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ANNUAL REPORT

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OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide is to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness of state government by receiving public complaints, investigating the administrative acts of state agencies, and recommending a fair and appropriate remedy.

OUR ROLE

The Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide is an independent agency of the Arizona Legislature that was established to make government more responsive to Arizona citizens. It is the office that Arizona citizens can turn to when they feel they have been treated unfairly by a state administrator, agency, department, board or commission. The services of the Ombudsman are free and confidential.

The office is given its authority by Arizona Revised Statute sections 41-1371 through 41-1383 and operates under Arizona Administrative Code title 2 chapter 16.

Aiding Citizens

HOW WE HELP

The Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office provides a unique service because we offer objectivity to citizens who complain when they think their state government has treated them unfairly. The first thing our experienced investigators do is listen to the person's complaint. For some people, this is the first time they feel that anyone in government actually heard them. Then we determine the nature of the dispute and respond in the most appropriate way to resolve the issue.

We group responses into three categories:

Coaching

Many residents are able to resolve their own concerns when they are aware of the services available. Often times a citizen does not have a complaint but is looking for information. We help these residents by educating them on the options available to them based on their specific request or issue.

Coaching includes defining issues and rights, identifying options, referring people to the appropriate employee or department, redirecting citizens to services outside our jurisdiction (non-profits, federal agencies, etc.), explaining agency policies, researching information, offering conflict management strategies, and developing reasonable expectations.

Assistance

Sometimes coaching is not enough and residents need our office to communicate with government agencies directly. Most complaints are the result of a miscommunication or a simple mistake. In these circumstances, we contact the appropriate agency on the citizen's behalf, facilitate communication between the parties, or coordinate action between agencies. Our investigators are working on a continual basis to foster relationships with agency personnel in every state agency to enable the efficient resolution of complaints prior to escalation.

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Assistance complaints are often the result of a miscommunication, a lack of follow through or a simple mistake. In these circumstances, we contact the appropriate agency on the citizen's behalf, facilitate communication between the parties, or coordinate action between agencies.

We essentially refer the complaint to the agency, note the allegation and circumstances that brought it to us and ask the agency to work directly with the complainant to resolve the concern. The agency takes the lead in dealing with the matter and lets us know the outcome. We tell the complainant to come back to us if they are not satisfied.

Some assistance cases are those where we do special tasks. We engage in training, perform research, issue ombudsman or public access material, and participate in other tasks. It is more than coaching as we are actively assisting.

Investigation

Complaints about administrative acts of agencies within our jurisdiction may warrant investigations. In those cases, we work with the constituents and agency personnel to ensure that the agency is complying with the law and offering optimal public service. Although we have no authority to compel an agency to follow our recommendations, most administrators are eager to resolve constituent problems and agency mistakes once we bring it to their attention. If the allegations are unsupported, we stand up for the agency and explain our findings to complainants. If necessary, we write investigative reports of our findings and recommendations, sending it to the agencies investigated, the legislature, the governor, and the complainants.

Investigations may be informal or formal. Investigations start with a complaint that an agency in our jurisdiction has performed an administrative act that is contrary to law, unreasonable, unfair, oppressive, arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion or unnecessarily discriminatory, mistake of fact, based on improper or irrelevant grounds, unsupported by an adequate statement of reasons, performed in an inefficient or discourteous manner, or otherwise erroneous. A.R.S. §41-1377.

Arizona Administrative Code R2-16-303 authorizes us to have informal investigations when the complaint can be resolved quickly and by mutual agreement. Most investigations start with an informal process and resolve as such. When situations get more complicated, then the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide may determine that a more formal investigation process and a report is warranted.

OUTREACH

The Legislature asked the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide (OCA) to note some of our outreach to the community we serve. Below are some of our activities.

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- The Ombudsman website (<http://www.azoca.gov/>) – we continue to make updates. We also maintain many resources for the public. We post our public resource list, copies of our public record and open meeting compendium of information in electronic booklets. We have a “How to file a complaint” tutorial, FAQs, and an electronic complaint form. Most recently, we refined our hints about how to interact effectively with the Department of Child Safety. We also spent time explaining that we are separate from the DCS Ombudsman Office and independent of DCS. We have found that this is often a point of confusion for the public, so we explained the differences and clarified information about the two offices.
- Distribute our brochures at our office, on our website, at meetings and speeches, and with various groups who distribute our brochure for us to their clients (i.e., the Family Involvement Center).
- We updated in 2018 our comprehensive guide booklets regarding public record and open meeting law. We distribute public access materials to elected officials and the public throughout the State. The League of Cities and Towns use these booklets in their elected official training.
- Media interactions – Occasional interviews throughout the State.
- Quarterly public access newsletter – public access attorney Danee Garone writes a quarterly newsletter, *The Public Record* that we post to our website and electronically distribute to interested parties. Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records distributes it on our behalf to its extensive listserv.
- Public access training for public officials and the public throughout the State. Our public access attorney, Danee Garone, conducts training sessions and participates in forum discussions regarding lawful practices relating public record and open meetings. During the past fiscal year, we conducted twenty-four of these training sessions to a variety of State and local government officials and public bodies in Phoenix, Sierra Vista, Arizona City, Tucson, Clarkdale, Marana, Cottonwood, Peoria, and Mayer. Additionally, we conducted trainings for a diverse array of governmental and quasi-governmental entities, such as the Mohave County Board of Supervisors, the Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District, the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, DES, the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council, the City of Cottonwood, AZLERMA, the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind, the Auditor General, the Secretary of State’s Office, AHCCS, PSPRS, and several charter schools. Most of the events are open to any interested public officials and members of the public. At each event, we provide our office’s contact information and website and explain what services we provide inside and outside of public access issues. On numerous occasions, new complainants have told us they became aware of our office because of a training.

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- We work with DCS to identify and resolve acute and systemic problems in the child safety agency. DCS is required to note OCA on their website, in its Notice of Duty to Inform, in its Temporary Custody Notice and notes OCA in its parent handbook.
- OCA staff (example: Dennis Wells, Ombudsman) as speaker or participant
 - Forums with legislative assistants – orientation meetings, one-on-one.
 - Forums with legislators – orientation meetings, one-on-one.
 - Various speaking engagements –State Archives training, civic groups, Arizona Children’s Association, and at various state agencies.
 - DES and DCS leadership individual and team meetings
 - Better Business Bureau – Deputy Joanne MacDonnell serves as an ethics judge for the annual BBB Torch Award Ethics program and as a panelist on Torch Ethics Guidance meetings.
 - Court panels - Arizona Court Improvement Panel, Parent Representation Standards committee – Deputy Joanne MacDonnell serves on these committees.
 - Host training programs for DES and DCS ombudsmen.
 - Outreach, speeches, open house events via Grand Canyon University, ASU (Main, Downtown & West campuses) work with professors and interns.
- United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) – extensive involvement.
 - Network – take referrals from other jurisdictions in the USA. Send representation to the national USOA conference.
 - Participate in training – new ombudsman training, continuing education, and our staff often teaches seminars.
 - Deputy Joanne MacDonnell serves as an elected Director and functions as Secretary/Treasurer of USOA.
- We co-host the Arizona Ombudsman Group with the SRP Ombudsman Office. It is a group of government, education and private ombudsmen in AZ. We participate in periodic meetings, host seminars and network with ombudsmen offices who have different constituencies. We refer citizens to one another as jurisdictions dictate.

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- We work with the AG's office as it refers many matters to our office when it cannot take a case. Example: Consumer Division, open meeting and public access guidance, general complaint assistance.
- The Self-Help Desk at the Maricopa County Courts – We provide information about our office for them to distribute.
- We post our public access training on YouTube.
- The State of Arizona web directory of state agencies, AZ Direct, features the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide Office as one of the main tabs for the public.
- Information about our office is on the DCS website (on which we pushed for a position that is more prominent) as a resource for the public to turn to.
- Information about our office is featured on state websites where agencies perform investigations - pursuant to A.R.S. §§ 41-1001.01 and 41-1009.
- We work with the Arizona Library and Archives at SOS regarding public record and archives. We collaborate with them to present discussions on public records retention discussion at conferences.
- We distribute our Point of Contact google doc resource directory to various government agencies.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

It is important for us to receive feedback from the citizens we help so that we can evaluate our performance, correct shortcomings and improve our service. One way we get feedback is through our customer satisfaction survey we distribute at the close of cases. The survey measures how well we are accomplishing six standards that we developed in our strategic plan.

