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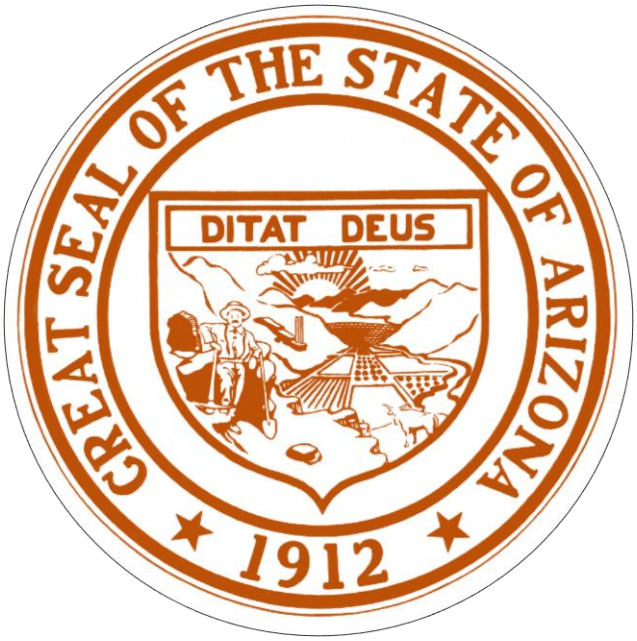

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2021: JULY 1, 2020 – JUNE 30, 2021

Submitted by Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide, Dennis Wells
December 30, 2021

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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 can resolve their concerns when they are aware of the services available. Often 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 requests 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 continually to foster relationships with agency personnel in every state agency to enable the efficient resolution of complaints before escalation.

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 them 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 are warranted.

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

OUTREACH

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

- The Ombudsman website (http://www.azoca.gov/) – We have a COVID section on our resource "Helpful Web Links" page to point people to COVID resources. We continued to update our website to provide valuable links to government and charity services available to the public. Additionally, we link to digital versions of our open meeting and public record law booklets. Our website also includes a general "How to file an effective complaint" tutorial, FAQs, and our electronic complaint form. We've also included a tab with suggestions about how to interact effectively with the Department of Child Safety (DCS). We explain the difference between our office and the DCS Ombudsman Office. We have found that this is often a point of confusion for the public.

- We distribute our brochures by email or mail to any member of the public who asks for more information. We also make them available at our office, on our website, at meetings and speeches, at trainings, and with various groups who distribute our brochure for us to their clients (i.e., the Family Involvement Center).

- We created comprehensive resource guide booklets in cooperation with the Arizona Supreme Court Improvement Committees.

    - **Community Resources, Emphasizing the Needs of Those Involved in DCS Matters.** https://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/46/Resources/CommunityAssistanceResourcesForParents.pdf

    - **Understanding the Child Safety System** https://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/46/Resources/Resources-UnderstandingTheChildSafetySystem.pdf

- We developed comprehensive guide booklets regarding the public record and open meeting law. We distribute these public access materials to elected officials and the public throughout the State. The League of Cities and Towns use these booklets in its elected official training.

    - **Public Records Law** - https://www.azoca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Public-Records-Law-Booklet-2020.pdf

    - **Open Meeting Law** - https://www.azoca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Open-Meeting-Law-Booklet-2020.pdf

- Media interactions – Occasional interviews throughout the State.

- 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 distribute the newsletter on our behalf to its extensive listserv.

    - The Ombudsman – Citizens' Aide Office's Public Access Newsletter - https://www.azoca.gov/open-meeting-and-public-records-law/newsletters/

- 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 to the public records law and open meeting law. In the 2021 fiscal year, we conducted sixteen training sessions, both in-person and through remote means, for public entities in locations throughout the state. For instance, we conducted trainings for public bodies in Phoenix, Payson, Tempe, Camp Verde, Pinal County, Pima County, Cochise County, Bullhead City, and the Navajo Nation. We also conducted trainings for municipal clerks, county supervisors, and irrigation districts throughout the state. At each event, we provide our office's contact information and website and explain what services we provide regarding public access issues and our general jurisdiction. Additionally, we distribute many of our office's public records law and open meeting law handbooks at the trainings. On numerous occasions, new complainants have told us they only became aware of our office because of a training.

- We post staff attorney Danee Garone's public access training on YouTube. One example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T583qHGTlnA&t=1s

- On the Arizona Supreme Court's website, in a training video called "Guide to More Effective Communication and Representation," Deputy Ombudsman Joanne MacDonnell explains about the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide Office in general and its specific role relating to DCS dependency cases. https://www.azcourts.gov/improve/Admin/Parent-Engagement

- We work with DCS to identify and resolve acute and systemic problems in the child safety agency. Various laws require DCS to identify the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office on its website, in its Notice of Duty to Inform, in its Temporary Custody Notice, and describe the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office in its parent handbook. Information about our office is on the DCS website as a resource for the public.

- Ombudsman Dennis Wells, Deputy Ombudsman Joanne MacDonnell, or attorney Danee Garone are speakers, trainers, or participants in the following:

    - Forums with legislative assistants – orientation meetings and one-on-one.

    - Forums with legislators – orientation meetings and one-on-one.

- Various speaking engagements – For example, State Archives training, civic groups, Arizona Children's Association, and 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. She is also on two Sub-Committees for Court Improvement relating to child safety and dependency, one on training and the other on safety.
- Outreach, speeches, open house events via Grand Canyon University, ASU (Main, Downtown & West campuses) work with professors and interns.
- Staff attorney Danee Garone participates as a trainer in State Bar Continuing Legal Education presentations.
- Deputy Joanne MacDonnell developed and taught a series of seminars about ombudsman procedures for DES's Office of Tribal Relations.

- United States Ombudsman Association (USOA). The State of Arizona is one of the five classical state ombudsman offices in the United States. Our state is a model for many jurisdictions.
  - Network – We receive referrals from other ombudsman jurisdictions in the United States. By sending representation to the national USOA conference or participating in other USOA undertakings, we learn of other jurisdictions' effective activities and best practices to better our office. We send new OCA staff members to USOA's internationally acclaimed New Ombudsman Training.
  - Participate in training – Our staff often teaches seminars.
  - Deputy Joanne MacDonnell serves as an elected Director and is the Secretary/Treasurer of USOA. Joanne is also active in the Children and Family Chapter of USOA and twice served as a co-chair of that group in the past decade.
- We co-host the Arizona Ombudsman Group with the SRP Ombudsman Office. It is a group of government, education, and private ombudsmen in Arizona. We participate in periodic meetings, host seminars, and network with ombudsmen offices that have different constituencies. We refer citizens to one another as jurisdictions dictate.

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- We work with the Attorney General's office as it refers many matters to us when its office cannot take them for whatever reason. We routinely assist their Consumer Division. We provide our expertise regarding open meetings and public access. We also offer general complaint assistance when the Attorney General's Office is not sure where to direct the public.

- The Self-Help Desk at the Maricopa County Courts – We provide information about our office for them to distribute.

- 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 featured on State of Arizona websites where agencies perform investigations - according to A.R.S. §§ 41-1001.01 and 41-1009.

- We work with the Arizona Library, Archives, and Public Records at the Secretary of State's office regarding public record retention and disclosure. We collaborate with the agency to present discussions on public records retention discussions at conferences.

- We distribute our Point of Contact Google Doc resource directory to various government agencies.

- We gave the Department of Corrections Ombudsman Office for Staff a free copy of our database programming so they would not have to create it when they opened their internal ombudsman office. This saved the state the cost of creating or purchasing a brand new case management system. The DOC tech programmers simply had to modify the Microsoft SQL code to meet the Department of Correction's needs.

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**.

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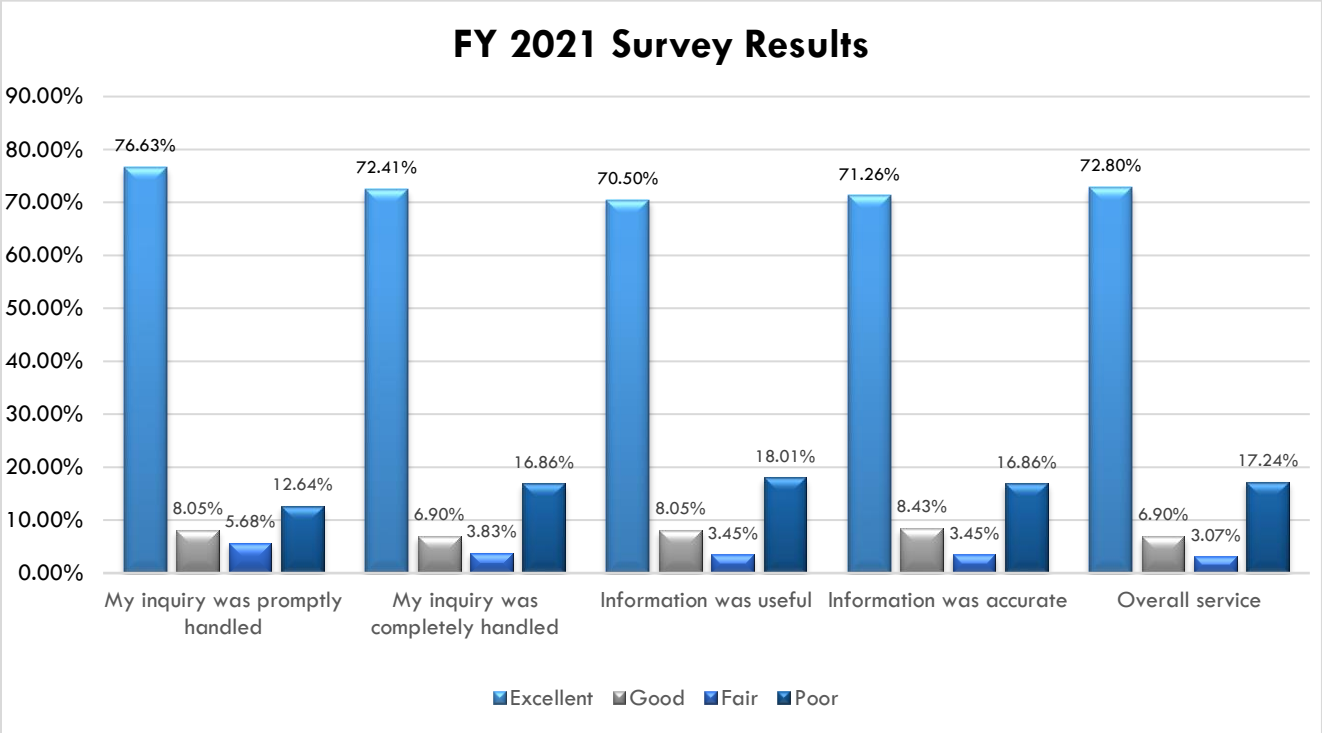
- Respond **promptly** to citizen inquiries.
- Provide as **complete** a response as possible.
- Provide **useful** solutions to citizens.
- Provide **accurate** responses to citizen complaints.

WE WELCOME FEEDBACK

The chart and comments on the following pages summarize the results of the survey for FY2021.



