



# About the Office of the Child Advocate

Led by Director Maria Mossaides (“the Child Advocate”), the OCA is an independent executive branch state agency with oversight and ombudsperson responsibilities. The OCA’s mission is to ensure that children receive appropriate, timely, and quality state services, with a particular focus on ensuring that the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable and at-risk children can have the opportunity to thrive. Our work includes:

- Reviewing individual cases to evaluate the safety and wellbeing of children and identify concerns
- Overseeing the services delivered by child-serving state agencies
- Identifying gaps in state services and making recommendations for systemic changes in policies, programs, and practices
- Partnering with state agencies to improve service quality through the development and launch of pilot projects
- Offering training and technical assistance to child-serving agencies

The OCA is a resource for families who are receiving, or are eligible to receive, services from the Commonwealth. If you have a concern or question about state services a child or youth is receiving, the Office of the Child Advocate can help.



**We are here to help. Contact us any time!**

Complaint Line: (617)-979-8360

[childadvocate@mass.gov](mailto:childadvocate@mass.gov)

[mass.gov/childadvocate](https://mass.gov/childadvocate)



# The OCA in Action

## Helping Families Navigate Complex State Systems

Anyone who has questions or concerns about a child who is receiving – or should be receiving – state services can call our Complaint Line. This is not an emergency response line, but we will listen to your concerns, review the situation, and provide advice, support, resources, or take action to help resolve the problem, as appropriate.

## Reviewing Individual Cases

The OCA reviews critical incident reports, which occur when a child who is receiving state services suffers a fatality, near fatality, serious bodily injury, or emotional injury. The OCA also reviews supported reports of abuse or neglect in out-of-home settings such as foster care, congregate care programs, childcare facilities, public and private schools, and hospitals. OCA staff analyze each case to evaluate the safety and wellbeing of the child(ren) involved in the incident and identify any policy and/or practice concerns.

## Making Policy and Practice Recommendations

We help to improve our child-serving systems by studying common and persistent problems, analyzing data, reviewing trends from our Complaint Line and case reviews, conducting research on emerging best practices and, ultimately, advocating for changes in state law as well as changes to state agency policies and practices to make things better for children and youth.

## Piloting Projects to Improve State Services

In partnership with other state agencies, the OCA also helps launch pilot projects to test, evaluate, and refine new ideas for better serving children and youth. Recent examples of OCA pilot projects include the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program and the Transition Aged Youth Housing Stabilization & Support Program.

## Training Child-Serving Agencies and Organizations

Our Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma works with child-serving state agencies and organizations, providing training and technical assistance to help them learn how to best support children and youth that have experienced trauma. The OCA also offers a free online training for Mandated Reporters.