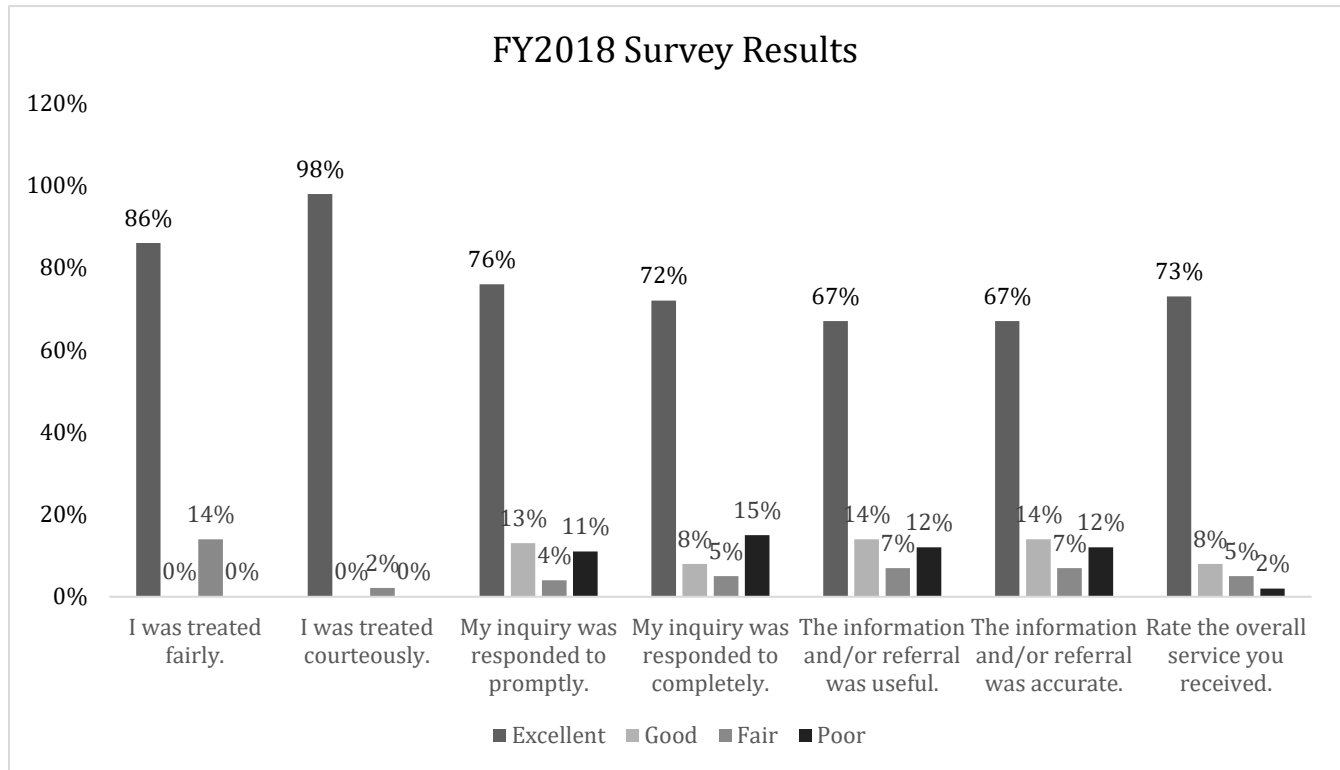
These standards are:

- Treat everyone **fairly**.
- Treat everyone with **courtesy and respect**.
- Respond **promptly** to citizen inquiries.
- Provide as **complete** a response as possible.
- Provide **useful** solutions to citizens.
- Provide **accurate** responses to citizen complaints.

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WE WELCOME FEEDBACK

The chart and comments on the following pages summarize the results of the survey for FY2018.



THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE FROM CITIZENS WHO USED OUR SERVICES IN FY2018:

"This lady is an asset to your organization. I was well educated and informed."

"Keith was able to solve a problem and get the answer in minutes compared to the weeks of runaround and waste of time I encountered with the ASRS. I appreciate his help. Perhaps the ASRS could revisit their archaic policies."

"Jen was wonderful she responded within 24 hours of my submission for request for assistance. She kept me informed and advised me of options I had and the outcome was great."

"Thank you very much people. This is a great and exceptional service for seeking inquiries, and consultation. :)"

"Danee answered my questions promptly, and provided very useful information. THANK YOU!"

"Very caring worker's...."

"Open, helpful. Helpful more than I imagined. When I contacted the service there was an automatic response with the exact information I requested. And I have a now wider view of what to do thanks a lot!!!!!!"

"I was truly happy with my interaction with your office."

"My first contact with Ombudsman. I was very pleased with the help I received."

"Thank you for assisting with a more than two month battle for public records."

"Joanne truly wants what is best for the kids. God is good all the time. Such a blessing she is."

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"So far great."

"Thank you for having people in your office that are courteous and follow through with what they tell you they are going to do."

"Thank you for all of your help."

"Your office explained the law in layman's terms, thank you."

"Thank you so much for having two great team members that have great customer service."

"(Frank) was more than helpful. Since I am currently outside the US, he seemed go the "extra mile" with service. I am very impressed."

"This is one of the most helpful efforts (for ordinary citizens) in state government."

"The contact that I worked with was polite and was as helpful as possible. I appreciate that! Thank you."

"Excellent service! Thank you!"

"I didn't know who to turn to so I was more than pleased to find an Ombudsman for Arizona! Thank you!"

"The representative was knowledgeable and extremely capable."

"I had been completely stonewalled for months BEFORE I contacted the Ombudsman's office. Danee worked magic and was able to get the record within two weeks. I sincerely can't thank him enough! My only regret is that I didn't find out about your office earlier."

"(Danee) is the consummate professional. He promptly responded to my inquiry in an extremely thorough manner and suggested multiple possible solutions to my issue."

"Prompt, concise and responsive reply."

"Joanne was wonderful. Joanne really helped me get a resolution to which I needed from DES, she also followed up with me to make sure that I was overall happy with the outcome, to which I was. The Ombudsman office is very helpful and needed. Thank you again for all of the help in resolving my ongoing issue with DES."

"After dealing with ADES and all the problems I had, I was pleasantly surprised at how quickly Frank responded to my complaint. He expressed empathy and understanding for what I was dealing with, and that was greatly appreciated and very rare in this day and time."

"My issue has been resolved and I am glad there is an organization such as yours to assist citizens."

"I was answered immediately and was treated with respect and I got what I needed done thank you so much."

"Gave me a small piece of hope."

"Helped me with my needs and was very professional about it."

"Jennifer was extremely pleasant to work with and made me feel at ease and that she was working hard to resolve the issue. Thank you so much!"

"I am grateful for the immediate response and quick action, God Bless you all."

"I hold the highest opinion and have the utmost respect for the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office."

"I have received professional and courteous treatment from every person I have spoken with there."

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"It takes a little of the stress off knowing that if the district's attorney is not available for an open meeting law question, we can contact the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office."

"Ok, thank you very much for looking into everything for me. You have been on top of everything including updating me with findings. I really appreciate it!"

"Outstanding! I am really glad for the Ombudsman office."

"Danee provided me with very complete and useful information quickly."

"Amazing and caring."

"I am surprised and pleased at the help that my request has generated at the Ombudsman office. Thank you very much."

"Thank you so much for your speedy and prompt response, I always appreciate efficiency."

"John was very helpful and courteous. He promptly answered all questions I had."

"Very impressed with all aspects of the response. Professional, courteous and informative while providing options to address our issue."

"I really did not expect any response to my letter, so having heard back at all was a giant plus. ADOT/DMV was in touch with me within a couple of days and, although nothing has happened to date I have been assured I will receive a refund for my over payment. Didn't know we had an ombudsman-citizen aide but sure happy we do."

Very helpful with my concerns with my family court issues. Thank you!

"Joanne did an excellent job answering my questions in a way I could clearly understand."

"I have heard from AZ MVD and I want to thank you so much for your help! I have been trying to get this situation cleared up for months now."

"(Keith) Thank you for readily taking this up and getting the communications going. It seems to be effective and to be handled..."

"Looking out for the little guy."

"Thank you (Joanne) for all of your kind and helpful assistance."

"(Danee) was very helpful. He took the time to listen and resolve each my concerns. I want to thank you for your time and assistance regarding this matter. I truly appreciate your help."

"I thank you wholeheartedly for advocating for what's right. The system needs more people like you!"

"Thank you so much for all of your help and thanks for taking the time to inform me on how to approach this matter. You're Awesome!!!"

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COMPELLING CASES

The following case summaries are examples taken from the 6,000 cases we handled in FY 2018.

GENERAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT STATE AGENCIES

Our intervention stopped an unfair financial burden on a citizen as exemplified by:

1802140. Department of Game and Fish.

A hunter contacted our office with a complaint regarding a Game and Fish Department license charge. The complainant alleged that the Game and Fish Department charged him in error. Further, he alleged that the customer service representative at the department refused to issue a refund. We looked into the case and then discussed it with the agency's ombudsman. Upon further investigation, we confirmed that the agency erred in making the charge. The agency agreed with our finding. The agency also agreed to issue the complainant a refund and to provide additional training to the customer service representative who had improperly denied the refund. The complainant was happy to receive the refund.

1802451. MVD - Motor Vehicle Division.

An ATV owner complained he paid his Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) renewal, only to discover he paid over eighty dollars more than the previous year. He said he complained to MVD staff, but they did not address his concern. They told him it was because he failed to purchase an Off-Road Decal for twenty-five dollars and that MVD also told him they would not refund him the renewal fee he already paid, but that he still needed to purchase the Off-Road Decal.

We asked MVD to address the ATV owner's issue or explain their legal authority for their initial answer. MVD reviewed the matter and determined a refund of the fee was in order after all. They contacted the ATV owner and informed him they were going to refund the renewal fee. We contacted the owner to confirm this information and invited him to contact our office if he needed any further assistance.

Our intervention resulted in better service to citizens.

1800181. DOR - Arizona Department of Revenue.

A taxpayer had a problem getting a copy of his transaction Privilege Tax License from the Arizona Department of Revenue (DOR). He said that DOR staff claimed they mailed him a copy of the tax license as he requested, but he never received it. After trying to resolve the problem with DOR, the taxpayer asked us to assist him in getting the license copy. We reviewed the complaint with DOR. DOR's problem resolution officer agreed to send the man a copy of his license and then confirm he received it. She did so and this resolved the problem. We confirmed with the man that he received the license.

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1801538. Game and Fish.

A fishing boat owner expressed his concern about the Game & Fish Certification of Placement of Hull Identification Numbers (HIN.) He said Game & Fish sent him a letter telling him to change the hull ID number, which the manufacturer placed on the boat in 1961. He said the directive did not sound right, and questioned the legality of the new policy.