KUDOS AND COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS WHO USED OUR SERVICES IN FY2021:

"Without the intervention of the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office, I would still be waiting for my driver's license, and I thank the powers that be for this office!"

"I was completely satisfied with the help I received from investigator Frank. He responded quickly and respectful to my needs. I would definitely contact his office again if I needed help."

"Joanne was absolutely fabulous and passionate about her research on my issues."

"Thank you for your service. God bless you all."

"John is an amazing person I appreciate all his help he is outstanding and is very helpful."

"I am so thrilled someone contacted me regarding this issue. Thank you so much for helping me."

"I was considerably agitated when I was trying to explain and was having difficulty she stuck with me and calmed me down so we could work together. Thanks for her. She's the greatest."

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"I cannot be more grateful with Carmen and all the effort she put on this unemployment issue. She was helpful, kind and the best customer service that I have ever had. Thank you!"

"Yvonne was very patient with me and explained everything I needed to know, and she also returned my call. I really appreciated all the information that I received. She was exceptionally great. Thank you."

"Danee is amazing! Very kind, knowledgeable, patient and helpful! Really impressed!!"

"Alicia is so sweet, helpful and fast! So blessed to have spoken with her!!! She was a great help. Great job!"

"I want to thank you (Danee) for helping us out today with our New Supervisor Orientation by presenting on Open Meeting Law and Public Records Law. Your vast knowledge on the subjects was readily apparent, which helped convey the myriad of information on these subjects. As you know, these areas of law are extremely important to elected officials. We appreciate you helping to provide this information to our members, especially to the newly elected county supervisors."

"The personnel that I spoke with were both very professional and explained in detail what was needed on my part."

"Joanne - This is resolved. Thank you for your help. You put me in touch with the right person and the problem was corrected very quickly. Thanks for intervening."

"I received response from AZ Ombudsman within 24 hours and response from AZ DES shortly thereafter. I am grateful for this assistance!"

"I enjoyed a swift and positive result."

"Thank you! (Danee) Very informative and you managed to make OML interesting."

"John was exceptional in getting back to me. Same day. Extremely kind and courteous. All my issues were resolved. Thank You!"

"When I contact, Frank is very prompt in getting back to me. It is reassuring that someone is actively assisting me. I thank him very much."

"I have been struggling to get at least some info on my issue to help resolve it and Yvonne was the first person to be of any help. On top of that, she went above-and-beyond explaining the steps that I needed to take next and in figuring out that I was in fact calling the right place when I thought I was not. She was incredibly helpful, courteous, and extremely pleasant and helped ease the stress of this incredibly stressful situation."

"I'm most impressed with Frank's assistance in this situation. He went out of his way and really went the extra mile. Please commend him for his professionalism and outstanding work. Thank you!"

"I submitted a complaint regarding missing funds taken by AZDES in their fraud sweep. Ombudsmen were quick with their response as well as provided valuable information, regarding my issue and the process of moving forward. Ombudsman is an invaluable resource to its citizens and I am grateful for all they've done for me regarding this matter and expediting the process in the return of funds. I cannot stress enough the appreciation for their quick responses to my emails and action as well as, and more importantly the information the agency provided to me to help ease the stress during this tough time."

"Very satisfied with my experience."

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

“Frank is wonderful. I could get nowhere with DES until I contacted him. My savior... 5 months of nothing until I contacted Ombudsman...thank you all so much.”

“Provided prompt, courteous, professional service.”

“I spoke with Jennifer and she was extremely supportive and talked to me for an hour in the evening long after she got off work. By the end of the call, I felt like I was chatting with a familiar family member or good friend. She knows her stuff and imparted her years of wisdom onto me. Her advice came in the nick of time, as I was able to utilize it to achieve the best outcome for my case. I’m grateful to Jennifer for taking her time me and for caring so much about her work.”

“Alicia truly went above and beyond to help me, while its a difficult scenario all around the length of her response was some of the most effort I’ve felt by someone that isn’t even apart of the ordeal, yet she was thorough, kind and detailed, and the compassion emulated with every sentence and after all this going on, it was refreshing and thank you.”

“I am grateful for your services, at least in four months that I have to present my Unemployment Claim and being ill in addition to having other inconveniences. You answered me instantly. I want to thank you for up to date before contacting you, no corresponding institution has provided me with help or attention to follow up on my process, which is approved and verified as I am a legal and honest person.”

“It’s really a shame that other departments of the government can’t treat people as well as you. Thanks for being there to help.”

“Alicia was a great help she really knows the ins and outs! Kind too!”

“Joanne, you have been absolutely amazing. . . Since you are definitely one of the angels who helped me, I want to say thank you. You took your time and you cared. I appreciate all you have done for me. I wish I could give you a much-deserved big hug. You're the best.”

“Exceptional support received.”

“I hope ADOT is as energetic toward the problem as the Ombudsman. Thank You.”

“Frank was very helpful and truly concerned for my situation. He was wonderful! He was persistent in getting my unemployment claim straightened out. Thank you!”

“I asked a simple question. Danee Garone, Staff Attorney, replied a very informative reply with all possible outcomes. The reply was more than I had expected. Also, the reply was the next day. I thought perhaps my simple question was going to get lost , put on the 'back burner', or receive 'the government run-around' (like ADEQ does often) and just forward my inquiry from on department to another department- then forward it to the county level then to various departments among city government until it just dies. Danee slashed any government employee expectations I had, in a good way. Keep up the great work!!”

“I appreciate you getting back to me so quickly did not expect that at all. I thought I would hear from you guys in a day or two. But got response really quickly DES needs to step it up like you. 😁”

“John is amazingly thorough. Alicia was my first contact (by phone) and she saw to all my needs and gave me her contact information to follow up in the event I didn't hear from John. This was my first good experience in my ordeal.”

"Frank is a great guy and he's really helped me out. . ." You may want to consider keeping this guy around and giving him a hell of a raise. I got to say I'm impressed hopefully we can get this resolved and get the Department of Economic Security to pay me I think Frank's the guy is going to light a fire underneath them he does it with class and persuasion."

"She was a pleasure to deal with, very professional, anxious to help with my problem. Very pleasant."

"I know the DES is dealing with an impossible number of cases. If not for Frank, I don't know if I would have received my benefits at all. I am very respectful of his hard work and diligent response to my needs."

"Frank was amazing; he was professional, decisive, and compassionate."

"Your response was quick and resolved my issue at the lowest level. My goal is compliance with the public records laws and the citizens' ability to obtain records and work within the governmental process."

"Thank you so much for the slides and for the awesome presentation! I really appreciate your time! I think the members found it helpful."

"Keep up the great communication skills!"

"John was very helpful and got my issue taken care of quickly thank you."

"Prompt and courteous replies to every email sent. Invaluable assistance."

"Very helpful."

"Yvonne was extremely knowledgeable and helpful guiding me through the process and answering the questions I had. I am grateful for her help."

"John is a thorough and caring person. I appreciate his help."

"Yvonne was wonderful. She gave me valuable information and went above and beyond to help me."

"I view the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide office and staff as an extremely valuable and dependable resource."

"Joanne, thanks for your thorough reply, I appreciate your diligence."

"Frank and his supervisor deserve some serious kudos. They were polite, professional, kind and seem to genuinely care about and like their jobs. Thank you for all of your help!"

"Yvonne the intake specialist was very informative and courteous. During these difficult times she managed to give me hope, I very much appreciate her kind words and support."

"For as overloaded as they are, they do a great job and I appreciate that."

"If I could give 10 stars, It would be 10's across the board. Great experience overall and very pleased with the service he provided!!!"

"Extremely valuable. Ombudsman has contacts that have interest in resolving issues. Resolved quickly via their contacts."

"I have lost a lot as we all have during this UI economic tragedy and all I seek is someone to listen to my concerns even without resolution the ear to listen. John took that his time to listen. If we had more of the

Arizona State Departments to follow in his footsteps, many concerns and the fear in which this economic tragedy has brought would simply subside."

"Thank you for always being a great resource and for providing such prompt responses to my questions."

"THANK YOU SO MUCH for speaking with our class today. Your presentation was clear and comprehensive and will no doubt inform some effective requests in the coming weeks. Wishing you all the best and thanks for everything you do in the service of transparency around government in Arizona."

"I was trying to get a response from unemployment for over seven months. Thank you for getting them to take a look."

"I had the pleasure of working with Frank and he was fantastic! He kept in constant contact with me and he was instrumental in finally getting my funds after 37-weeks. I'm forever thankful for his service!!!"

"Very professional, very clear, very concise response!"

"I am thankful that this service is available for help. The response was as good as it could be."

"Yvonne, was very kind, patient and informative which is just what I needed at this tough time! Thank you kindly."

"Congratulations for having Danee on staff--provided intelligent, responsive, experienced and, yes, even wise insights."

"My Ombudsman was Frank and let me just say he is a rare individual. Kind compassionate and eager to help in anyway he can. Your office is lucky to have him and all I can say is I wouldn't have gotten through this whole ordeal at times if it wasn't for him. Whatever you pay him it isn't enough."

"Alicia is a great listener and was so helpful and kind and opened my world to a plethora of options I can look into after being ignored, shut down, and shut out of my kids' lives for no valid or honest reason by the DCS and court system."

"John was the gentleman who tried very hard to help me. I very much appreciate everything did. He is an asset to our state. I thank him very much."

"I am so grateful that I had an agency and an individual person within that agency to turn to for support in resolving the distress of having my much needed PEUC disbursement inexplicably interrupted with false attribution of "Federal or Military wages" to my account."

"Danee responded quickly and thoroughly. He asked clarifying questions to ensure he had gathered pertinent details and gave great guidance."

"Thanks John for doing your Job with dignity and respect for others."

"My question was one of clarification. Joanne responded quickly and clearly. I appreciate that."

"Very helpful. Excellent assistance to resolve a problem I was unable to resolve alone."

"John was the person we dealt with and we very much appreciated his service. He had our back and stepped in to make things happen, when we almost seemed to be ignored by the other party."

"Very thankful that we had the AZ Ombudsman to help in our situation!!"

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"I am surprised how quick my issue was handled and resolved. Thank you!"

"It was a pleasure and honor to work with Joanne. I was so grateful to be able to speak with her about our business."

"We residents very much need the service and appreciate having it available as we would not be able to navigate through this complicated system without the Citizens' Aide help."

"As an authorized representative and still needing further assistance this office is very useful to the seniors in our communities."

"Thank you so much to Danee! He has helped me more than once, and it is so appreciated."

"I appreciate how quickly my issue was acknowledged and remedied. Before contacting this office my concerns were ignored. Thank you."

"Always a great resource."

"Frank is the most studious, prompt and professional that's I have worked with in the state of AZ."

"I appreciate that my complaint was addressed immediately and I will take the necessary steps as instructed."

"After trying since October 2020 to receive my PUA benefits without any success, I wrote to the Attorney General, Mark Brnovich, who provided the AZOCA to assist me. Brandon assigned an investigator, John, who followed through to be sure my benefits were paid. An amazing team working to assist me. Thank you ever so much!"

"Not only was Frank the first person to respond to me and actually hear me out, but he rapidly was able to help me solve my problem."

"Thanks, Joanne! And thank you to everyone who helped in this effort."

