecting the child protection system.
  - ▶ Make recommendations for improvement.

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### Jurisdiction

- ▶ CPO has an extremely broad jurisdiction
- ▶ Charged with studying systems and gaps between systems
- ▶ Entities that fall under the CPO's purview include:
  - ▶ Human services agencies
  - ▶ Division of Youth Services
  - ▶ Law enforcement
  - ▶ Medical and mental health providers

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### Jurisdiction

- ▶ CPO does **NOT** have authority to:
  - ▶ Investigate allegations of abuse and/or neglect.
  - ▶ Interfere with or intervene in any civil or criminal proceeding.
  - ▶ Investigate complaints related to judges, magistrates, attorneys or guardians ad litem.
  - ▶ Mandate the reversal of decisions made by agencies, providers, judges or attorneys.
  - ▶ Offer legal advice.

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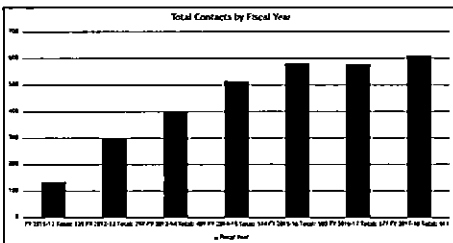
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### Growing Demand for CPO Services




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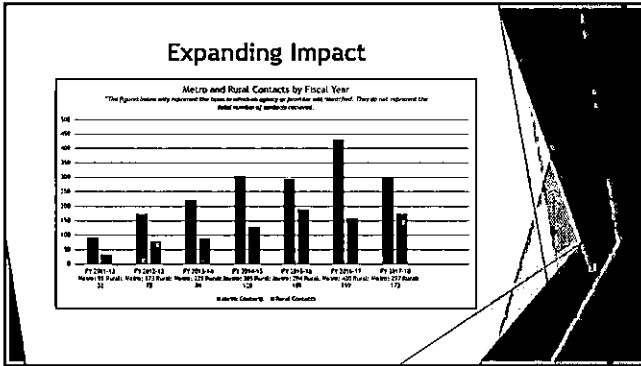
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- ### FY 2017-2018 Highlights
- ▶ **Revised CPO Case Practices and Operating Procedures**
    - ▶ New practices and procedures give analysts more flexibility to achieve strong outcomes for families and ensure the CPO is able to efficiently approach systemic issues.
  - ▶ **Adoption Assistance Investigation and Legislation**
    - ▶ CPO released investigation report in December 2017. During the summer and fall of 2018, the CPO has facilitated eight stakeholder meetings to discuss legislation that will address the issues identified in the report. The draft is currently being finalized.
  - ▶ **Municipal Court Information Sharing Stakeholder Groups**
    - ▶ CPO spearheaded a group of more than 20 stakeholders to address gaps in how municipal courts share changing information and criminal records that are pertinent in child welfare cases.
  - ▶ **Expanding Services and Expertise for Division of Youth Services Cases**
    - ▶ CPO hired two full-time employees in September 2018. These employees will serve as chief analysts for the CPO's child welfare and Division of Youth Services programs.

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- ### FY 2018-19 Performance Plan
- ▶ **Strategic policy initiatives designed to ensure the agency is effectively and efficiently serving citizens and effecting meaningful systemic change.**
    1. Communication and Outreach
    2. Efficient and Impactful Practices
    3. Expanding Expertise and Services

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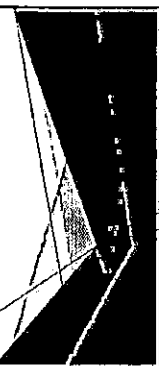
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**SPI 1: Improve communication methods and increase outreach campaigns to better educate and engage citizens and stakeholders on issues facing the child protection system.**

<p><b>Completed in FY 17-18</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Started issuing case briefs for cases lasting longer than 60 business-days</li> <li>▶ Maintained public webpage where citizens can track cases</li> <li>▶ Increased involvement with legislation and legislators</li> <li>▶ Implemented recurring Juvenile Justice roundtable discussion</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ongoing in FY 18-19</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Start releasing quarterly reports</li> <li>▶ Launch data dashboard on CPO website</li> <li>▶ Continue outreach to various communities and stakeholders</li> <li>▶ Continue to increase outreach and engagement with rural communities and agencies</li> </ul>
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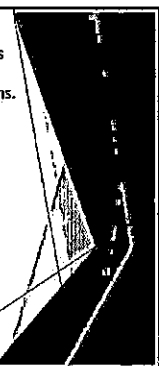
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**SPI 2: Implement practices that ensure the CPO manages its caseload efficiently and effectively, allotting staff the necessary time and resources to investigate systemic concerns.**

<p><b>Completed in FY 17-18</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Revised CPO Case Practices and Operating Procedures</li> <li>▶ 96% of all CPO cases were closed within 60 business-day deadline</li> <li>▶ Implemented weekly staff meetings to discuss cases and possible trends within systems and agencies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ongoing in FY 18-19</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue streamlining processes for closing case efficiently</li> <li>▶ Work to decrease the length of time CPO cases are open and find resolutions faster</li> <li>▶ Utilize CPO case data to identify trends in the child protection system to launch investigations sooner</li> </ul>
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**SPI 3: Increase the expertise and resources needed to investigate and research systemic issues within the child protection system.**

<p><b>Completed in FY 17-18</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ JBC approved CPO's request for additional staff. Positions will improve efficiency and expand agency expertise</li> <li>▶ Worked with stakeholders to determine how best to direct complaints and focus efforts</li> <li>▶ Continued internal discussions about tracking CPO recommendations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ongoing in FY 18-19</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Hired two chief analysts. One will build the CPO's DYS program. The other will continue to grow and improve the CPO's child welfare program.</li> <li>▶ Implement system for tracking and analyzing CPO recommendations to agencies and providers</li> </ul>
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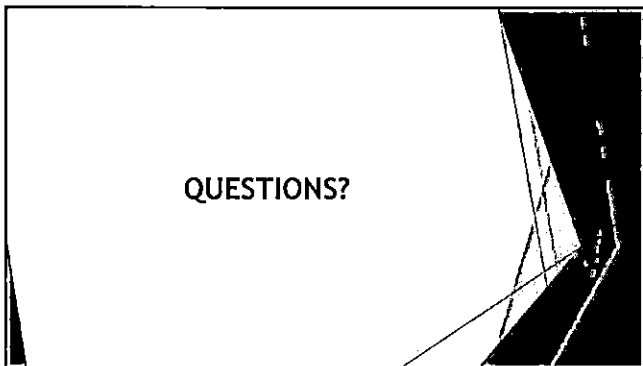
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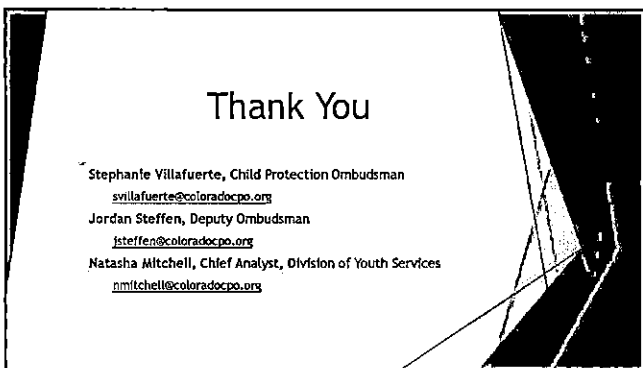
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