We discussed the matter with Game and Fish. Game and Fish contacted the boater and addressed his concern. Game and Fish informed the boater that the U.S. Coast Guard was requiring all boats to have legally conforming HIN, the equivalent of a vehicle identification number (VIN.) Game and Fish went to the boater's residence as a courtesy and installed the new HIN.

We confirmed with the boater that Game and Fish had satisfactorily addressed his issue.

1802174. ABCE - Arizona Board of Chiropractic Examiners.

Our office received a complaint from a chiropractor in Washington State who was trying to get licensed in Arizona through the Arizona Board of Chiropractic Examiners (ABCE). The man relayed that ABCE had closed his license application by claiming he did not submit all the requested documentation to the agency within a required 60-day period. The applicant chiropractor disputed this and claimed that he did submit the records timely. The man explained the King County Records Division, in Washington State, provides records for all King County public entities, including the King County Sheriff's Department, in which the ABCE had requested information. The man said the ABCE claimed that because the Sheriff's office did not send the record, it was not acceptable to the ABCE, thus, he did not submit all requested documents. The man thought this was unfair, and asked our office for assistance.

Our office informed the ABCE of the complaint and requested their rationale about the situation. The ABCE reviewed the matter. The agency decided to overturn the decision, reopen the man's application, and move forward with the process.

Our office informed the applicant. He was very grateful and thanked us.

Our intervention stopped an unfair financial burden on a citizen.

1800219. DHS - Department of Health Services.

A mother complained about the Department of Health Services (DHS). She said the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) under the Department of Health Services was supposed to pay certain medical bills for her twin children, but DHS had failed to pay their portion of a hospital bill that was due.

We contacted DHS and reviewed the matter. DHS concluded that the family had met their share of the liability; therefore, DHS agreed to pay for the remaining portion of the bill. The Department of Health Services then sent the woman a letter with their findings.

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We confirmed with the mother that DHS paid their portion of the bill and that she received the promised letter.

Our intervention resolved cases that no one else was able to resolve internally.

1800263. MVD - Department of Transportation-Motor Vehicle Division.

A motorist had a problem with the Arizona Department of Transportation-Motor Vehicle Division (MVD). She said MVD incorrectly printed her name on her driver's license and now they want her to return to their office so they can correct it. The motorist believed that she should not have to go into the office for the agency to fix their error. She explained that MVD had accidentally reversed her last and first names on the license the agency issued. She thought that MVD should be able to correct this clerical error without her having to return to the MVD office. She claimed she had spent three hours at MVD when she went to get her license the first time.

We contacted MVD and reviewed the motorist's file. MVD realized their error and agreed to correct and replace the license with no fee. MVD contacted the woman and told her to watch for the updated license in the mail. We later confirmed this with the motorist. The motorist was pleased MVD corrected their error by mailing her a corrected license without inconveniencing her further.

1801617. Board of Examiners of Acupuncture.

A citizen complained the Acupuncture Board of Examiners improperly posted her personally identifying information to their website. She had contacted the Board about the issue too. We reviewed the posting and confirmed the problem. We discussed the posting with the Acupuncture Board staff. The Board staff then contacted the citizen to discuss the situation. The board staff brought in their IT department to review the concerns and develop a means of preventing such a problem in the future. The board staff then asked their assistant attorney general to research a solution and appropriately respond to the citizen.

1802286. DCSS - Department of Child Support Services.

A father expressed concern with how the Arizona Department of Economic Security (ADES) – Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) handled his support case. The father explained he had consistently paid an agreed-upon amount of child support every month since 2010. He had an agreement to send payments to the mother (the custodial parent) on occasion. The father had an affidavit from the custodial parent verifying he made direct payments to her for child support. The father said he made these payments directly to the custodial parent until 2011 when the custodial parent moved to Utah. At that time, the father opened a support case with Utah. Utah then deducted the child support payments directly from his paychecks and sent them to the Utah Clearing House. Utah then provided the support funds to the custodial parent. This continued until 2014 when the father moved back to Arizona.

Arizona then started processing the father's child support. Although Utah child support records correctly accounted for the father's previous direct payments to the custodial parent, DCSS had no record of any such direct payments. DCSS told the father he owed significant arrears.

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The father requested that Arizona DCSS perform a reconciliation in the hope it would demonstrate he was current in his payments and not in arrears. Unfortunately, the reconciliation process still showed a discrepancy in records between Utah and Arizona, resulting in DCSS reaffirming their claim the father owed arrears. In an effort to resolve the discrepancy, the father appealed to the custodial parent, requesting she submit an additional affidavit to DCSS, supporting the father's claim that he had consistently paid his obligation. The custodial parent did not immediately supply the affidavit. However, once she supplied it to Arizona DCSS, the agency did not immediately apply the information to the case.

DCSS eventually processed and applied the affidavit figures to the father's account. This created a new problem, as DCSS records now had an unexplained overpayment to the custodial parent (mom) in excess of \$5,000. The father requested DCSS refund him the excess funds or apply them to future payments, but DCSS refused. The father asked for our assistance alleging that DCSS was not reasonable.

We contacted the ADES Ombudsman's office and requested further clarification from DCSS regarding the father's account. Subsequently, DCSS informed us the overpayments could not be refunded, as they had already distributed the funds to the custodial parent in "good faith." Our office requested a meeting with DCSS to further discuss the case. DCSS agreed and said they would continue to research the case further because they too had some concerns.

Upon our next meeting, DCSS explained they reviewed the case more deeply and found the funds had not been distributed to the custodial parent as they had previously thought. The agency said the funds must be held until the case was closed. DCSS said the father may seek a refund of the overpayments through civil court once his DCSS case closed in a few years pursuant to A.R.S § 25-527 and 45 C.F.R. § 302.51. Our office questioned that too. DCSS agreed to continue to review the case and said they would bring in other experts to check the situation. Our office checked the statutory citations provided by DCSS and found them to be irrelevant to the father's case. We alerted DCSS. DCSS elevated the matter to their legal team who concurred the citations was incorrect for this particular situation.

DCSS kept researching and then informed our office that they found a missing piece of the puzzle, and were gathering the last of the records. DCSS met with us and explained how they erred and the father erred. DCSS had not applied all funds to the case as required and they were confused by the father's error too. DCSS showed us court orders that had stipulated the father was never to issue direct payments to the custodial parent. With the information from the affidavit and the custodial parent's approval, DCSS was able to apply the funds to the account despite the mistake of the father. DCSS successfully corrected the account and determined there was not an excess balance, the custodial parent had not received excess funds and the father was current on his obligations. Our office found this news to be satisfactory, as the DCSS determination seemed to be in line with what the father had claimed all along. DCSS contacted the father and explained their findings to him.

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1800365. Arizona Department of Transportation-Motor Vehicle Division.

A motorist had an issue updating her address on the Arizona Department of Transportation-Motor Vehicle Division's (MVD) website. She claimed she had tried to update her address on the Service Arizona website, but was unable to do so. In addition, she had not been able to update her voter information.

We worked with the Motor Vehicle Department on this complaint. MVD also spoke to the woman. MVD confirmed the problem and then resolved the computer issue that had caused the difficulty. MVD updated the motorist's address in their records and informed the motorist they had resolved the problem. They did not have the ability to adjust the woman's address problem on the voter rolls, but they provided her with contact information for the County Recorder's Office.

We verified with the motorist that the agency had updated her information.

1802398. MVD - Motor Vehicle Division.

A motorist complained the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) did not issue him a new license displaying his designation as a veteran as they should have done.

We discussed the matter with the MVD staff. They agreed to contact the motorist and address his license issue. MVD later informed us they contacted the motorist and issued a corrected credential.

Our intervention stopped an unfair financial burden on a citizen as exemplified by:

1800950. DOR - Arizona Department of Revenue.

A taxpayer had a problem with the Arizona Department of Revenue (DOR) relating to her 2009 divorce. Since the divorce, the Arizona Department of Revenue has sent her ex-husband the refunds in his name without including her. Thus, he received some refund monies that DOR should have allocated to her. Further, DOR put a lien on her tax account even though her ex is the one having the tax issues with the Department of Revenue. The taxpayer said she tried to work it out with the agency, but had not been able to do so. She turned to us and asked that we get DOR to fix the issues.

We contacted DOR; they reviewed the account and released the levy. DOR said the account was very complicated. It showed they refunded her with no offset for the past few years. DOR also said there was a joint liability for a 2008 period while the couple was still married. DOR found they erred in the manner they issued the tax levy for that. The Department of Revenue had their Collections Division apologize to the taxpayer and correct the action. The Department of Revenue said that they noted the account to show that she has had an "Innocent Spouse" status. The Department of Revenue also gave the taxpayer contact information for a problem resolution officer if she has any other issues.

We contacted the woman and informed her of our findings.

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Our intervention led to a change in an agency's procedure and corrected a systemic problem.

1800312. DOC - Department of Corrections.

A citizen alleged disability discrimination regarding the Department of Corrections (DOC). The citizen said he is an approved visitor at an Arizona prison and has made several visits with no incident. The citizen stated that he attempted to have a visit more recently but was turned away because he has a prosthesis of his leg (his disability). He explained that he was wearing shorts per DOC policy, so the prosthesis is visible at all times. After being turned away, the man said he went to his car, removed his leg and then came back to the entrance and requested entrance. The DOC prison staff still turned him away claiming that he would now be a liability. The man stated that DOC staff then required a doctor's note. The man returned after getting a doctor's note for a visit and DOC then allowed the visit.