"Frank demonstrated courtesy, patience and a willingness to assist me. He was very prompt in responding to my inquiries and inspired me (without even suggestion) to get involved in my local community and do some volunteer work as he had probed further into my situation. I realized there were others that had more disadvantages than I had which inspired me to try to make a difference. I thank Frank for opening my eyes to this."

"Thank you so much for the quick response. I consider your office an excellent resource and I greatly appreciate your expertise."

"Kayla is someone to be valued and shown that she is. Best customer service representative I've dealt with."

"Alicia Nugent was the most helpful person I have ever had the privilege to deal with west of the Mason Dixon line. She was amazingly helpful and it was the easiest phone call I have ever made. She was sweet concise and very helpful. She needs a raise."

"A next day response is unheard of from a Government Office, but that is what happened."

"Frank is very professional and courteous. I wholeheartedly thank him for his service and assistance as well as Brandon (intern) for taking the time to escalate my issue in a speedy and efficient manner also correct manner at that. Thank you both for knowing how to help and excelling at your jobs by doing them competently."

"Miss Yvonne was great!!"

"I had an issue with unemployment. Legitimate claims were not being paid for weeks. I contacted the ombudsman. Frank sent me a detailed email regarding my issue with excellent instructions on how to proceed. I followed his instructions to a T. The issue was cleared up. Frank helped me by promptly replying to my initial email. Upon follow up contacts, it was always the same. Frank sent me a reply within minutes (literally). Just the fact that someone responded (and it seemed to be from a person and not a form letter reply) was good enough for me. I know my outcome was successful and I am happy but the quick replies from Frank made my mind be put at ease for a bit. Thanks again."

"I really appreciate all of the work you put in."

"The customer service and timely correspondence I received from Ombudsman Office was exceptional. . . Prompted a UI adjudicator to review and resolve my case."

"This group of individuals were very professional and I appreciate ALL the help I received in this matter. AWESOME employees."

COMPELLING CASES

The following case summaries are examples taken from the 9,756 cases we handled in FY2021.

GENERAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT STATE AGENCIES

Our intervention resulted in better service for the citizens as exemplified by:

2005022. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
A Department of Economic Security (DES) Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant asked if we could prompt DES because the agency had not yet sent her a replacement card despite her requests. The woman sent over copies of various documents and a picture of her identification to verify her identity.

We noticed the claimant had an out-of-state driver's license and address. We told her this might be the source of problems. She explained she had moved back to Texas to save money once the pandemic hit. We suggested the woman explain that to DES. We gave her additional information on how to approach DES UI. We sent word to DES UI and forwarded the documents for the woman's case.

Shortly thereafter, DES UI reviewed the case, verified her information, and cleared the fraud hold. Shortly thereafter, the woman received her UI funds.

2005068. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
A man was upset that he had not received his Department of Economic Security (DES) Unemployment Insurance yet. DES had been untimely in responding to him. The man had tried to get in touch with DES staff repeatedly without success. He tried emailing, phoning, faxing, and personal visits to DES. Nothing worked. The applicant said that he needed DES to talk to him to repair whatever problems they might have with his application.

We sent the complaint to the DES Ombudsman and asked them to process it. We provided the man with additional information.

We also reached out twice to DES and told them they had not responded yet to the applicant and that they needed to do so. DES reviewed the matter and contacted the man. DES determined the man needed to submit a pay stub from an employer.

2005166. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation

A resident contacted our office regarding her Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits not being received and having trouble getting in contact with anyone that could help them over at the Department of Economic Security (DES). The resident claimed they were stuck in this situation without them being able to receive benefits, and had submitted everything that DES had asked of them and did not know what the delay was. We helped ensure their claim was submitted correctly and answered the complainant's questions. We followed up with our contacts over at the DES ombudsman office over the next two months attempting to get attention and assistance to their case. DES informed us the complainant was assisted. The complainant thanked us for helping to facilitate a resolution and helping them receive their benefits.

2005481. Department of Economic Security – Benefits and Medical Eligibility

A mother contacted us on behalf of her son who was having trouble getting through to the Department of Economic Security (DES), to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The family claimed to have trouble getting in touch with anyone at DES regarding the benefits. The son was also struggling with another barrier. He also had a technical issue that needed to be resolved with DES.

We reached out to the DES ombudsman and discussed the case and situation. The DES ombudsman office sorted out the technical problem and also dealt with the family to resolve the other problems with the benefit application.

We confirmed the son received the SNAP benefits to which he was entitled, with both DES and the complainant. The mother thanked us for our assistance in helping to ensure DES addressed their case and helped resolve the technical issue so they could continue to receive their SNAP benefits. We encouraged her to contact us back if necessary and later closed out the case.

2103755. Arizona Historical Society

An officer with a chapter of the Arizona Historical Society (Society) asked if the Society's bylaws bound it to follow the chapter.

We looked at the bylaws and the statutes and explained we did not think chapter bylaws could trump the statute because the Society was allowed to disband the chapters by the law. We read the minutes from the meetings in question. We saw the rationale made by the Society and by the Auditor General auditors on this subject. We informed the man and suggested he consult with the Attorney General

Office and with the Arizona Department of Administration, General Accounting Office (GAO) if he disagreed with the Society and Auditor General recommendations. We also told him that because these are factual determinations of a legal and contractual nature that need to be made, the issue is more for the courts if his group does not agree with what the Society does or the advice of the Attorney General and GAO Offices. The man agreed to contact the AG and GAO for further guidance.

Our investigation of a complaint shed light on a related matter that was not the subject of the complaint as exemplified by:

2005047. Department of Agriculture

A resident contacted our office concerned that some horses were being mistreated because they were left in the heat without shelter. He claimed an inspector from the Arizona Department of Agriculture was refusing to examine the matter. The resident was concerned that the inspector was disregarding the submission and improperly dismissing the case. Our office reached out to both the Department of Agriculture and the resident to help ensure we had all of the correspondence that had gone between both parties regarding this case.

The Department of Agriculture initially claimed that they had the right to disregard the case because the definition of "cruel neglect" was not met and because they defined shelter as being "cover from the cold and wet environment." Our office investigated both of the claims the Department made, as well as the Department's obligation (if any) and authority to investigate the matter.

The Department claimed that "cruel neglect," or to "fail to provide an animal with necessary food, water or shelter," was not met if any one of those three conditions were provided. Our office pointed out that "cruel neglect," as mentioned in statute (Title §13-2910(H)(3)), seems to suggest that "cruel neglect" would apply if any one of those three conditions applied. In other words, an individual would still be guilty of "cruel neglect" in depriving a horse of food, even if that individual had provided them with plenty of drinkable water. The agency agreed that our interpretation seemed correct.

The Department claimed that "shelter" is not defined in statute and that the State Veterinarian's definition is what they go by. Our office agreed that relying on the State Veterinarian's Office for guidance on the matter in the absence of it being defined in statute seemed reasonable. In speaking to the State Veterinarian, we learned that they do NOT provide a definition to the Department of Agriculture and do not believe one is needed. Instead, the State Veterinarian relayed that the relevant focus should be on the 'living conditions when it comes to horses, such as whether or not things are hygienic and the manure is cleaned around the animals.

Our office recommended to the Department of Agriculture that they ensure their employees are all on the same page for this type of complaint in the future. We recommended they recognize the definition of cruel neglect as being the absence of any one of the three elements (food, water, shelter). In cases involving horses, we recommend they listen to the State Veterinarian's advice regarding 'living conditions' being the operative phrase. Finally, we encouraged the Department to review the inspector's conduct, as he had misleadingly suggested that 'shelter' was defined by the

Department of Agriculture in a particular way and that they could dismiss a complaint about that reason. The agency accepted our recommendations and spoke to the inspector.

Our office did not find evidence of wrongdoing or acting contrary to law in this case, as the Department has broad statutory authority to investigate these conditions and they are not required to take any particular action. We pointed out our findings to both the Department and the complainant and provided coaching information for the complainant to proceed on the issue in petitioning a justice of the peace or city magistrate if they wished to pursue it further.

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

2004614. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
A Department of Economic Security (DES) Unemployment Insurance (UI) applicant, said that she had been told that DES erred and paid her Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits by mistake. She qualified for regular DES UI benefits. She had not been able to get direction from DES UI even though she made multiple attempts to correct the error and return the extra funds. She had written up a very clear document about the issue. All she wanted was to reverse the funds back to DES UI. The DES UI accounting error was delaying the agency from distributing any of her regular unemployment benefits.

We got with DES managers and asked them to review the explanation material the applicant had submitted. We asked the agency to contact the complainant to clear up the problem.

DES reviewed and informed the woman applicant that she could not use her DES UI card, but must repay the DES the PUA money she had received in error. They said she could cash the checks they sent her because those checks were for regular unemployment insurance. They fixed her record with DES UI and informed the applicant how to return the overpayment on the other account.

2004639. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
A Department of Economic Security (DES) Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant said that she had been laid off from her customer service job due to the pandemic. She had qualified and had been receiving DES UI funds until she had to leave Arizona to take care of her daughter who was very ill with a major health issue in another state. Shortly after she moved, DES notified her that her file had been flagged as a possible fraudulent filing. The woman contacted DES multiple times to provide information that would clear her account out of the suspect accounts, but none of her attempts were successful. She claimed she spent hours trying to get through the jammed phone lines. Either she would not get through, or she would reach people who could not take her information to clear up the matter, or she would send emails and get no response.

We contacted the DES Ombudsman Office. They told us that Arizona DES was swamped, but was distributing billions in UI funds. A huge number of fraudulent UI claims hit most of the states in the USA. A large number of people reported that they received UI cards but these individuals had never applied for UI benefits. Tipsters suggested that many of the frauds were from those who were out of

state or who used electronic online banks.

The Department of Economic Security consulted with their Inspector General Office, the Attorney General's Office, and other financial and technical security experts. Based on the feedback, Arizona DES then "paused" many accounts to perform secondary screening on accounts that had a greater likelihood of trouble. They (DES) knew this negatively affected many innocent applicants and were working to resolve the problem so they may lift the "pause" on the cases as they are cleared. Her file was in this group, likely because she had moved out of Arizona.

We asked the Ombudsman Office to make sure the woman's file was in the proper line for attention.

A few days later, we checked with the mother and she cried to us that she was down to her last few dollars and was desperate. We passed along ideas to the woman about how to get other assistance in the interim and brainstormed with her typical places that were hiring.

We informed the DES Ombudsman Office and asked them to do what they could to get the situation handled soon. Later that day, DES staff were able to contact the mother and confirm her identity, and do other things to ensure that her claim was legit. The DES workers sent word to the bank that issues the debit cards and told us the bank must issue them a file of returned amounts so that DES may reissue the money to the claimant.

We confirmed the mother got this information. She thanked us.

2005671. Department of Revenue

A taxpayer was upset because the Arizona Department of Revenue (DOR) had not sent his refund check after a 10-week wait. The complainant expressed frustration in having to go through the hassle to get the refund, and claimed that they did not know whom to contact within DOR without "getting the runaround."

We reached out to our DOR contacts to inquire about the complainant's concern and the status of her expected tax refund. Our contacts ensured us that it would be addressed immediately and that it may have just been held up due to a clerical error.

