



## Move the Ombudsman's Office Outside of CHFS

To Increase Transparency and  
Accountability within the Department  
for Community Based Services

The child welfare system, and specifically the process of substantiation of abuse and neglect, is complex, involves multiple departments, and can be subjective. When people feel the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) did not take appropriate steps or make the right decisions in child abuse cases, they may contact the Ombudsman's office to file a complaint. However, currently the Ombudsman's office that takes complaints for child abuse cases is housed within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), meaning that people are filing a complaint within the same Cabinet that made the decision in a case.

Several states locate their Ombudsman's office for the child welfare system in an independent location in order to increase transparency and accountability of the child welfare system; Kentucky should do the same. This would create an independent place for people to be able to contact and reduce potential conflicts of interest within DCBS and the Ombudsman's office.

As Kentucky continues to have high numbers of child abuse reports and investigations, moving the Ombudsman's office will help Kentucky better serve kids and families.

### **To increase transparency and better serve families, move the following Ombudsman functions to a place outside of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services:**

- Issuing reports about the number and types of complaints that DCBS receives
- Recommending corrective action or administrative hearings based on complaints
- Reviewing requests to appeal child abuse and/or neglect substantiations
- Investigating complaints about DCBS

### **Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Solution:**

Increase transparency within the Department for Community Based Services by moving functions of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services' Ombudsman related to appeals and cases to an office outside of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, such as the Governor's office or the Justice Cabinet.