We discussed the matter with DOC management staff. They reviewed the case and confirmed the circumstances were as described by the citizen in his correspondence. They agreed the man had not been treated appropriately and that he had been inconvenienced for unnecessary reasons. They said the warden was going to take the necessary and appropriate remedial action to ensure that this does not happen again, either to this person or to any other similarly situated visitor. The DOC further explained visitation security staff will be re-trained accordingly. The DOC also contacted the citizen to apologize for his visitation experience.

Our intervention led to a change in an agency's procedure to correct a systemic problem and revealed a field practice that was not in accordance with the agency's stated procedures.

1703061. Arizona Registrar of Contractors.

A Phoenix-area homeowner complained the Arizona Registrar of Contractors (ROC) had mishandled his case due to errant procedures and incorrect acts by its investigator. The homeowner explained he had hired a contractor to remove black mold from his residence. The homeowner claimed the contractor cut corners, did not perform work as required by contract and had abandoned the job. The homeowner claimed the contractor was not returning the homeowner's phone calls. The homeowner filed a complaint against the contractor with the ROC. The ROC investigated, but the homeowner was not happy with the ROC's decision or other actions regarding his case. The homeowner asked us to investigate.

Our office requested the homeowner provide us with all the documentation he had received from the ROC. The homeowner sent us a copy of the ROC's directive order written to the contractor. We examined the ROC's directive order and found that the ROC had sided with the homeowner. The ROC ordered the contractor to finish the job per contract and all work orders. We were confused as to why the homeowner was upset with the ROC when the ROC had apparently taken his side in the dispute.

We asked the homeowner to clarify his complaint, detailing the reason he was upset with the ROC. The homeowner claimed the ROC Investigator was incompetent and the contractor had disappeared without making the repairs. The homeowner also claimed his family was made "homeless" because of the contractor's delays. The homeowner then complained about his insurance company and

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claimed that the mold had given him health problems that had required he obtain hospital services three times since the ordeal started.

We explained our jurisdiction extended to the agency acts, not the contractor, insurance company, or his health issues. Our office requested the homeowner provide more information, but we did not hear from the homeowner until weeks later when he received a letter from the ROC stating the agency was closing the case. The homeowner said the agency closing letter falsely claimed the unfinished work listed in the ROC directive order had been completed by the contractor. The homeowner was furious because the contractor had never returned to the home to correct the issues so it was impossible that the contractor had completed the work.

We contacted the ROC and arranged to review the file. We found that no formal contract existed between the homeowner and the contractor. The absence of a formal contract between the parties meant there were not any written requirements of the contractor. Without written requirements of a contract, the ROC could not determine what was required and what work remained incomplete, which was the main basis of the homeowner's complaint. The ROC was able to a formal warning to the contractor for violating A.R.S. § 32-1158(A). This statute requires contractors to include the minimum elements of a contract when entering into agreements with homeowners. We recommended the ROC reiterate to their inspectors that they must obtain the written contracts between the parties early in their investigation. Further, we recommended ROC inspectors check for specific contract parameters too because contracts must contain specifics for contractors to be held accountable.

Our office also questioned how the ROC investigator handled the initial inspection and developed the directive order. The homeowner refused to accompany the ROC investigator into the home during the inspection. By doing so, the homeowner did not specifically identify the construction defects. Typically, investigators document key issues by taking photos of alleged problems cited and exhibited by the homeowner. Since the homeowner did not accompany the ROC investigator into the residence to point out the defects, the investigator could not know exactly what the homeowner alleged to be poor workmanship or contrary to contract. With no specifics, the investigator instead used vague language in the directive repair order to the contractor. The directive said, "Finish the job per contract, and per all work orders."

We found that had the ROC investigator investigated properly, due diligence would have revealed the absence of a contract, essentially ending the ROC's investigation of the homeowner's complaint. We also found that the ROC investigator acted arbitrarily in issuing the directive order without citing specific issues and corrective measures necessary to address the problems. The ROC acknowledged that the ROC investigator should have had the homeowner or his representative point out items they considered to be issues and the investigator also erred by issuing the directive order based on his assumptions instead of contract-required specifics. We recommended further training for the investigator and a review of ROC procedures.

Our office then questioned the rationale of the investigator issuing the closing letter to the

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homeowner. The homeowner was adamant that the contractor never returned to the residence to make repairs. Our office asked the ROC to identify what their investigator meant in the directive order when they said that the work failed to meet minimum workmanship standards. We further asked the agency to identify what corrections the contractor made and to explain how the contractor had satisfied the ROC directive order. The ROC was unable to produce this information and acknowledged that the ROC investigator should not have issued the closing letter.

Next, our office reviewed the language in the directive order itself. The language required the contractor to submit “satisfactory written proof of compliance.” We asked the ROC to provide us with a copy of the contractor’s written proof. The ROC admitted they did not enforce this “written proof” requirement. We found this was unreasonable. The ROC agreed. The ROC changed the language used in directive orders to require contractors to “notify” the ROC when they completed the directed repairs moving forward. Our office recommended the ROC instead enforce the “written proof” requirement as opposed to allowing contractors to just say they complied with the directive, but the ROC declined that specific recommendation and instead said their method would work.

In sum, we found the ROC made significant errors related to the case. The agency acknowledged these errors and undertook corrective measures to ensure they would avoid similar errors in the future. Our office also recommended the ROC stress to contractors that they have a legal obligation to use written contracts with homeowners. Our office suggested the ROC investigator receive additional training. We informed the homeowner.

OMBUDSMAN INTERVENTION IN DCS CASES

The Ombudsman Office looks into complaints people have against the Department of Child Safety (DCS). Parents, grandparents, and other relatives of the child seek help from our office when they believe DCS has treated them unfairly. Other sources of complaints include foster parents, adoptive parents, community service providers and members of the state legislature.

The majority of the coaching and assistance inquiries we receive involve clarification of DCS recommended services, explanation of the DCS and dependency processes, facilitation of communication by the caseworker and legal counsel, and explanations about visitation or placement issues.

Our Department of Child Safety cases were 38.75% of our total caseload.

We contact DCS to gather agency administrators’ perspectives on assistance and investigation complaints. Typically, a phone call or e-mail message to DCS staff can resolve frequently received complaints such as caseworker assignment problems, copies of case plans, failure to receive notification of staff meetings, requests for Foster Care Review Board (FCRB), or court hearing dates. Case managers, supervisors or upper DCS management offer clarity to events, laws or policies and

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procedures. We facilitate clear communication between families, our office and the various points of contact within the Department of Child Safety.

Additionally, some of the complaints we receive require an in-depth review of the case and direct contact with the caseworker or agency representative. These are often complaints where residents feel that the agency violated their rights or failed to provide adequate services. With these complaints, our office may initiate full-file reviews, request documents and other supporting data or meet with DCS staff. We review case correspondence, therapeutic reports, and the DCS CHILDS database as sources of information to help facilitate the resolution of disputes.

Many of the complaints that we address are fairly isolated or case specific. However, for some issues, we identify patterns among multiple complaints that indicate systemic issues or deficiencies regarding DCS actions. In these situations, resolving one particular complaint is not enough. Instead, we identify the recurring issues and bring them to the attention of DCS management for systemic resolution.

OMBUDSMAN DCS CASE LOG FY2018 KEY CATEGORIES

The following chart shows who and where some of our DCS calls come from as well as the type of complaints.

DCS Complainant Information Chart –July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018	
DCS Complaint Source Relationship	
Parent	1388
Kin	598
Service Provider	2
Child	12
Foster	155
Attorney	21
Agency Worker	2
Other	69
DCYF Region	
Central	291
Southwestern	72
Southeastern	12
Northern	30
Pima	61

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Type of Complaint	
Removal Issues	220
Service Issues	140
Visitation Issues	178
Communication Issues	445
Record Issues	153
Placement Problems	282
Investigation Issues	315
Inadequate efforts towards case plan goal	54
False Allegations	127
DCS Process Questions	603
Adoption	20
Caseworker	238
Other	313
Unknown/NA	102

Ombudsman Intervention in DCS Cases

The Legislature instructs us in our budget note to emphasize Department of Child Safety cases. During the FY2018 period, 38.75% of our total cases were about DCS. Below are some examples where our intervention helped resolve concerns with DCS.

Our intervention revealed a field practice that was not in accordance with the agency's stated policy, procedures, and statutes.

1703052. DCS - Department of Child Safety.

A father contacted us about multiple issues with a Department of Child Safety (DCS) case. The father's concern was about their removal of his daughter. The father asserted that DCS did not provide a specific reason for removing his daughter from his custody.

We obtained the documentation regarding the removal. We brought the matter to the attention of the DCS Ombudsman's office. The DCS Ombudsman's office agreed that the agency had not provided a specific reason for the removal as required by law. DCS agreed to provide the caseworker who handled the matter with additional training about how to comply with the relevant statute.

1703264. DCS - Department of Child Safety.

A biological father and his current wife contacted us. The man relayed that his children recently visited their birth mother, the man's ex-wife, in Colorado. When the children returned, the man and his wife became concerned about what happened to the children while under the ex-wife's care in Colorado. Their concerns led them to call the Colorado Child Protective Service (CPS) to make a report. Unbeknownst to them, Colorado CPS notified

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Arizona's Department of Child Safety (DCS). DCS initiated its own investigation that included the man and his wife. A DCS Investigator presented the man and his wife with a "Notice of Duty to Inform" document. The man and his wife contacted us and requested we investigate why DCS had focused on them when they were the ones who had made the report. They also alleged that the Notice of Duty to Inform did not include the specific allegation against them as required by law.