We monitored the issue and ensured that there was no further delay. We learned shortly after that she had been sent her proper refund. The complainant thanked us for intervening and getting the matter resolved so promptly.

2005832. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation

A citizen contacted our office about an Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) Unemployment Insurance concern. We provided the person with the relevant resource information and contact information for the DES ombudsman office to start the official complaint. The complainant agreed and worked with the DES ombudsman office but was unable to get the matter resolved.

We then began direct assistance. We contacted DES and asked that they have staff engage to repair the case problems. For the next two months, we constantly reached out in conjunction with the complainant to try to get attention focused on the complainant's case and ensure it was cleared so that the benefits could be released. Finally, DES was able to finish clearing all of the pending issues.

We noted that DES needs to reach out to complainants within a more reasonable period.

The complainant thanked us for helping ensure they received their benefits. We later closed the case.

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

2004383. Department of Transportation - Motor Vehicle Division

A representative from a car dealership complained their company had completed emissions successfully and paid for car registration, but the Arizona Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division (MVD), never returned the completed registration to them. The representative said he had attempted to resolve the matter with MVD staff but had been unsuccessful.

We contacted MVD and reviewed the matter. MVD agreed they had not processed the registration properly. The agency fixed the issues and issued the registration to the dealership

The dealership representative expressed his appreciation.

2004609. Corporation Commission

A man was upset with the Arizona Corporation Commission, Corporations Division (Commission) because he thought the Commission failed to give him a correct principal address of a business.

We looked into the Commission's corporate records. The Commission is the brief listing reference repository for the public regarding corporations and limited liability companies. The Commission does not regulate businesses so much as it serves to post lists of approved business entities and the means for the public to contact the entity in person or writing.

Statutory agents for legal business entities have limited but important duties listed in the law. The statutory agent for an entity is legally required by A.R.S. §10-1508 to inform the Commission and the company it serves of any change to its address. In this case, the agent appears to have erred by not informing the Commission and the corporation that its address had changed. This caused the Commission and the company to continue to show the old address because the agent failed to give them the new information. In such a circumstance, the fault would lie with the statutory agent unless the agent had sent an address change to both the Commission and to the company. In turn, each of those entities would have to fail to update the address in the official record.

In this situation, the corporation sent its 2019 corporate annual report. In that report, the corporation put down the address for both its known place of business and its statutory agent. The Commission staff gave the complainant man the statutory address that showed up on the paperwork of the foreign corporation's 2019 annual report. That annual report is the corporation's

representation of its most current information. The Commission is required by law to point to it. Thus, the fault was with the company and/or the statutory agent.

If a statutory agent is not at the statutory (officially listed) address of record, the person who wishes to file suit is supposed to notify the Commission. In turn, the Commission is then required to mail to the main address of the subject corporation to both inform them and to test the address. That main address in law is called "the known place of business."

As previously noted, this company listed its known place of business at the same address as its statutory agent address. This is a frequent, although unwise, practice. It is unwise because two different addresses are unlikely to both be wrong. It is best to maintain two distinct addresses. The company also listed its principal address in its home domicile state. Principal addresses are important for foreign (corporation not based in Arizona, but listed in another state) corporations. In practice, the Commission will send test mailers to both the known place of business and to a principal of the entity (AKA, a corporate officer).

The complainant served the Commission on January 23, 2020. The Commission's website information for the company shows the Commission acted promptly. On January 24, 2020, the Commission directed the service to the company principal address listed on the company's 2019 annual report in Illinois. By law, the Commission was required to send such a document if the statutory agent address was shown to be faulty. The law is a bit nebulous. It says the Commission should mail to the known place of business, but in another statute, it says it *may* mail to the principal address.

With this situation, it appears the company must have received the record at the principals' address. Otherwise, the mail should have come back undeliverable to the Commission and been filed as such. It appears the mail was not returned because the Commission records do not show any "undeliverable mail" entry. When the Commission receives undeliverable mail, it scans the envelope upon receipt into the record to show the U.S. Post Office (USPO) mail sticker showing "undeliverable" to warn the public who might examine the record. The Commission pays the USPO to return undeliverable mail to them as the envelopes say "Return Service Required." Once the Commission receives such undeliverable mail, it also usually puts the company on a list for them to administratively dissolve at the next running of the Commission's dissolution program. Usually, the Commission performs dissolutions every six months or so. In this situation, the mail did not come back "undeliverable" from the main address, so the Commission would not automatically put it on the dissolution list.

We found that the Commission advised the principals at the Illinois address about the complaint. We also found that the complainant could serve the company directly to ensure there is no question of service. Alternatively, we found that the complainant could serve the statutory agent at their proper address in Phoenix, Arizona, now that they knew that address.

We spoke to the Director of Corporations. Originally, she thought the Commission erred and her people had told the complainant that. After reviewing with us, she realized the Corporation's division

did not err. She explained this to the complainant.

2005163. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
A resident contacted our office regarding her Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits not being received and having trouble getting in contact with anyone that could help them over at the Department of Economic Security (DES). The resident claimed they were stuck in this situation without them being able to receive benefits, and had submitted everything that DES had asked of them and did not know what the delay was.

We helped ensure their claim seemed to be submitted correctly and answered the complainant's questions. We followed up with our contacts over at the DES ombudsman office over the next month attempting to get attention and assistance to their case. DES reached out to inform us the complainant was assisted. The complainant thanked us for helping to facilitate a resolution and helping them receive their benefits.

2005365. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
An applicant for Department of Economic Security (DES), Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits contacted us because her benefits appeared to have been paid out to someone else. She had been trying to get her case resolved for months but had been unsuccessful in getting through to DES UI.

We coached her about numerous things she could do to help DES UI correct her situation faster. We also contacted DES and inquired about the woman's claim.

DES resolved the issues about her PUA claim in her favor, and promptly issued her the UI benefits she had earned. The applicant was very thankful.

2005646. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
A woman was having a problem with her Department of Economic Security (DES), Unemployment Insurance (UI) application, and was unable to get DES UI staff to clear her claim for payment. She had submitted all documents that DES UI had required, but DES still would not release her benefits. To add to her frustration, DES had actually said in a letter that she was entitled to higher UI payments, yet the benefits were not released.

We reached out to our contacts at DES UI, who confirmed the woman was qualified and had provided all required documentation. They cleared her file for payment and issued the money the next day.

2101264. Corporation Commission
A couple had submitted documents to the Arizona Corporation Commission (Commission) and alleged the Commission gave an insufficient reason as to why they rejected their documents.

We reviewed the case documents and explained that the Commission was correct. We explained what the Commission meant in its response, and advised how to fix the documents for re-submittal.

2103039. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
A claimant asked for help with his Department of Economic Security (DES), Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim because the agency was not fixing the matter and not releasing his benefits.

We sent their claim to our contacts at DES and requested they review the claim because it appeared all was in order. DES took a closer look and agreed. DES then processed the claim and paid the man.

2103719. Department of Revenue
A manager for a Flood Control District said that the Department of Revenue (DOR) was unresponsive for six months regarding his repeated attempts to submit payments. The manager explained that the district was mandated to pay state withholding tax electronically. The manager stated that despite filling out the application repeatedly, he could not complete the payment because the file became marked "suspended". His calls to the DOR customer care failed to clear up the problems. Frustrated, he asked for our intervention.

We reviewed the case and reached out to our contacts at DOR requesting the problems with the account be addressed.

DOR reviewed the case and contacted the manager, and was able to successfully guide him so that he was able to complete the current payment, and pay future payments.

We confirmed with the manager that his issue had been resolved. He was grateful for our assistance.

Our intervention identified a field practice that was not in accordance with the agency's stated procedures and statutes, as exemplified by:

2005289. Department of Economic Security - Employment and Rehabilitation
An applicant for Department of Economic Security (DES), Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits said that DES UI was not processing her claim timely.

We contacted her and gave her suggestions about how to troubleshoot with DES UI staff. We also contacted DES managers on her behalf. The DES staff looked into it and decided the applicant had completed the process correctly and the funds should have been released. The agency notified the applicant that they would quickly fund her account and they did so.

2006089. Department of Transportation – Motor Vehicle Division
A motorist contacted our office with frustrations about the Arizona Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division (MVD). The motorist had followed instructions and paid for his registration, but MVD had failed to send him his vehicle tags. Furthermore, when the motorist tried to call the agency, he did not receive the necessary assistance to fix the problem.

We gathered information and then reviewed the case with MVD. We provided MVD with the relevant contact information so the agency could properly send the complainant his tags.

The MVD ombudsman office explained that they had verified the complainant's information and sent the tags over to him.

The motorist contacted us again to thank us for being responsive. He appreciated us helping to ensure that he received his tags. The individual also appreciated the MVD ombudsman's office for helping to expedite a resolution. He said he was frustrated by the lack of assistance from people at the general number. We encouraged the individual to contact us back if they had any other issues and later closed the case.

2005907. Department of Transportation - Motor Vehicle Division

A motorist complained he received conflicting responses from the Arizona Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) relating to the status of his vehicle registration tabs. He said MVD staff told him that due to mailing problems during the COVID outbreak, it would take several weeks. The MVD asked for his patience and said he would get the tags in time. After waiting several weeks and still not receiving his car registration, the motorist checked again with MVD. MVD staff then revealed that they had mailed his tags shortly after his first inquiry. MVD told the motorist that since weeks had passed, he would now need to pay an extra fee.

The motorist paid the fee to obtain replacement tabs, but he asked our office to look into his complaint about the situation.

We did so and then reviewed the matter with MVD. We noted that the motorist had followed MVD directions about the problem, yet seemingly was being punished for following the direction to wait patiently. The initial and subsequent delays had not been the motorist's fault. MVD had not informed the man that they were promptly mailing the tags but had asked him to diminish his expectations and wait weeks. Therefore, the man could not have alerted MVD that the tags continued to be missing until the time he did alert them. Further, the tags never arrived. MVD managers agreed and processed a refund of the fee for the motorist.

Our intervention identified a trend as exemplified by:

2004385. Public Safety Personnel Retirement System

A widow said that the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS) correctional employee section (CORP) initially gave her a certificate saying that her ex-husband was classified as a COVID19 line of duty death in April. This stipulation entitled her to a greater pension. However, later in the year, a committee of the agency decided that the officer's death was not "COVID certified." The widow objected.

We investigated. We looked at the PSPRS retirement system information, the CORP Board minutes, and various laws. We reviewed specifically Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) § 38-847. "Local boards" and A.R.S. § 38-846. Death benefits. These laws convey that the most relevant section of A.R.S. §38-847 is in section D which says that a local board shall have such powers as may be necessary, "To decide all questions of eligibility for membership, service credits and benefits and determine the

amount, manner and time of payment of any benefits under the system."

Additionally, A.R.S. §38-846 (D) says the following in part,
"For the purposes of this subsection, "killed in the line of duty" means the decedent's death was the direct and proximate result of the performance of the decedent's public safety duties and does not include suicide."

The decision is up to the board due to the first statute and because the state and the federal government had not clarified line of duty death clauses in light of COVID. COVID may be a cause of death or just present when other comorbidities cause the death.

We gave the lady further sources including the Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance, who was pushing for clarification, and the Congressional Research Service. We also told her about the Federal board and informed her that she has appeal rights there too.

2004972. Department of Transportation - Motor Vehicle Division
A driver said that the Arizona Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) had not sent him his car registration documents.

We informed the driver that MVD was aware of the problem, as MVD had issued a news release and created a method to reprint registration documents and request new stickers. We instructed the motorist on how to navigate the workaround MVD setup. We told him to come back to us if that was not sufficient to solve the problem.

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 often seek help from our office when believe DCS has treated them unfairly. Other sources of complaints include foster parents, adoptive parents, community service providers, and members of the Arizona 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 18.41% of our total caseload in FY2021.

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 the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB), or court hearing dates. Case managers, supervisors, or upper DCS management may provide clarity as to events, laws, or policies and procedures. We facilitate clear communication between families, our office, and the various points of contact within DCS.

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, and/or meet with DCS staff. We review case correspondence, therapeutic reports, and the DCS CHILD's 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.

Most often with DCS cases, we serve as an information guide to the public. We go to great lengths to equip parents, other family members, fosters, service providers, mandatory reporters, and even the older kids in the system about how they can better inform themselves and improve the outcomes for their particular child safety situation. We developed two resource booklets with the Supreme Court Improvement Committee that our staff distributes frequently in DCS cases.[1] We recommend these booklets for legislative staff as we think you will find them to be great resources. One booklet is a collection of reference and explanatory materials for those who find themselves involved with DCS or in a dependency case. The second booklet is a resource compendium of community services that might be helpful to people in a variety of circumstances.

OMBUDSMAN DCS CASE LOG FY 2021 KEY CATEGORIES

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

[1] See page 3 for links to the booklets.

DCS Complainant Information Chart –July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021	
DCS Complaint Source Relationship	
Parent/Guardian	1355
Kin/Significant Contact	313
Service Provider	2
Child	8
Foster	78
Attorney	16
Agency Worker	0
Other	23
Type of Complaint	
Removal Issues	201
Service Issues	58
Visitation Issues	103
Communication Issues	412
Record Issues	105
Placement Problems	207
Investigation Issues	286
Inadequate efforts towards case plan goal	180
False Allegations	164
DCS Process Questions	638
Adoption	12
Caseworker	642
Payment Issue	7
Judicial Issues	45
Attorney Issues	17
Criminal Investigation Issues	5
Special Task	2
Other	172
Unknown/NA	66

The Legislature instructs us in our budget note to emphasize DCS cases. During the FY2021 period, 18.40% of our total cases were about DCS. The prior fiscal year DCS case was 28.79% of our caseload. This might appear as a 10% or so drop in DCS cases. However, the drop was only 159 cases in number, as DCS cases numbered 1,796 cases. The shift in percent of our cases was mostly attributable to the huge uptick in DES cases due to COVID, and resulting unemployment. DES cases typically number in the low three digits or less. FY2021 was the first year in which the number of DES cases surpassed DCS cases.

Below are some examples where our intervention helped resolve concerns with DCS.

Our intervention identified a field practice that was not in accordance with the agency's stated policy/procedure, statutes, or case law

2101709. Department of Child Safety

A foster parent complained that the Department of Child Safety (DCS) was not living up to its financial obligations. She explained that DCS is financially responsible for the daycare expense for her foster child and the agency is supposed to remit payment for that purpose, but the agency is failing to pay the bills in a reasonable and prompt fashion.

We checked with DCS and they admitted the parent had a point and was due monies. DCS relayed they were having issues receiving the childcare subsidy that funds them as well. We asked the DCS Ombudsman to look into the concerns. DCS researched the situation then let us know they had found an error in the system. DCS said they fixed the problem and processed the outstanding bills. They notified the foster parent that her payments would arrive shortly.

2107750. Department of Child Safety

A resident contacted our office about the difficulty he said he was having in obtaining records from the Department of Child Safety (DCS). From what he sent us, he had made his request more than two months earlier.

He said he followed up with DCS about the request. He shared a DCS response in which DCS said, "The current circumstances has delayed our production with meeting due dates. We are doing our very best to catch up with requests."

We reached out to the DCS Ombudsman office about the matter. The DCS Ombudsman office said, "DCS recently changed the disclosure process for dependencies. CRCU is now handling disclosures for all court cases in addition to the normal record request processes, so waits have been longer than normal while they get the hang of the new workload." The DCS Ombudsman's office said it expedited the request and would have the records out to the resident by the end of the next week. DCS said it informed the resident.

We updated the resident and told him to let us know if he did not receive the records. He thanked us and did not follow up.

Our intervention resolved a grievance against the Department that had not been corrected yet by internal workers from DCS as exemplified by:

2008790. Department of Child Safety
A resident contacted our office regarding the Department of Child Safety (DCS). He said DCS had investigated him three times. He said, "I am trying to get a hold of the full unredacted DCS reports so that I can include this in a criminal complaint of false reporting. I am also trying to use these reports for an upcoming child custody case."

It seemed like he had requested the records once or twice within the last month or so. It was unclear why he had come to us. We inferred it was because he thought the agency was taking too long to provide him with the records.

We told the resident he must first bring his complaint to DCS and referred him to the DCS Ombudsman office. We also told him he would likely not be entitled to completely unredacted information pursuant to statutory restrictions. We provided him with the relevant administrative code rules concerning DCS records requests and told him he could follow up with us if things were not resolved by the DCS Ombudsman's office.

Our intervention resulted in better service to citizens as exemplified by:

2005461. Department of Child Safety
A grandmother contacted our office regarding the Department of Child Safety (DCS), expressing concern about the placement of her granddaughter. She claimed to be unaware of the DCS process, expressed frustration at not knowing how to navigate the situation, and being unable to afford an attorney. We spoke with the grandmother about her concerns, explained the DCS process to her, and answered questions regarding both visitation and placement. We explained our office's role, how we could help, provided her with DCS ombudsman contact information, and encouraged her to contact us back if necessary. She stated she would talk with the father and then update us if she had some new information.

2009056. Department of Child Safety
A mother contacted our office with concerns regarding her Department of Child Safety (DCS) visitation and case plan. We discussed the case with her and learned that the mother had not had the court-ordered visits and thought DCS was improperly withholding them. We reached out to the DCS Ombudsman for further clarification. Upon further investigation, we learned that the visits had been suspended because the mother had COVID, and they had been unable to reschedule because the mother had been unresponsive to the DCS attempts to reach out.

DCS acknowledged that visits had been missed and that they would ensure there was a make-up visitation. The mother thanked us for looking into the matter and we later closed the case.

2101565. Department of Child Safety

A mother requested help obtaining information from the Department of Child Safety (DCS). She claimed a person had filed false allegations against her with DCS. We provided information about the process that DCS uses concerning record requests. We told her she must file record requests directly with the agency. We noted that the DCS Ombudsman could also troubleshoot for her regarding records or other concerns.

The mother later contacted us to let us know she had requested her records from DCS. She noted that when she asked for her records, she received an auto-response from the agency that stated she was to re-submit the same request after 3-4 weeks.

We asked the DCS Ombudsman to explain. DCS informed us that they were not able to process records requests due to a computer system change. However, they professed that the agency would work as quickly as possible to provide the records without any further action from the mother. DCS said the woman would not need to submit her request again. The mother was apparently satisfied as she did not return for more assistance.

Our intervention resolved a case involving more than one agency or more than one level of government as exemplified by:

2004353. Department of Child Safety

A grandmother contacted our office regarding a communication concern with the Department of Child Safety (DCS). We answered her questions about our process, the DCS process, and discussed how they could become more involved in the DCS case. We suggested she file a motion to intervene with the courts and explained the process of how she could approach doing that. After walking her through the court process and answering her questions we provided her with DCS contact information and encouraged her to contact us back if necessary. We did not hear back and later closed out the case.

2009046. Department of Child Safety

A grandmother contacted our office because she could not obtain a birth certificate from the Department of Child Safety (DCS) for her grandchild who was placed in her care when the child was two days old. She said DCS assured her it would provide her with a birth certificate for the child; however, the child was four months old and DCS had still yet to provide her with the birth certificate.

We contacted the DCS Ombudsman office about the matter. DCS said it had worked with the grandmother on the issue. DCS said the agency “sent packets to [the Department of Health Services] multiple times but they were not satisfied with the documentation we provided to

prove the child's birth in AZ." DCS also said the agency "provided [the grandmother] the DHS Ombudsman contact info to see if possibly her pressuring them from that side might help." The DCS Ombudsman office said it would check with the Department of Health Services about the status of the birth certificate.
Five days later, DCS followed up and said, "[T]he caseworker says she recently resubmitted the packet to DHS and hope that the current documentation will be sufficient and the certificate will be issued and mailed out."

OMBUDSMAN INTERVENTION IN PUBLIC ACCESS CASES

Outreach and Education

Educational Materials
We provided a couple hundred of our office's booklets on the Public Records Law and the Open Meeting Law booklets directly to elected officials, non-elected public officials, public employees, advocacy groups, and members of the public. We also provide 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 2021 fiscal year, we conducted sixteen training sessions, both in-person and through remote means, for public entities in locations throughout the State. For instance, we conducted trainings for public bodies in Phoenix, Payson, Tempe, Camp Verde, Pinal County, Pima County, Cochise County, Bullhead City, and the Navajo Nation. We also conducted trainings for municipal clerks, county supervisors, and irrigation districts throughout the state.

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

Lastly, we continue to provide recordings of 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

OPTIMIZING OUR STATE GOVERNMENT

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 addressed public attendance at open meetings during a pandemic, open meeting notice postings during a pandemic, and various court decisions pertaining to the public records law and the open meeting law. We also provided up-to-date summaries and analyses of pending Arizona public access legislation.

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

Inquiries and Investigations

In the fiscal year 2021, our office handled 408 cases regarding matters related to public access. Of those calls, 205 were public record law inquiries, 171 were open meeting law inquiries, and 32 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	Unknown
Number of inquiries	259	10	135	4

Table 2

	State Agencies	County Agencies	City or town agencies	School Districts	Other Local Jurisdictions
Number of inquiries	186	36	94	32	60

Public Access Case Examples

2005008. Paradise Valley School District.

A Paradise Valley Unified School District employee contacted our office to talk about a public records matter. She said, "I need some clarification on two public records requests we have received to see if it falls within parameters of information we can provide via a public records request."

First, she indicated a request for "directory listing for employees, parents, and guardians, and students 18 years old that will be used for voter registration and getting out the vote efforts" including information like "Name, Title, Department, Email, Phone number, Home Address, Date of birth, Gender and race."

Second, she indicated a request for "Directory listing for employee data - names, positions, the school they work at (if possible), and district email addresses of all employees of your district that work on a campus."

We researched and analyzed the relevant federal education law. We then sent the employee a lengthy email addressing the requests. We cautioned her that we are not federal education law experts and suggested her agency consult legal counsel if it wanted a more certain answer than we could provide.