A.R.S. § 8-803(A)(2) requires DCS child safety workers to inform the subject of an investigation, both verbally and in writing, of "[t]he specific complaint or allegation made against that person."

We contacted DCS about the matter. DCS reviewed the matter and responded. DCS informed us that the agency removed the man and his wife from the report; however, DCS refused to issue a corrected version of the notice document, claiming that the agency provided the couple with a sufficient explanation during their interviews and they were no longer under investigation.

1800137. DCS - Department of Child Safety.

A mother said the court ordered that her visits were to continue even though it severed her rights to the children. The mother said that Department of Child Safety (DCS) had not continued the visits, despite the court order. She claimed that at the last two court appearances, the judge had gotten upset because the visits had not continued.

The DCS Ombudsman's office initially disputed that the court clearly ordered visits to continue. We elevated the concern to the Director of DCS on January 19, 2018. Although we never received a response from the Director, DCS did resume facilitating visits. Because this resolved the issue, we closed the case.

1703957. DCS - Department of Child Safety.

A father stated he received conflicting information from the Department of Child Safety (DCS) and the Courts. The father explained that DCS substantiated his case against him yet the Court stated that his case was unsubstantiated.

We reviewed the documents that the father provided us from DCS and the Courts. We contacted DCS about the matter. DCS agreed to alter its finding to align with that of the court.

1800074. DCS - Department of Child Safety.

A foster mother for a developmentally disabled child said that she had a child placed with her for some months but the child's Department of Child Safety (DCS) caseworker had been unresponsive to her. The foster mom provided examples. She said DCS gave her important medication for the child, but DCS did not provide instructions about the medication. The foster mother also reported an issue with insurance to the caseworker, but the foster mother had not gotten any assistance from the caseworker in resolving the insurance issue.

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The foster mom cited various other examples with how the DCS caseworker failed to comply with law and act reasonably, such as the worker not properly visiting the child because an employee of another agency had done so. The foster mom claimed she tried contacting the caseworker's supervisor using a phone number provided by the caseworker, but it was a wrong number.

We reviewed the case with the DCS Ombudsman's office. The DCS Ombudsman's office researched the situation and agreed that the caseworker had not handled the situation according to policy and that communication was poor in the case. We asked the DCS Ombudsman to contact the foster mom to handle the issues the foster mom had expressed. The DCS Ombudsman office agreed and noted that this is a personnel issue, and a DCS manager would address the complainant's concerns directly.

Our intervention led to a change in an agency's procedure or practice and corrected a systemic problem that had been violating law.

1703948. DCS - Department of Child Safety.

A mother informed us that she was confused as to why she is on the Department of Child Safety (DCS) Central Registry when she has not had a case with DCS in several years. The mother further explained she currently holds a fingerprint clearance card. She explained that she recently found out she is on the Central Registry. The mother claimed DCS never told her that she was on the Central Registry.

DCS claimed to our office that it had provided the mother with a letter informing her about her placement on the Central Registry.

We suggested to the mother that she request her closure letters from the DCS, as those would explain the specific factors that led to her placement on the Central Registry. We further informed her DCS should keep the letters in the official record and make them available to her because she is a party to the case. We told her how to request records from the DCS Records Department.

We later learned that DCS does not keep the physical letters or electronic copies of the letters it sends out about Central Registry placement. DCS said it maintains the substance of the letters on file in its database, but not the actual letters that are mailed. DCS further explained it could recreate the letters, but the new letters would have the current date, text, and DCS letterhead on them, not the original date, text, and letterhead that was actually sent to the parent at the time DCS issued the original mailing.

To us, this demonstrated a problem with the agency recordkeeping and documentation. The letter was a record critical to a DCS case and imperative for the accused to have in an appeal, but the DCS way of handling letters meant that it would not be clear that DCS ever sent the original letter in the first place because nothing truly documented that mailing. Additionally,

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important facts might be changed with regeneration of the letters like dates, DCS directors, or Arizona governors.

We thought it would be better if the agency kept at least an electronic copy of the letter. We talked to DCS about the situation. They decided to change its policy. In the future, the DCS would retain the original letters its send out to alleged perpetrators.

Our intervention helped resolve a grievance against a state agency where the resolution corrected a financial problem and benefited a citizen.

1800274. DCS - Department of Child Safety.

A presumed adoptive father stated he has two siblings placed with him and both are on Social Security Insurance (SSI). He further explained that they get the daughter's SSI funds each month, but not the son's funds. The father further alleged the Department of Child Safety (DCS) is the payee for the son's SSI, but he claimed the agency had not been providing the benefits to or for the son. He stated there were no funds given for the son's use from September 2017 to January 2018.

We explained the problem to DCS and asked them to review the situation. DCS examined the matter and agreed there was a problem. They informed us that they will send the funds to SSI and then SSI would then process the funds for release to the family as benefits for the son.

Our intervention resulted in better service to a citizen and resolved a grievance against an agency.

1704655. DCS – Department of Child Safety.

The owner of a local group home claimed that the Department of Child Safety (DCS) Office of Licensing (OLR) recently revoked her group home license. The woman had appealed the DCS decision and requested a hearing; however, she had not heard anything from DCS in a reasonable amount of time. The woman wanted to know when DCS was going to schedule her hearing.

We contacted DCS and inquired about the woman's case. DCS disputed the woman's claim that she had appealed the decision.

The woman claimed she had a date and time-stamped copy of the appeal showing she delivered it to the required DCS office prior to the deadline. Our office reviewed the document and confirmed its timestamps were prior to the deadline.

Our office sent a copy of the stamped document to DCS and asked the agency to review the matter and respond. DCS disputed the authenticity of the document due at least in part to misrepresentations DCS said the owners of the home had made in the past. DCS staff said they believed this was another misrepresented document because the stamp on the document was not one used by DCS. DCS requested that our office ask the woman to explain

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the procedure she undertook in order to obtain the stamp, including where she went and to whom she delivered the document.

Our office requested the woman describe the process in which she undertook to deliver the document and how she received her stamp. The woman responded, explaining the process she undertook to get the original stamp. Further, to prove her point, she went down to the same DCS office as before and got another stamp on a new document. She provided us with the new stamped document and noted the two stamps were identical.

Our office gave the document to DCS and asked them to examine the situation and evidence again. Shortly thereafter, DCS advised us that they could not prove the stamp on the document was inauthentic; therefore, DCS decided to grant the woman an appeal hearing.

Our office informed the licensee woman of DCS's decision. The woman was very happy and credited our office for her opportunity to appeal the DCS decision.

OMBUDSMAN INTERVENTION IN PUBLIC ACCESS CASES

Outreach and Education

Educational Materials

We provided hundreds of our office's booklets on Public Records Law and Open Meeting Law directly to elected officials, non-elected public officials, public employees, advocacy groups, and members of the public as well as providing digital versions of the booklets on our website. In addition, we continue to share and help develop training materials for public bodies and officials. We continue to update our website with publications, training opportunities, and new developments in the open meeting and public records law, such as new case law, legislation, and Attorney General Opinions.

Trainings

There is a significant demand for training throughout the State. In the 2017 fiscal year, we conducted twenty-four training sessions for a variety of State and local government officials and public bodies and other organizations in Phoenix, Sierra Vista, Arizona City, Tucson, Clarkdale, Marana, Cottonwood, Peoria, and Mayer. Additionally, we conducted trainings for a diverse array of governmental and quasi-governmental entities, such as the Mohave County Board of Supervisors, the Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District, the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, DES, the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council, the City of Cottonwood, AZLERMA, the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind, the Auditor General, the Secretary of State's Office, AHCCS, PSPRS, and several charter schools.

In addition to general training in which we discuss public access requirements, we developed and presented customized training to address specific needs of public officials upon request.

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Lastly, we continue to provide recordings of a recent open meeting and public records law training we conducted to interested elected officials, non-elected public officials, public employees, advocacy groups, and members of the public.

Newsletters

We continued to publish a public access newsletter on about a quarterly basis. Our newsletter *The Public Record* touches on interesting and timely open meeting and public records law issues that are relevant to the duties and responsibilities of public bodies and officials throughout the State. For example, we provided a summary of a new appellate court public records law case touching on whether records created on private devices and accounts can constitute public records. We also provided an overview of the Arizona Supreme Court's decision to subject the Arizona State Bar to open meeting and public records law-type requirements. Additionally, we provided analysis on common open meeting and public records law issues. We also provided up-to-date summaries and analysis of pending Arizona public access legislation.

Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records send our newsletter to a listserv of public officials and employees throughout the State. Additionally, we also send our newsletter to our own list of public officials and employees who have contacted our office directly to receive our newsletter.

Inquiries and Investigations

In the past fiscal year, our office handled 459 cases regarding matters related to public access. Of those calls, 248 were public record law inquiries, 180 were open meeting law inquiries, and 29 concerned both public records and open meeting law. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of inquiries received from the public, the media, and government agencies. Table 2 provides the number of inquiries received about state agencies, county agencies, city or town agencies, school districts, and other local jurisdictions.

Table 1

	Public Inquiries	Media Inquiries	Government Agency Inquiries
Number of Inquiries	250	31	175

Table 2

	State Agencies	County Agencies	City or town agencies	School Districts	Other Local Jurisdictions
Number of inquiries	205	48	75	65	66

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Public Access Case Examples

17004849. Liberty Elementary School District.

A resident contacted our office in regard to difficulty he said he was having in obtaining public records from the Liberty Elementary School District.

The resident said the District had agreed to a settlement with the Superintendent. He said he had requested a copy of the settlement and related emails from the District, and a demand letter the District had received, but he had not received them. We contacted the District about the request. At first, a District employee maintained that the settlement record was confidential and would not be provided; however, the District's attorney told us otherwise.