We explained that the relevant federal law seems to allow for schools to disclose "directory information" about students, provided that parents have not opted out. "Directory information" seemed to include the requested information. We explained, therefore, that it seemed the agency could disclose the requested student information for students whose parents had not opted out without running afoul of federal law. We further explained that the parent and employee information was likely not covered by the same federal law; therefore, under the Arizona public records law, it was presumed to be subject to disclosure. We also explained that the agency could likely make strong privacy arguments for withholding at least some of the information, such as birth dates and personal contact information. We cited and quoted the relevant federal and state law.

We told the employee that the analysis for the second request likely mirrored the analysis for the first request. She thanked us.

2005291. Department of Public Safety.

A journalist contacted our office regarding the difficulty she was having in obtaining public records from the Department of Public Safety (DPS).

She said the agency would only accept payment of the copy fees in the form of a business check, cashier's check, or money order mailed to the agency. She said the agency would not accept a personal check. She said this was unduly burdensome to her because such restrictions would require her to enter public places during a pandemic. Additionally, she did

not understand why the records could not be emailed to her at no cost in light of the fact the agency already had them in electronic format.

She provided us with two invoices from DPS that supported what she said. Additionally, the invoices noted that DPS's public desk was closed due to public health concerns. As a result, the agency was no longer accepting credit or debit card payments. One of the invoices also quoted the journalist a cost of $9 for records to be emailed to her.

We relayed the complaint to DPS. We asked DPS to explain the basis for restricting payment methods to the three outlined by DPS. We also asked DPS on what basis it planned to charge the journalist $9 to receive records via email.

DPS explained it would soon have operational an online records portal allowing for remote, electronic payments. DPS also provided its fee schedule for records. DPS explained that $9 was the minimum charge and that it was based on the agency personnel and resources devoted to fulfilling records requests. Because the public records law is fairly vague on copy fees, we could not conclude this was unreasonable or unlawful.

We relayed to the journalist what DPS said and relayed our conclusions to her. We explained she would have to challenge the fee in court if she wanted to press it further. She then said she re-submitted her request through the new online portal. She asked us if her request could be processed quickly because it had been pending for months. We asked DPS, and DPS agreed to push her to the front of the line. We relayed this to the journalist and she was very thankful.

2005601. State Board of Nursing.

A former nurse contacted our office with several issues regarding the Board of Nursing.

She said the Board revoked her license in May of 2016 for five years; however, she did not learn this until February of 2017. She said the Board claims it made five attempts to contact her regarding investigating her but was unable to reach her. She disputes both that the Board made good faith attempts and that the Board was unable to reach her.

She also said the punishment was not appropriate and that the claims made against her were untrue.

Additionally, the former nurse said the agency would not provide her with her "public record."

She sought reinstatement of her license.

We reached out to the Board about the allegations. The Board's attorney reviewed the matter and followed up with us. She indicated that she found issues with the agency's handling of the matter that might have affected the outcome. She suggested that the agency should have been able to contact the former nurse with the information it had available. She said the

agency would likely reopen the matter. She asked us to have the former nurse reach out directly to her.

We contacted the former nurse. We summarized what the Board's attorney had told us. We suggested she contact the attorney.

The former nurse followed up with us. She said she spoke to the Board's attorney. She said the Board's attorney said she was drawing up an agreement for reinstatement of the former nurse's license. She was extraordinarily thankful.

The attorney then followed up with us and said the "Board did agree to rescind the revocation at its November regular meeting, [the former nurse] reapplied for her RN license, and she now has the RN license."

2007362. Pine Forest Charter School.

An employee for the Pine Forest Charter School contacted our office with an open meeting law question.

She wanted to know if an item on an agenda for an upcoming governing board meeting was specific enough to satisfy the open meeting law. The item indicated that the board would be interviewing and possibly acting on a candidate for an opening on the board. She was concerned that because the candidate's name was not included, the public would have no idea who the person was.

We explained that this might not be an issue as far as the open meeting law because the agenda item indicates what is happening, as is required by the open meeting law. We also said the public likely has access to the candidate's name via public records and prior public meetings.

She then went on to say that the candidate had been chosen by a committee, established by the board, which had not been following the open meeting law. We explained that the fact that this committee had not been complying with the open meeting law is a serious issue and may even invalidate a subsequent action by the governing board to choose the candidate. We suggested the school consult legal counsel and consider ratifying actions taken by the committee.

We agreed to memorialize our conversation in writing for her and did so. She thanked us.

2007629. Secretary of State Office.

A resident contacted our office about the difficulty she said she was having with the Secretary of State's office in obtaining minutes for a 9/4 meeting of the agency's Equipment Certification Advisory Committee.

She said she had phoned the Secretary's office and asked if the agency could post the minutes. She said an employee said the agency would not post the minutes online until they were formally approved. She said she asked if she could instead receive them via email. She said the employee said no and told her to mail in a completed request form to obtain the minutes.

We reached out to the agency. An agency employee said there must have been a misunderstanding and had tried to explain that the resident could request the minutes by emailing a particular agency email address. She employee also said the agency would provide the record via email.

We relayed what the employee said and suggested she email her request to the provided email address and to let us know if she faced further issues.

2107760. Northern Arizona Academy.

The Executive Director of a charter school contacted our office to discuss a variety of ways she thought the school's governing board had violated the open meeting law. We reviewed relevant school governing board meeting materials and discussed with her the issues and explained how and why we thought the board likely violated the open meeting law.

We suggested the school consult an attorney to get back on track. The Executive Director asked if she could share our analysis with the board. We told her she could do so.

2107836. Arizona State University.

An Arizona State University professor asked our office to present to his investigative reporting class about the open meeting and public records law. We agreed and presented to the class. He and the students thanked us.

2008560. Town of Payson.

A Payson resident contacted our office regarding a request for records he said he made to the Town of Payson (Town).

He requested thousands of pages of records from the Town that were to be delivered to him via flash drive. He said the Town quoted him about $250 for the records. He thought this was unreasonable because the records were being provided electronically.

The resident followed up with us. He said he went to the Town to pay the quoted $250 and obtain the flash drive of records despite thinking it unreasonable. He said that the Town then said the cost would be $4,768. He said he refused to pay.

We contacted the Town. The Town's attorney reached out to us. He said, "We have evaluated the matter and have determined that this was in error, and we are remedying the issue and

will correct the Town's fee schedule." We asked him how much the Town would be charging. The attorney said the Town would not be charging because it was providing the records electronically.

The resident thanked us.

2008609. Maricopa County Constable.

A resident contacted our office concerning the difficulty he was having in obtaining public records from a Maricopa County Constable's office. He said it had been about two months since he made his request.

The resident said he had received some of the records he requested from the Maricopa County Attorney's Office (MCAO); however, he had not received most of what he requested. He said he pressed an MCAO attorney (who had provided some of the records) about the outstanding records, but she said that she was not the correct party to be asking. He provided us with emails from the MCAO attorney supporting what he said. The resident also provided us with an email from the MCAO attorney in which she indicated that she is the attorney for the Maricopa County Constables.

We reached out to the Constable's office. The MCAO attorney reached out to us. She said some of the requested records do not exist; however, the agency was working on providing the rest.

Soon after, the agency emailed the records to the resident. The resident thanked us.

2008692. Industrial Commission.

A resident contacted our office regarding the difficulty he was having in obtaining claim records from the Industrial Commission.

Essentially, it sounded like the agency tried to give him the records electronically; however, he does not have a computer. He said the agency then said it would cost more to provide them in hard copy.

We contacted the agency. Our agency contact asked us to have the resident call him. We put the resident in touch with him. Our contact then said that the agency provided him with the claim records, and we received no further complaints or contact from the resident.

2008780. Department of Transportation – Motor Vehicle Division.

A former resident contacted our office regarding difficulty she said she was having in obtaining her Arizona driver's license number.

The former resident said she moved out of state. She said she had to surrender her Arizona license to obtain a license in her new state. She said she now needs her Arizona license number to obtain a copy of her driving record; however, she does not know her old Arizona Driver's License number. She said she tried to contact the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) multiple times by phone, but had been unsuccessful. She also said she recently emailed, wrote a letter to, and filled out an online form for ADOT.

We contacted the ADOT Motor Vehicle Division constituent services office and asked them to address the matter.

A few days later, ADOT confirmed it reached out to the former resident and provided her with her license number.

The former resident followed up with our office and said ADOT had reached out to her and assisted her. She said she was "so relieved" and was very thankful for our assistance.

2009169. Town of Eagar.

An Eager Police Department employee contacted our office to discuss whether polygraph examination records are public records or confidential. We explained that they are public records presumed to be subject to disclosure when in the custody of the police department. We cautioned, however, that there are some situations in which such records cannot be disclosed and/or may be withheld.

2009192. City of Phoenix.

A resident contacted our office about the Phoenix Zoning Adjustment Board.

The resident said the meeting was conducted by electronic means. He said he signed up to speak but was not called on to speak at the meeting. He thought this was a violation of the open meeting law.

We reviewed the language the entity used for its agenda. It included a web link to register to "observe the live meeting virtually". Clicking on the link did then give the impression that one could sign up to speak via the link. That being said, the agenda itself indicated that one must email a particular person if they wished to speak at the meeting.

We told the resident that we saw how this might mislead someone; however, it was unclear whether this would constitute a violation of the open meeting law, let alone one serious enough to render subsequent decisions made by the board null and void.

We raised the matter with the agency and suggested the agency amend the agenda language or the web link language to reduce the likelihood of confusion. The agency agreed to alter the link language so that it did not give the impression that one could sign up to speak by clicking the link.

2100687. Town of Fountain Hills.

A resident contacted our office about a public record request she said she made to Fountain Hills. She said the town did not provide her with "all information that was requested." The resident provided us with little more explanation; however, she supplied us with a very large stack of records.

The records seemed to consist mostly of emails provided to her from Fountain Hills. Additionally, it included emails between her and the town regarding her request. As best we could tell, her complaint boiled down to the following three issues:

1. The town did not provide her with some requested emails (and records referenced therein) in their complete form despite her asking for them in their original electronic format and following up with the town about what was missing. Instead, it had only provided email chains or conversations. Some of the headings were pared down or stripped out, which makes it difficult or impossible to know who sent the email to whom and when.

2. The town did not provide her with any text messages in response to her request for messages sent from the Mayor to a particular business owner (hereinafter, "the business owner"). She said she was aware of at least one text message that should have been included. She now suspects there may be more that were withheld from her.

3. The town did not provide her with the phone logs she requested.

We presented this summary of the issues to the resident and she seemed to confirm that we understood her correctly.

For the first issue, the emails the resident provided was an email she sent to town staff indicating the issues she had with what emails/attachments were and were allegedly not provided to her. Also in the emails was a response from a town staff member responding to each issue raised by the resident in what appeared to be a reasonable and satisfactory explanation. There was no evidence the resident ever contested any of the responses to the staff member or other town officials. Yet, the resident would go on to claim on multiple occasions to our office that the town did not respond to the concerns she voiced, despite the clear evidence to the contrary. We also spoke to the town's attorney about the issue. He said the town would gladly provide any emails, attachments, or information the resident believed were not provided. On several occasions, we explained this to the resident and asked her to provide a list of records she believed were missing or incomplete. She never did so.

As for the second issue, we asked the resident multiple times over several months for the text message she said she had access to that the town had not provided to her. She had made it seem like she had access to it but became cagey and noncommittal when we would ask her to provide it to us. Eventually, a third party who was assisting the resident provided three messages to us. The resident stopped engaging with our office. Instead, the third party would engage with us along the same lines that the resident had. The messages provided by the

third party lacked context, such as the phone numbers involved or, in some cases, when exactly they were sent. We also were able to obtain the messages from the business owner. She provided some additional context and explained that the messages were Facebook messages. Upon closer examination, we realized that one or perhaps two of the three messages were outside the date range requested by the resident. So, one, or perhaps two of the messages, would have been responsive to the request.

We reached out to the town's attorney about the issue. He explained that there were no relevant text messages. He acknowledged that at least some of the Facebook messages did seem to be responsive. He said the town's failure to produce them was accidental. He explained that the request did not specifically ask for social media messages, which was accurate. As a result, the person who fulfilled the request likely did not even consider that there might be Facebook messages responsive to the request. He said town staff would scour social media accounts to see if any other responsive records had been overlooked. Eventually, he said the town found no additional responsive messages.

The resident and a third party assisting her seem to think the one or two responsive messages that had not been provided constituted conclusive evidence that the town was intentionally hiding records from her. The content of the messages at issue appears relatively superficial and innocuous. There was no obvious motive for why the town would intentionally hide them from the resident. In the end, there was no evidence to suggest the town intentionally withheld the messages or that it was withholding more.

As for the third issue, there was no evidence that a phone log existed. The resident simply believed without reasonable evidence that there must be a log. We reached out to the town's attorney about the issues on two separate occasions. Both times, he said the town has no log of phone calls in and out of the town. He said he even reached back out to town staff to see whether there might be an automated system logging calls that town employees were not immediately aware of. He said there was not. In the end, there was no evidence that the town had and was withholding a log of phone calls.

On multiple occasions, we explained what we were finding to the resident and the third party assisting her. They asked to schedule a meeting with the Ombudsman and the staff member investigating the complaint. The resident and the third party canceled the meeting and did not reschedule or follow up about the matter.

2100684. City of Phoenix.

A City of Phoenix employee contacted our office about a public record request she made to the city. She said she had requested a variety of records concerning a third-party attorney hired by the city to handle a complaint she had submitted. She said she submitted the complaint on October 30, but the city had not yet provided records. She said the city had said it was currently in the hands of the legal department.

After she provided us with a copy of the request, we reached out to the city about the request. Later the same day, the employee said she received an email from the city's records coordinator saying she should have the records soon. The next day, the city explained the length of time for the request, "The investigation was pending at the time of her request. Releasing materials when an investigation is pending could compromise the integrity of the investigation. In addition, the majority of the items she requested needed to be reviewed to determine whether they were protected by the attorney-client privilege. The City provided timely updates to [the complainant] when she inquired about the status of her request." The city also said, "The City has completed its investigation and its review of the requested materials. The responsive items were given to the requestor today."

2108018. City of Cottonwood.

A cottonwood employee contacted our office about whether to withhold from public disclosure medical information about a criminal suspect contained in a report. She seemed to think it might be protected by federal health care law.

We suggested she consult the city's legal counsel as we are not federal health care experts; however, we suggested the information was likely not protected because the relevant federal law did not apply to the city in this type of situation. We provided her with some relevant resources on the law.

2108041. Office of the Attorney General.

An employee of the Attorney General's office contacted our office to discuss a complex issue concerning open meeting law postings by natural resource conservation districts. We discussed the matter with her, and she thanked us.

2102962. Town of Pima.

A resident contacted our office about the difficulty she said she was having in obtaining public records from the town of Pima. She said she requested police department policy records from the Town Manager on 9/29/2020.

The resident said that, after the Town Manager's initial response to her request, she had not heard back despite multiple follow-up attempts, nor had she received the records.

We reached out to Town Manager about the matter. He made it sound like he communicated to the resident and/or her mother that the resident could have copies of the records; however, it might be pricey because of the number of records. He said the resident or someone on her behalf could also come in, review the records, and pay for copies of only the records/page she wanted.

We relayed what the Town Manager said to the resident. She was satisfied.

2108076. Department of Revenue.

A resident contacted our office about the difficulty he said he was having in obtaining public records from the Department of Revenue (DOR). Specifically, he said he sought "certain electronic data files submitted to DOR from various county assessors per law and regulation" and "an up to date copy of the regulation or confirmation that the copy obtained from outside sources is current, a specific file layout, and processing notes concerning [his request]."

He said DOR told him he would be receiving a written denial. He said a DOR employee then sent him a letter recommending he go to the counties for the records/information, which he shared with us. It sounded like the agency was asserting that his request was unduly burdensome.

We spoke with the DOR employee and another DOR employee for an explanation of the matter. They seemed to better understand the issues now and said they would speak to the resident. The resident then followed up with us. He said, "Just now I completed a very constructive and mutually helpful call with two people from the Department of Revenue . . . ." He also said, "Therefore, please hold my complaint in a state of suspense at this time. No question that this movement was due to your skillful intervention."

2104342. Department of Public Safety

A resident contacted our office regarding a request for records he said he made to the Department of Public Safety (DPS). He said the agency had not provided the requested records in the 12 weeks since he made the request. He provided us with an email from a DPS employee in which she made it sound like the matter was stalled to the unresponsiveness of a particular DPS trooper.

We reached out to DPS about the matter. Our contact at DPS looked into the matter. Within a day, our contact said DPS collected the responsive video records. He said the agency would make it a priority and was going to review (and potentially redact) the records. He said the agency would provide them to the resident within eight days.

We updated the resident. He then followed up and said DPS had sent him an invoice for the video footage. He did not follow up with us.

2104548. Department of Public Safety.

An out-of-state trucker contacted our office regarding difficulty he said he was having to obtain a record. He said a trucker incident report from a third party indicated he had had an incident

in Arizona in 2017. He said he sought the accident report for the incident, but he had gotten nowhere with Arizona law enforcement at the state, county, and local level.

We offered to try tracking down the record for him. We asked him to provide us with the trucker incident report. He faxed us a copy of the record and provided us with various other information. We consulted a contact at the Department of Public Safety. After going back and forth with him several times and providing him with a variety of information, our contact was able to locate the underlying record. He said he reached out to the trucker and told him how the trucker could obtain the record. The trucker confirmed what our contact said and thanked us.

Our Cases – Statistics of Note

INVESTIGATIONS

We managed our investigations in FY2021 as noted in the following tables.

Table 3 – Investigations – July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021	
Discontinued[2]	58
Declined[3]	637
The complaint was withdrawn or resolved during the investigation[4]	16
Investigation Completed	140
Ongoing	64
TOTAL REQUESTS FOR INVESTIGATION	915

[2] "Discontinued" is marked when the complainant stops responding and the Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide Office is unable to proceed with inquiries.

3 "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. By law, we must decline an investigation if we find the complainant is coming to us prematurely. In those cases, we coach the complainant about how to initially proceed with the agency.

4 "Withdrawn or Resolved During Investigation" is marked when the complainant asks us to cease an investigation

Table 4 – Investigative Findings –July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021		
SUPPORTED/PARTIALLY SUPPORTED[5]		67
Requires further consideration by the agency	47	
Other action by the agency required	16	
Referred to the legislature for further action	0	
Action was arbitrary or capricious	0	
Action was abuse of discretion	1	
Administrative act requires modification/cancellation	1	
Action was not according to law	3	
Reasons for administrative act required	2	
Statute or Rule requires an amendment	1	
Insufficient or no grounds for an administrative act	1	
INDETERMINATE[6]		26
NOT SUPPORTED		47
TOTAL COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS		140

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, 2020, and June 30, 2021, our office handled 9,756 cases involving 249 agencies. This is 2,932 more cases than the prior fiscal year. Further, it is the most cases our office has handled in a single year in our twenty-three-year history.

The following table shows the distribution of our contacts with an agency. Cases involving Child Protective Services comprised 18.41% of our total for FY2021 with 1,796 total cases.

Also of note were two other agencies trending in the wrong direction. The Department of Economic Security (DES) Unemployment Insurance (UI) Division only had 55 cases in FY2019. Just four months of the COVID-19 Pandemic saw the case count increase to 933 DES UI cases

5 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.

6 "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.

for FY2020. In FY2021, we had 3,109 DES UI cases. We looked deeper into the source of DES complaints and found the following.

DES Unemployment Insurance Complaints –July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020	
DES - Type of Complaint	
Phones are not answered or DES hangs up on me	1,227
DES staff are unable to clear problems and do not promptly elevate	419
Password problem	19
No one gets back to me in a reasonable time	1,065
I never got a card	9
I never got money put in the card account, yet I was approved	235
DES removed money from the card	20
DES froze my account over "an issue" but they do not communicate with me	356
I was told I need an adjudicator	131
I was told I do not qualify, but the reason is not true	138
Fraud concern about my claim	155
The person is sent a card or funds for no reason	15
Funds are incorrect	84
LWA account problem	9
PUA account is pending and unresolved	806
Regular UI is pending and unresolved	488
Other	96

A few other agencies we noted had above-average case contacts. ADOT's Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) has been trending the wrong way for a few years. FY2020 MVD complaints almost doubled from the prior year with 335 cases in FY2020, and 635 cases in FY2021. Effects of the Pandemic hit the agency rather significantly and a problematic computer system conversion seemed to contribute to the MVD difficulties. We also saw that the Department of Revenue had increased cases with 168 contacts.