Eventually, the District provided the resident with the settlement and related emails; however the District maintained that the letter was protected by some sort of privilege. After several discussions, the District decided to provide the letter.

1704942. Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority.

A journalist contacted our office in regard to a public record request she made to the Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority (the Authority).

She said she made a standing public records request for a weekly newsletter produced by the Authority. She said the Authority asserted that her standing request was not valid and she would have to make a request for each edition of the newsletter as it is produced.

We contacted the Authority's Fire Chief about the matter. He referred us to the Authority's attorney. The attorney asserted that the Authority does not put out a weekly newsletter, instead the Chief puts out an internal update for the Authority's employees. We maintained that this type of record likely still qualified as the type of regularly produced record for which a standing request would be legitimate. He seemed to disagree.

We reviewed the relevant case law. We followed up with the attorney and left him a message explaining that we think the public records law requires the Authority to honor the journalist's standing request for the internal communications. He followed up with us and said he relayed our stance to the Authority.

The journalist eventually followed up with us and said the Authority had chosen to honor her standing request.

She thanked us.

1800018. Arizona Department of Homeland Security.

A resident contacted our office in regard to a couple of issues with the Arizona Department of Homeland Security (ADOHS or the Department). The resident said he was a former employee of the Department.

His complaint had two prongs.

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First, the resident asserted that ADOHS did not provide 24 hours of notice for the September 22 meeting of the Homeland Security Senior Advisory Committee as required by the open meeting law.

Second, the complainant asserted that ADOHS's regional advisory councils are not meeting at least four times per year as required by A.R.S. § 41-4258(H).

The resident said that high-ranking Department officials had confirmed both violations of law to him and explained that the Department had acted intentionally in both regards.

We reached out to the Deputy Director of the Department about the two allegations. He conceded that the Homeland Security Senior Advisory Committee had not provided proper notice for its September 22 meeting, although he said this had not been intentional. He said the Committee would act to ensure that this does not happen again. He also conceded that the regional advisory councils were not meeting the minimum amount of times as required by law. He stated that this was intentional because the councils were completing their work in fewer meetings. He said the councils would begin meeting enough times to comply with the law.

1800091. Arizona Department of Administration.

A resident contacted our office about a request for public records she said she had made to the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) on November 3. More than two months had passed since she made her request, and she said she still had not received the records. She provided us with a string of emails between an ADOA employee (employee) and herself. In an email to the resident, the employee said the agency had placed the request in its "queue." She also said that some of the requested records were available online. She also said the request was very broad in several ways and asked the resident to narrow her request or be more specific.

In late November, the resident appears to have gotten more specific with her request. In late December, the resident followed up with ADOA about the status of her request. As of January 8, the resident said she had not heard anything from ADOA since her late November communications to specify what she wanted.

We contacted the employee about the matter. The employee said ADOA had communicated back and forth with the resident and was close to fulfilling the resident's request. She sent us a slew of emails between the resident and ADOA. She then explained that ADOA had half of the requested records and would produce them within the week. She also said the rest of the records would be produced on a rolling basis as they located and reviewed them.

The employee then included us on an email to the resident. Attached to the email were a fairly large number of records. The resident said she would review them. From that point on,

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the resident did not contact us. Because it seemed as though ADOA was providing her requested records, we closed the case.

1800238. Dewey-Humboldt.

A resident contacted our office and asserted that the Dewey-Humboldt Town Council violated the open meeting law. She asserted that the Town Council voted on an item at a public meeting, but the meeting agenda did not indicate that the Town Council might take action on the item.

We examined the agenda and were able to confirm that the resident was right that the item agenda did not indicate possible action. We consulted the open meeting law statutes and arrived at the conclusion that the open meeting law most likely requires that an agenda item must indicate the possibility for action in order for a public body to legitimately take action on the item. "Agendas required under this section shall list the specific matters to be discussed, considered or decided at the meeting. The public body may discuss, consider or make decisions only on matters listed on the agenda and other matters related thereto." A.R.S. § 38-431.02 (H).

We contacted the Town Manager and Town Mayor about the complaint. We explained why we thought that the action was likely a violation of the open meeting law. The Town Manager responded and agreed. He conceded that the Council likely violated the open meeting law and that the action taken at the meeting might be rendered null and void. He said he consulted the Town's attorney who also agreed. He said the Town would ratify the action taken in violation of the open meeting law.

1800501. Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

An employee for the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind contacted our office and inquired about whether our office could provide open meeting law training for a new, deaf School board member.

The employee said that it was somewhat urgent because the board member would soon assume office. As a result, we agreed to conduct a short one-on-one training for the board member and did so on February 20.

1800961. Arizona State Board for Charter Schools.

An employee from the State Board for Charter Schools contacted our office in regard to an open meeting law matter.

She said the Board had partially fulfilled a request for copies of public records. She said that the Board was charging the requester fees for the copies. She said the requester then requested something in writing explaining how the Board calculated or decided the fees. The employee wished to know whether the Board had to provide such a written explanation. We explained that the Board would need to provide any such records that existed.

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In the course of discussing the matter, the employee implied that the Board charges for the time Board employees spend gathering and sorting requested records. We explained to the employee that the public records law does not permit charging for time spent gathering

records. We explained that agencies may only charge for resources spent actually producing copies. She understood and thanked us. We offered to send her additional information on the subject and did so.

1802182. Yavapai County Sheriff's Office.

A gentleman contacted our office on behalf of an elderly lady who he said had had trouble with a public records request she had made to the Yavapai Sheriff's Office.

Essentially, the gentleman said the Sheriff's Office would only allow the lady to inspect the requested records. It would not provide her with copies or allow her to make her own copies.

The lady sent us a copy of her request and confirmed what the gentleman had told us.

We reached out to the Sheriff's Office. After several conversations with multiple employees at the Sheriff's Office, we learned that the Sheriff's Office had indeed told the lady that she would only be allowed to inspect the records. The Sheriff's Office explained that this was their office's official policy for personnel records. We pressed the Sheriff's Office on the matter.

Eventually, the Sheriff's Office followed up with us and led us to believe the Sheriff's office had discussed the matter with the County Attorney. As a result, the lady would be allowed to make her own copies with her own devices or to obtain copies of the records from the Sheriff's Office.

We relayed this to the lady. She was pleased and thanked us.

1805852. Pima County Attorney's Office.

A resident contacted our office about a request for her personnel records (and other related records) she said she made to the Pinal County Attorney's Office (PCAO) two months prior. She said she had not received the records despite the agency telling her it would take about 10 days.

We contacted the county. A county official said the resident's request resulted in about 700 responsive records that the agency was reviewing. He said the agency would have the records for her soon. The employee followed up with us the same day and said the agency was mailing a disc containing the records to the resident on the following business day. We relayed this to the resident.

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Our Cases – Statistics of Note

INVESTIGATIONS

We managed our investigations in FY2018 as noted in the following tables.

Table 3 – Investigations – July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018	
Discontinued ¹	34
Declined ²	117
Complaint was withdrawn or resolved during the investigation ³	6
Investigation Completed	195
Ongoing	12
TOTAL REQUESTS FOR INVESTIGATION	364

Table 4 – Investigative Findings – July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018		
SUPPORTED/PARTIALLY SUPPORTED ⁴		62
Requires further consideration by the agency	19	
Other action by agency required	35	
Referred to the legislature for further action	1	
Action was arbitrary or capricious	0	
Action was abuse of discretion	3	
Administrative act requires modification/cancellation	2	
Action was not according to law	14	
Reasons for administrative act required	1	
Statute or Rule requires an amendment	1	
Insufficient or no grounds for an administrative act	1	
INDETERMINATE⁵		17
NOT SUPPORTED		116
TOTAL COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS		195

¹ “Discontinued” is marked when the complainant stops responding and the Ombudsman-Citizens’ Aide Office is unable to proceed with inquiries.

² “Decline” is marked pursuant to authority in A.R.S. §41-1377(C). In those cases, the Ombudsman-Citizens’ Aide Office may decline to investigate a complaint if there is another adequate remedy available; the matter is outside the duties of the ombudsman-citizens aide; the complainant has had knowledge of the matter for an unreasonable time period; the complainant does not have sufficient personal interest in the subject; the complaint is trivial or made in bad faith; or the resources of the office of the ombudsman-citizen aide are insufficient to adequately investigate the complaint.

³ “Withdrawn or Resolved During Investigation” is marked when the complainant asks us to cease an investigation

⁴ The individual count for “total supported or partially supported findings” count in the right-side column will always be equal to, or greater than, the left column of specific reasons because each case must have at least one finding, but may have multiple “supported” or “partially supported” findings.

⁵ “Indeterminate” is marked when an investigation is completed, yet there is not enough evidence to discern whether something is “supported,” “partially supported,” or “not supported.” Example: two witnesses with opposite stories and no evidence to tip the balance.

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OVERALL CASE STATISTICS

As explained on page 2 of this report, we respond to citizens' complaints in three ways: coaching, informal assistance or investigation.

Contacts by Agency

Between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018, our office handled 6,000 cases involving 249 agencies. The following table shows the distribution of our contacts by an agency. Cases involving Child Protective Services comprised 38.45% of our total for FY2018.

CONTACTS BY AGENCY

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
Academy of Math and Science	2	2	0	4
Accountancy Board	1	1	0	2
Acupuncture, Board of Examiners of	0	0	1	1
ADOA - Administration, Department of	14	5	3	22
Agriculture - Wt. and Measures	6	0	0	6
Agriculture, Department of	5	2	0	7
Agriculture, Pest Mgmt. Office	1	0	0	1
Agua Fria High School	1	0	0	1
AHCCCS	94	55	9	158
Alpine Elementary School District 7	2	0	0	2
AmeriSchools	0	1	0	1
Amphitheater Public School District	1	1	0	2
Apache County	1	0	1	2
Apache Junction	0	1	0	1
Arizona Fire District Association Area 32	0	1	0	1
Arizona Power Authority	0	0	1	1
Arizona State Hospital	1	0	0	1
Arts Academy at Estrella Mountain	1	0	0	1
ASU -Arizona State University	1	0	0	1
Athletic Training, Board of	1	1	0	2
Attorney General, Office of	35	4	4	43
Auditor General	1	2	0	3
AZ Criminal Justice Commission	0	1	0	1
AZ POST - Peace Officer Standards & Training Board	1	0	1	2
AZ Prosecuting Attny Adv Council -APAAC	0	0	1	1
Barbers, Arizona Board of	2	1	0	3
Basis Charter Schools	0	1	1	2
Beaver Valley Water Improvement District	2	0	0	2

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
Behavioral Health Examiners, State Board of	4	1	1	6
Ben Franklin Charter School	1	0	0	1
Benson	0	0	2	2
Bisbee	3	0	1	4
Buckeye	2	0	0	2
Buckeye Police Department	0	1	1	2
Buckskin Sanitary District	1	1	0	2
Cambridge Academy	0	0	1	1
Camp Verde	0	1	0	1
Casa Grande	1	0	0	1
Cave Creek Unified School District	1	0	0	1
Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority	0	1	0	1
Central Yavapai Fire District	4	0	2	6
Chandler	1	1	0	2
Chandler Police Department	0	0	1	1
Chandler Unified School District	2	0	0	2
Charter Schools, Arizona State Board of	12	1	0	13
Chiropractic Examiners, State Board of	0	1	0	1
Choice Academies, Inc. Governing Board	2	0	1	3
Clarkdale	1	2	0	3
Cochise County	2	1	0	3
Cochise County Attorney	4	2	0	6
Commerce Authority of Arizona	1	0	0	1
Commission of Judicial Conduct	4	0	0	4
Community College, State Board of	1	0	0	1
Corporation Commission	29	5	4	38
Corrections, Department of	43	3	2	48
Cosmetology, Board of	314	8	4	326
Cottonwood	1	1	0	2
DCS - Community Advisory Committee	9	4	4	17
DCS - Department of Child Safety	1563	544	174	2281
DCS - Office of Licensing Certification Regulation	3	5	0	8
DCS - Other	1	0	0	1
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Commission	3	1	0	4
Deaf and Blind, Arizona School for the	0	2	1	3
Deer Valley Unified School District	1	0	0	1
Dental Examiners, Board of	11	1	1	13
DES - Aging & Community Services	189	5	1	195
DES - Benefits and Medical Eligibility	160	118	5	283
DES - Child Support Service	32	57	7	96
DES - Developmental Disabilities	11	16	1	28

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
DES - Employment and Rehabilitation	33	26	2	61
DES - Other	37	12	4	53
DES- Adult Protective Services	7	5	2	14
Dewey-Humboldt	1	0	0	1
Dewey-Humboldt Town Council	0	0	1	1
Discovery Plus Academy	1	0	0	1
Douglas	0	0	1	1
DPS - Department of Public Safety	44	6	3	53
Dysart School District	0	1	0	1
Education, Department of	31	6	3	40
El Mirage	0	0	1	1
Emergency & Military Affairs, Department of	1	0	0	1
Environmental Quality, Department of	4	1	1	6
Financial Institutions Department	8	0	0	8
Fingerprinting, Board of	6	2	0	8
Flagstaff	3	0	0	3
Florence	1	0	0	1
Funeral Directors & Embalmers, State Board of	2	0	0	2
Game and Fish, Department of	1	6	1	8
Gaming Dept., Boxing Dept.	0	0	1	1
Gaming, Dept.	0	0	1	1
Gaming, Racing Department	1	0	1	2
George Gervin Prep Academy	0	1	0	1
Gila Bend	1	0	0	1
Gila County Sheriff's Office	2	1	0	3
Glendale Police Department	1	0	0	1
Golden Shores Volunteer Fire Department	1	0	0	1
Golden Valley Fire District	2	0	1	3
Goodyear	1	0	0	1
Governor, Office of	7	0	1	8
Governor's Council of Aging	1	1	0	2
Great Heart Academies	1	0	0	1
GRRC	1	0	0	1
Health Services, Department of	79	8	1	88
Health Services, Vital Records Office	6	2	2	10
Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District	2	1	0	3
Historical Society, Arizona	2	0	0	2
Homeland Security, Department of	0	1	0	1
Housing Dept. -Manufactured Housing Office	1	1	0	2
Housing, Department of	30	3	1	34
Huachuca City	0	1	0	1

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
Industrial Commission	50	9	2	61
Insurance, Department of	38	5	2	45
Judicial Conduct, Commission on	4	1	0	5
Juvenile Corrections, Department of	5	1	0	6
Kingman	0	0	1	1
Kyrene Unified School District	1	0	1	2
La Paz	3	0	0	3
Lake Mohave Ranchos Fire District	2	1	0	3
Land, Department of	3	0	0	3
Legislature	18	3	0	21
Liberty Elementary School District #25	2	1	1	4
Liquor Licenses and Control, Department of	7	0	0	7
Lottery	10	4	0	14
Marana	0	0	1	1
Marana Drainage and Water Improvement District	4	1	0	5
Maricopa	1	0	0	1
Maricopa County Assessor	0	1	0	1
Maricopa County Attorney	1	0	0	1
Maricopa County Community Colleges	2	0	0	2
Maricopa County Planning and Development	0	0	1	1
Maricopa County Sheriff	1	0	1	2
Maricopa Unified School District	1	0	0	1
Massage Therapy, State Board of	2	0	1	3
Mayer	1	0	0	1
Mayer Fire District	7	1	0	8
Mayer Water District	0	1	0	1
Medical Board, Arizona	28	6	3	37
Mesa School District	2	0	0	2
Mescal J-6 Fire District	0	2	0	2
Mine Inspector	2	0	0	2
Mohave Accelerated Learning Center	1	0	0	1
Mohave Valley Fire District	0	0	1	1
Naturopathic Physicians Board of Medical Examiners	1	0	0	1
Navajo County Attorney's Office	0	0	1	1
Navajo County Superior Court	0	0	1	1
Northern Arizona Consolidated Fire District #1	1	1	0	2
Nursing Care Institution Administrators & Assisted Living Managers Examiners Board	1	0	0	1
Nursing, State Board of	10	3	3	16

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
Nutriosso Fire District	1	0	0	1
Ombudsman	108	14	0	122
Optometry, State Board of	2	0	0	2
Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery, Board of	0	0	1	1
Other - Arizona in general	49	0	0	49
Other - Federal	69	2	1	72
Other - Government	299	10	12	321
Other - Private	438	15	14	467
Page	1	0	0	1
Paradise Valley School District	3	1	0	4
Parks, Department of	2	0	0	2
Peebles Valley Fire District	0	1	0	1
Peoria Unified School District	2	0	0	2
Personnel Board	3	0	0	3
Pharmacy, Board	12	3	4	19
Phoenix	2	1	1	4
Phoenix Fire Department	0	0	1	1
Phoenix Police Department	0	4	1	5
Physician Assistants, AZ Regulatory Board of	0	1	1	2
Pima	2	1	0	3
Pima Community College	1	0	0	1
Pima County Attorney's Office	0	0	1	1
Pima County Community College Police Department	1	0	0	1
Pima County Elections Integrity Commission	1	0	0	1
Pima County Sheriff's office	1	0	1	2
Pima Natural Resource Conservation District	1	0	0	1
Pinal	1	0	0	1
Pinal County Sheriff's Office	1	2	2	5
Pine Creek Canyon Domestic Water Improvement Dist	1	0	0	1
Pine Forest Charter School	1	0	0	1
Pinetop-Lakeside	2	0	0	2
Pinetop-Lakeside Police Department	0	0	1	1
Pioneers Home	1	0	0	1
Podiatry Examiners, State Board of	2	0	0	2
Porter Creek Domestic Water Improvement District	1	0	0	1
Prescott	2	0	0	2
Prescott Valley	1	1	0	2

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
PRIVATE Post-Secondary Education Board	3	0	0	3
Psychologist Examiners, State Board of	5	2	0	7
PUBLIC Post-Secondary Education Commission	1	0	0	1
Public Safety Personnel Retirement System	3	4	0	7
Quartzsite	0	1	0	1
Queen Creek	0	1	0	1
Radiation Regulatory Agency	1	0	0	1
Rancho Jardinas Water District	0	0	1	1
Real Estate Dept. - HOAs	7	0	0	7
Real Estate, Department of	14	2	0	16
Red Rock Road Enhancement District	1	0	0	1
Regents, Arizona Board of	0	0	1	1
Registrar of Contractors	24	14	3	41
Retirement System, Arizona State	8	9	1	18
Revenue, Department of	24	23	2	49
Rincon Valley Fire District	0	0	1	1
Rio Verde Fire District	1	0	0	1
Roosevelt Water Conservation District	0	0	1	1
San Luis	1	0	0	1
San Simon Unified School District	1	0	0	1
San Simon Volunteer Fire District	0	1	0	1
Sanders Unified School District	1	0	0	1
Santa Cruz Provisional Community College District	1	0	0	1
School Facilities Board	1	0	1	2
Scottsdale	1	1	1	3
Scottsdale Unified School District	1	1	0	2
Sec. of State -Library, Archive & Records Dept.	2	0	0	2
Secretary of State, Office of	9	1	0	10
Sedona	1	0	0	1
Sedona-Oak Creek Unified School District	1	0	0	1
Sierra Vista School District	0	0	1	1
Southwest Leadership Academy	1	0	0	1
Statewide Independent Living Council	0	1	0	1
Sunburst Farms Irrigation District	2	0	0	2
Superior	1	0	0	1
Superior Court	1	0	5	6
Supreme Court	2	0	1	3
Surprise	0	1	0	1
Technical Registration, Board of	6	7	1	14
Tempe Union High School District	1	0	0	1