CONTACTS BY AGENCY

Agency	Coaching	Assistance	Investigation	Total
Academy of Math and Science	1	0	0	1
Administrative Hearings, Office of	1	0	0	1
ADOA - Administration, Department of	27	1	2	30
Agriculture - Wt. and Measures	4	0	0	4
Agriculture, Department of	4	1	2	7

Agriculture, Pest Mgmt. Office	1	0	0	1
AHCCCS	69	19	9	97
Apache County Sheriff's Office	1	0	0	1
ASU -Arizona State University	2	1	2	5
Attorney General, Office of	13	0	3	16
Auditor General	1	2	0	3
AZ POST - Peace Officer Standards & Training Board	3	0	1	4
Ball Charter Schools	1	0	0	1
Barbers, Arizona Board of	9	1	0	10
Beaver Dam/Littlefield Fire District	1	0	0	1
Behavioral Health Examiners, State Board of	13	1	5	19
Bisbee	0	0	1	1
Buckeye	0	0	1	1
Camp Verde	0	1	0	1
Central Arizona Project	1	3	0	4
Chandler	0	0	2	2
Charter Schools, Arizona State Board of	9	4	0	13
Chiropractic Examiners, State Board of	2	1	0	3
Chloride Water Improvement District	1	0	0	1
Christopher-Kohl's Fire District	1	0	0	1
Clarkdale	5	2	0	7
Cochise County	0	1	0	1
Cochise County Attorney	1	2	0	3
Coconino County	0	0	1	1
Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District	0	1	0	1
Colorado River Union High School District	2	1	0	3
Commerce Authority of Arizona	5	0	0	5
Commission of Judicial Conduct	2	0	0	2
Corporation Commission	16	2	3	21
Corrections, Department of	79	4	3	86
Cosmetology, Board of	28	1	0	29
Cotton Research and Protection Council, Arizona	1	0	0	1
Cottonwood	1	0	0	1
Cottonwood Police Department	1	0	0	1
DCS - Community Advisory Committee	6	0	0	6
DCS - Department of Child Safety	1336	57	388	1781
DCS - Office of Licensing Certification Regulation	2	0	3	5
DCS - Other	3	0	1	4
Deaf and Blind, Arizona School for the	3	1	0	4
Deer Valley Unified School District	1	0	0	1
Dental Examiners, Board of	8	1	1	10

DES - Aging & Community Services	278	3	5	286
DES - Benefits and Medical Eligibility	562	41	31	634
DES - Child Support Service	54	35	5	94
DES - Developmental Disabilities	22	4	5	31
DES - Employment and Rehabilitation	2054	859	196	3109
DES - Other	25	4	4	33
DES- Adult Protective Services	44	1	3	48
Desert Marigold School	1	0	0	1
Developmental Disabilities Council	0	1	0	1
DPS - Department of Public Safety	13	7	4	24
Dysart School District	1	0	1	2
Eagar	1	0	0	1
Education, Board of	5	0	1	6
Education, Department of	32	1	0	33
Elfrida Elementary School District #12	1	0	0	1
Eloy Fire District	1	0	0	1
Emergency & Military Affairs, Department of	1	0	2	3
Environmental Quality, Department of	18	7	4	29
Financial Institutions Department	13	0	0	13
Financial Institutions, Appraisal Division	1	0	0	1
Fingerprinting, Board of	6	0	0	6
Flagstaff	2	0	0	2
Forestry & Fire Mgmt.(formerly Dept. FBLS)	5	0	0	5
Fountain Hills	0	0	1	1
Funeral Directors & Embalmers, State Board of	3	0	0	3
Game and Fish, Department of	31	10	2	43
Gaming Dept., Boxing Dept.	0	0	1	1
Gaming, Dept.	2	1	0	3
Ganado School District	0	1	0	1
Gila County	0	0	1	1
Gilbert	1	0	2	3
Globe	0	0	1	1
Golden Shores Sanitary District	0	1	0	1
Goodyear	1	1	3	5
Goodyear Police Department	0	0	1	1
Governor, Office of	9	0	6	15
Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family	1	0	0	1
Health Services, Department of	139	6	3	148
Health Services, Vital Records Office	6	1	1	8
Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District	0	1	0	1
Historical Society, Arizona	2	0	1	3
Homeland Security, Department of	1	0	0	1

Homeopathic Board of	1	0	0	1
Housing Dept. -Manufactured Housing Office	6	0	0	6
Housing, Department of	61	11	5	77
Industrial Commission	60	8	2	70
Insurance, Department of	68	2	3	73
Judicial Conduct, Commission on	2	0	0	2
Juvenile Corrections, Department of	1	2	2	5
Kingman	3	0	0	3
Lake Havasu City	1	0	0	1
Lake Mohave Ranchos Fire District	1	0	1	2
Land, Department of	3	0	2	5
Legislature	14	0	1	15
Liberty Elementary School District #25	4	0	0	4
Liquor Licenses and Control, Department of	10	2	4	16
Litchfield Elementary School District	0	0	1	1
Lottery	4	0	0	4
Mammoth	0	0	1	1
Marana Drainage and Water Improvement District	2	0	0	2
Maricopa	3	0	1	4
Maricopa County Attorney	0	0	3	3
Maricopa County Community Colleges	1	0	0	1
Maricopa County Department of Public Health	1	0	0	1
Maricopa County Human Services Workforce Dev.	1	0	0	1
Maricopa County Recorder	0	0	1	1
Maricopa Special Health Care District	0	0	1	1
Massage Therapy, State Board of	4	0	1	5
Mayer Fire District	3	1	0	4
Mayer Water District	3	2	0	5
Medical Board, Arizona	70	1	1	72
Mesa	1	0	2	3
Mesa Police Department	2	0	2	4
Mescal J-6 Fire District	1	0	1	2
Mine Inspector	1	0	0	1
Mohave County Airport Authority	1	0	0	1
Mohave County Sheriff's Office	0	0	1	1
Naco Sanitary District	1	0	1	2
Naturopathic Physicians Board of Medical Examiners	1	1	1	3
NAU - Northern Arizona University	1	0	1	2
Nineteen Tribal Nations Workforce Development Area	1	0	0	1
Northern Arizona Academy	3	0	0	3

Nursing Care Institution Administrators & Assisted Living Managers Examiners Board	4	0	0	4
Nursing, State Board of	8	2	6	16
Oatman Fire District	1	0	1	2
Occupational Therapy Examiners, Board of	1	0	0	1
Ombudsman	54	7	0	61
Optometry, State Board of	3	1	0	4
Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery, Board of	4	0	1	5
Other - Arizona in general	186	3	0	189
Other - Federal	140	0	5	145
Other - Government	298	4	28	330
Other - Private	344	10	11	365
Page	0	0	1	1
Paradise Valley	0	0	1	1
Paradise Valley School District	0	1	1	2
Parks, Department of	1	0	0	1
Payson	0	0	1	1
Peoria Police Department	0	1	0	1
Peoria Unified School District	1	0	1	2
Personnel Board	2	0	0	2
Pharmacy, Board	5	2	1	8
Phoenix	1	0	6	7
Phoenix Police Department	5	0	1	6
Pima Association of Governments	0	0	1	1
Pima Community College	0	1	0	1
Pima County Attorney's Office	2	0	0	2
Pima, Town of	0	0	1	1
Pinal	0	1	0	1
Pine Forest Charter School	0	2	0	2
Pioneers' Home	2	0	0	2
Podiatry Examiners, State Board of	1	0	1	2
Ponderosa Park Domestic Water Improvement District	1	0	0	1
Prescott	3	0	1	4
Prescott Unified School District	0	0	1	1
Prescott Valley	1	0	1	2
PRIVATE Post-Secondary Education Board	4	1	0	5
Psychologist Examiners, State Board of	7	1	0	8
PUBLIC Post-Secondary Education Commission	2	0	0	2
Public Safety Personnel Retirement System	1	1	0	2
Real Estate Dept. - HOAs	27	0	0	27

Real Estate, Department of	17	0	1	18
Redistricting Commission	2	0	0	2
Regents, Arizona Board of	2	0	0	2
Registrar of Contractors	30	6	6	42
Retirement System, Arizona State	17	5	2	24
Revenue, Department of	123	28	17	168
Rio Nuevo	0	0	1	1
San Jose Fire District	0	0	1	1
San Tan Irrigation District	1	0	0	1
Santa Cruz	0	0	1	1
Santa Cruz Provisional Community College District	0	1	0	1
School Facilities Board	1	1	1	3
Scottsdale Police Department	1	0	0	1
Scottsdale Unified School District	1	0	0	1
Sec. of State -Library, Archive & Records Dept.	1	0	0	1
Secretary of State, Office of	13	0	2	15
Sedona - Oak Creek Airport Authority	2	0	0	2
Sonoita Elgin Fire District	8	0	1	9
St Johns	1	0	1	2
Superior Court	1	0	0	1
Supreme Court	0	1	1	2
Surprise	1	0	2	3
Surprise Police Department	1	0	0	1
Technical Registration, Board of	2	0	4	6
Tempe	1	0	2	3
Tempe Police Department	1	0	0	1
Tonto Natural Resource Conservation District	0	1	0	1
Tourism, Office of	1	1	0	2
Transportation, Department of	101	10	1	112
Transportation-Motor Vehicle Division	471	130	34	635
Tri-City Regional Sanitary District	0	0	1	1
Tucson	1	0	4	5
Tucson Police Department	1	0	3	4
U of A - University of Arizona	0	0	1	1
unknown	6	0	0	6
unknown charter school	0	0	1	1
unknown city	9	0	1	10
Unknown Domestic Water Improvement District	1	0	0	1
unknown fire district	1	0	0	1
unknown local jurisdiction	0	1	0	1
unknown school district	2	0	0	2
Unknown state agency	189	1	2	192

Vail School District	0	0	1	1
Various	0	1	0	1
Vernon Elementary School District	0	0	1	1
Veterans Home	2	0	0	2
Veterans' Services, Department of	4	0	0	4
Veterinary Medical Examining Board	2	1	1	4
Water Protection Fund Commission	0	2	0	2
Water Resources, Department of	4	2	1	7
W. Pinal National Resource Conservation District	0	1	0	1
White Mountain Summer Homes Water Improvement Dist.	1	0	0	1
Yavapai County	1	0	0	1
Yavapai County Sheriff's Office	2	0	0	2
Yucca Fire District	2	1	0	3
Yuma County	2	0	0	2
Yuma County Airport Authority	0	0	1	1
Yuma County Attorney's Office	1	0	0	1
Yuma County, Workforce Development Board of	2	0	0	2
TOTAL NUMBER OF CONTACTS	**7483**	**1355**	**918**	**9756**

Agency Count: 226

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. Before 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 ADOA 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 has trained, been certified, and uses the DCS database "GUARDIAN." She is active in the U.S. Ombudsman Association, having served multiple years as a Board Director and 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 for seven years and was a member of the Supreme Court's Special Committees on Parent Representation and Guardian Ad Litem Standards. She has served on the Arizona Juvenile Court Improvement Committee since 2011. She has served as a judge for the Central Arizona Better Business Bureau (BBB) Business Ethics Award for the past ten years.

Danee Garone – Staff Attorney.

Danee is a staff attorney for the Ombudsman's office and specializes in open meetings and public records law matters. He frequently teaches public access courses. He is the author of the Ombudsman Office Quarterly Public Access Newsletter – *The Public Record*. He joined the Ombudsman's office in 2014. Before 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.

Keith Meyer – Senior Investigator/Writer Ombudsman.

Keith joined the Office of the Ombudsman in 2014. He has 21 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 the Maricopa County government, he worked at the County Attorney's Office coordinating restitution issues with citizen victims of crime. 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. Keith retired in FY2021

Frank Rutledge – Senior Investigator/Writer Ombudsman.

Frank joined the Ombudsman team in June 2016 after working for 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. He has trained, been certified, and uses the DCS database "GUARDIAN." Frank has resided in Arizona for over 36 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 passed away in the summer of 2021. May she rest in peace.

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 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 old DCS database "CHILDS" and the new one, "GUARDIAN." Jennifer is proficient in American Sign Language.

John Wicus – Investigator/Writer Ombudsman.

John joined the office as an intern in January of 2018 while completing his Masters 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 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. He has trained, been certified, and uses the DCS database "GUARDIAN."

Yvonne Rothblum – Assistant Intake Ombudsman.

Yvonne joined the Ombudsman team in November 2016. Yvonne has worked in both the public and private sectors. 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.

Alicia Nugent – Assistant Ombudsman.

Alicia began working at the Ombudsman's Office in January 2020 as an intern. After the internship ended in May of 2020, she stayed as an assistant intake ombudsman. She has received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from ASU in 2020. She is in a Masters program at ASU in Legal Studies.