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
Tombstone	0	1	0	1
Transportation, Department of	44	13	3	60
Transportation-Motor Vehicle Division	70	56	8	134
Treasurer, Office of	0	0	1	1
Tucson	0	1	0	1
Tucson Police Department	0	3	0	3
Tusayan	1	0	0	1
unknown	5	0	0	5
unknown charter school	6	1	0	7
unknown city	4	0	0	4
unknown fire district	2	0	0	2
Unknown Irrigation District	1	0	0	1
unknown school district	7	0	0	7
Unknown state agency	23	1	1	25
Veterans Home	0	1	0	1
Veterans' Services, Department of	6	3	0	9
Veterinary Medical Examining Board	3	0	1	4
Water Resources, Department of	8	1	1	10
White Mountain Lake Fire District	0	1	2	3
Yavapai County	1	1	0	2
Yavapai County Community College	1	0	0	1
Yavapai County Sheriff's Office	1	0	1	2
Yuma City	1	0	1	2
Yuma County	0	1	0	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF CONTACTS	4439	1197	364	6000

Agency Count: 249

About the Ombudsman and Staff

Dennis Wells - Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide.

Dennis became the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide on July 2, 2012, following confirmation by the Legislature and Governor in 2012 and was re-appointed for a second five-year term during the legislative session of 2017. Dennis holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration from Northern Arizona University and a Bachelor of Science in Geology. His educational background also includes a fellowship at Harvard regarding studies in State and Local Government. He has ombudsman training by the U.S. Ombudsman Association (USOA) and is an investigator certified by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR). In the public sector, Dennis was an elected supervisor and chair of the Coconino County Board of Supervisors, State Land Commissioner for Arizona, a member of the Arizona State Parks Board and served as City Manager for Williams, Arizona. Dennis' public service also includes serving on the Board of Directors, Foundation for Flagstaff Medical Center and as a board member of the Arizona City and County Managers Association. In the private sector, Dennis began his career working in the family business, The Williams Grand Canyon News, which was continuously published by the Wells' family for 100 years. Following graduation from NAU, Dennis worked for firms in oil exploration and drilling in Texas, Louisiana and overseas (Africa and the Middle East). Dennis has experience in public management, intergovernmental relations, public planning, and dispute resolution.

Joanne MacDonnell - Deputy Ombudsman.

Joanne joined the office as Deputy Ombudsman in 2005 after serving nearly eight years as the Arizona Corporation Commission, Director of Corporations. Prior to working in government, Joanne worked in the private sector at FCC Investors, Inc. serving on the Board of Directors and as an accountant. She also worked in real estate as a licensed Realtor associate and real estate appraiser. Joanne has Bachelor of Science degrees in Business Administration and Real Estate from the University of Arizona, is an investigator certified by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR) and completed mediation training through South Mountain Community College. She has additional training including the Executive Course, Project & Investment Justification Training, the Leadership Module through Rio Salado College and Arizona Government University; and ombudsman training prescribed by the U.S. Ombudsman Association (USOA). She is active in the U.S. Ombudsman Association, having served multiple years as a Board Director/Officer and as a Conference Committee and Outreach Committee Member. She is currently USOA's Secretary/Treasurer. She was Chairman of the USOA Children and Family Chapter for four years. She was a member of the Association for Conflict Resolution, qualified in the "Practitioner" category. She was a member of the DCS Citizen Review Panel Committee and the Court Parent Representation Committee. She has served on the Arizona Juvenile Court Improvement Committee since 2011. She has served as a judge for the Central Arizona BBB Business Ethics Award for the past eight years.

Danee Garone – Staff Attorney.

Danee is a staff attorney for the Ombudsman's office and specializes in open meeting and public records law matters. He joined the Ombudsman's office in 2014. Prior to joining the Ombudsman's office, Danee completed a legal internship with the Arizona House of Representatives. Additionally, he completed a legal externship with the United States District Court for the District of Arizona and interned for the United States Small Business Administration.

Danee has a Juris Doctor degree from the Sandra Day O'Connor School of Law at Arizona State University and is a licensed attorney. Additionally, he graduated from Arizona State University summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science.

Philip Gough-Stone – Intern and Assistant Ombudsman.

Philip Gough-Stone joined the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide Office as an intern in June of 2016. He studied Business Management and Pre-Law and graduated from Grand Canyon University. The Ombudsman Office hired Philip as a full-time employee after his internship. Philip is a certified mediator and an active student. Aside from his studies, Philip has extensive experience in the customer service and nonprofit industries. He worked at the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office as an Assistant Ombudsman until he left the office in August 2018 to attend law school at the University of Arizona.

Aimee Kearns – Assistant Ombudsman.

Aimee joined the Ombudsman office in 2014. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 2000 from Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado. Before joining the Ombudsman office, Aimee worked for in Vancouver, Washington as a case manager for homeless individuals and families in transitional housing. Prior to that, she worked for the Jobs Program with MAXIMUS in the Phoenix area assisting families who received state cash assistance. She also has extensive experience in customer service in the non-profit, financial and mortgage industries. She completed New Ombudsman training by the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) and is an investigator certified by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR). She has clearance for investigatory purposes into the Department of Child Safety Children's Information Library & Data Source (CHILDS) Program after completing training with the Child Welfare Training Institution and Department of Economic Security. Aimee left the office in May 2018 to pursue private pursuits.

Keith Meyer – Senior Investigator/Writer Ombudsman.

Keith joined the Office of the Ombudsman in 2014. He has 20 years of public experience in Arizona State and County governments. He served in the Arizona Department of Corrections Director's Office, the Arizona Department of Agriculture, the Arizona State Land Department, and Arizona State University. In Maricopa County government, he worked at the County

Attorney's Office coordinating restitution issues with citizen victims of crime. Other service included volunteering on several homeowner association boards. He has ombudsman training prescribed by the U.S. Ombudsman Association (USOA) and is an investigator certified by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR). Keith earned a Master's degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor of Science degree in Agribusiness, with a minor in Sociology, from Arizona State University.

Jennifer Olonan - Assistant Ombudsman.

Jennifer began working for the Ombudsman office in 2014. She has completed ombudsman training prescribed by the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA). She previously worked in the medical field as a team lead and manager, where she obtained extensive clinical experience. She has received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Health Science (Healthcare Policy) from Arizona State University. She has a Master's of Public Administration with an Emphasis in Government and Policy, from Grand Canyon University. She has completed training with the Child Welfare Training Institution and Department of Economic Security to obtain clearance for the Children's Information Library & Data Source (CHILDS). Jennifer is proficient in American Sign Language.

Yvonne Rothblum – Assistant Intake Ombudsman.

Yvonne joined the Ombudsman team in November 2016. Yvonne has worked both in the public and private sector. She worked in the Arizona Commerce Authority (previously known as the Arizona Department of Commerce) and the Arizona Department of Revenue. In the private sector, Yvonne worked in retail. Yvonne has an Associate in Liberal Arts from Glendale Community College (GCC). While at GCC, she was inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. Yvonne continued her education and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Communication with a minor in Spanish from Arizona State University. Yvonne completed the New Ombudsman training by the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA). She has also completed the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR) training.

Frank Rutledge – Investigator/Writer Ombudsman.

Frank joined the Ombudsman team in June 2016 after working almost nine years with the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES). During his time at DES, Frank worked in the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the DES Office of Procurement, and most recently with the Division of Developmental Disabilities. Frank brings a wealth of knowledge including contracting, procurement, and DES services to the team. Frank has completed the New Ombudsman Training prescribed by the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA), and is certified as an Investigator/Inspector by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement, and Regulation, and certified in Arizona State Public Procurement. Frank has resided in Arizona for over 35 years, and is a graduate of Northern Arizona University's School of Communication, with an emphasis in Journalism.

Carmen Salas - Assistant Ombudsman.

Carmen joined the Ombudsman's office in 2005. She previously worked at the Arizona Corporation Commission for nine years as a management analyst and supervisor. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from the University of Phoenix. She has completed additional training including ethics and various risk management courses through Arizona Government University. She has completed the Leadership Module through AZGU, is an investigator certified by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR), has ombudsman training prescribed by the U.S. Ombudsman Association (USOA) and has completed mediation training. She has also completed training with the Child Welfare Training Institution and Department of Economic Security to obtain clearance for the Children's Information Library & Data Source (CHILDS). Carmen is fluent in Spanish.

John Wicus- Legislative Intern & Assistant Ombudsman.

John joined the office as an intern in January of 2018 while completing his Master's in Politics at Arizona State University. He previously worked as a Teacher's Assistant at ASU and taught the courses of Political Ideology, Problems of Democracy and Contemporary Political Theory. He received a Bachelor's of Science in Politics (Global Studies) and a minor in European History from ASU. John attended ASU and then went to work for the State Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide Office after graduation. John completed the New Ombudsman Training offered by the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA). He is proficient in American Sign Language.