

Strategic Plan SFY 2017-2018



Office of
Client Advocacy

DHS STRATEGY MAP

SFY 2017-2018

OUR MISSION

We improve the quality of life of vulnerable Oklahomans by increasing people's ability to lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

OUR VISION

DHS provides help and offers hope to vulnerable Oklahomans through stronger practices, involved communities and a caring and engaged workforce.

OUR VALUES

Safety • Integrity • Professionalism • Compassion



<p>We help Oklahomans who are vulnerable lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the well-being of the people we serve • Improve access to our services and benefits 	<p>Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote safe, healthy work environments • Improve the effectiveness of our workforce • Continue to improve employee engagement 	<p>We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of Oklahomans who are vulnerable.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and strengthen community partnerships • Help Oklahomans who are vulnerable access community resources 	<p>We have a culture of continuous improvement.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve the department's effectiveness, efficiency and accountability • Continue to evaluate the impact our services and benefits have on Oklahomans who are vulnerable
--	--	--	---

Figure 1. SFY 2017-2018 Strategy Map

A Letter from the Advocate General

As we identified critical objectives for our strategic plan, we reached consensus that our top priority in the Office of Client Advocacy (OCA) is the health, safety and well-being of the people we serve. In order to maximize our impact we needed to engage in collaboration with both agency and external partners. Whether it is related to foster parent complaints, grievances filed on behalf of children in DHS custody, the advocacy needs of individuals with disabilities, or the rates of abuse or neglect of vulnerable citizens, we want to do more than just report data. OCA wants to utilize the information we gather while serving our clients to inform positive systemic change.

OCA consists of four separate units, Advocacy, Investigations, Grievance, and Foster Care Ombudsman. The units work together to provide wrap around services for our clients. We want to ensure that we are utilizing all four units to ensure client safety and promote individual rights and autonomy of our clients. One avenue we are pursuing is the increased use of time limited, issue specific "special advocacy services" for vulnerable adults and children with disabilities and educational advocacy for foster children. We want to improve client safety by exploring best practices for interviewing children and adults with disabilities and ensuring that we put clearly defined, easily understood safety interventions in place when warranted. We intend to increase the number of trainings surrounding financial exploitation in an effort to increase the quality of our personal funds audits from the perspective of both the client and the provider.

OCA has worked collaboratively with agency and external partners to reduce the incidence of maltreatment for children in out of home care. This year we want to engage our partners more fully in order to collectively seek solutions to the patterns and trends identified through the data we collect about our work in all four main areas of OCA services. Additionally, we will increase public awareness of the services OCA provides. We want to ensure that our office provides a safe outlet for foster parents and people with complaints regarding DHS custody children or individuals receiving DDS services to have their concerns addressed and resolved timely through our grievance or Foster Care Ombudsman consumer complaint programs.

In order to be successful in the difficult work we do, our workforce needs to be able to connect the work they do with the impact they have on the individuals we serve. We are reviewing ways to balance quantity versus quality of work and ensure that OCA employees feel supported and included as an integral part of any plans for future process improvements. As we are all being asked to do more with less, we want to seek innovative, smart solutions to improve our processes and include our employees and our partners in the conversation for change while continuing to maintain client safety and well-being.

Even during uncertain economic times, one thing remains constant. OCA remains steadfastly committed to advocating for children and individuals with intellectual disabilities and ensuring their voices are heard.

Kathryn Brewer

Advocate General, Office of Client Advocacy

DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Office of Client Advocacy (OCA) performs an important independent consumer protection function within the Department of Human Services and primarily serves children in DHS custody, foster parents, and individuals with disabilities. Our objectives are to ensure the safety, well-being, fair treatment, and advancement of individual rights through our Advocacy, Grievance, Investigations, Foster Care Ombudsman, and Administrative Review programs.

The **Advocacy Unit** seeks to ensure the full realization of rights and access to the same opportunities for persons with disabilities as those expected by the general population. OCA Advocates represent Hissom Class Members, individuals residing at Greer, and individuals who transitioned into the community after the closure of state-run facilities. Advocacy services are also available to individuals receiving DDS services who request temporary, issue-specific “special advocacy” services. OCA Advocates are members of their client’s interdisciplinary support team and assist with resolving issues related to client services and improving the quality of their life and care. Advocates report allegations of caretaker maltreatment and conduct preliminary inquiries. Advocates also file grievances on behalf of clients and represent clients in fair hearings.

The **Grievance Unit** ensures a fair, simple and expeditious system for the resolution of problems. We ensure individuals filing grievances are free from restraint, coercion, reprisal, or discrimination. OCA independently reviews and monitors the implementation of grievance programs for children in DHS custody; youth in voluntary care of DHS; foster care services for foster parents; and persons receiving services from our Developmental Disability Services Division.

The **Investigative Division** is charged with investigating allegations of abuse or neglect of children in residential facilities as well as children and vulnerable adults with developmental disabilities who have a caretaker eligible for placement on the Community Services Worker Registry and Hissom Class Members. In addition, OCA conducts investigations of retaliation, harassment or discrimination against foster parents by DHS employees as well as administrative investigations involving the death or near-death of children known to Child Welfare at the request of the DHS agency Director. All of OCA’s investigations are provided to the relevant District Attorney’s office with recommendations as to whether additional investigation and criminal prosecution appears necessary. Confirmed findings may result in the accused caretaker being added to the Community Services Worker Registry or Child Care Restricted Registry.

The **Foster Care Ombudsman** oversees a grievance and complaint process for foster parents. OK Foster Parent Voices, www.okfosterparentvoices.org, operates in partnership with the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth. The goal of the program is to increase placement stability for children by easing the stress and frustrations foster parents may feel with the system by providing them with a secure place to address and resolve their concerns.

OUTCOME 1: We help Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

Goal 1: We will improve the well-being of the people we serve.

Objective 1: We will examine our processes, data and reports to ensure our services maximize the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults and children beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

Beginning January 2017, we will maintain a safety-based investigative approach and include a Plan for Immediate Safety (PFIS) to control any significant and observable condition that may endanger a child or vulnerable adult.

By January 2017, we will improve the quality of our clients' personal funds audits.

By January 2017, we will ensure the timely resolution of issues identified during client visits and service reviews.

By January 2017, we will ensure our clients complaints are processed timely and according to policy.

By January 2017, we will conduct on-site audits of client grievance records at facilities and providers.

Beginning January 2017, we will review all grievances to identify potential abuse and neglect trends and ensure incidents of abuse or neglect have been reported.

Important Results:

- The increased number of trainings regarding exploitation and protection of client funds
- The increased number of referrals for personal funds audits
- The increased percentage of issues identified for Informal Problem Resolution resolved within 30 days
- The increased number of staff cross-trained to conduct grievance surveys
- The increased number of grievance surveys at providers and facilities
- The established baseline for the number and nature of grievances reported to ascertain safety issues and identify trends
- The established baseline for the number of vulnerable adult investigations requiring a PFIS
- The increased knowledge of staff and providers regarding protections against abuse, neglect and exploitation
- The increased safety for service recipients

OUTCOME 1: We help Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

Goal 2: We will improve access to our services and benefits.

Objective 1: We will improve electronic accessibility to OCA programs and services beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

Beginning January 2017, we will ensure Quality Service by referring and connecting our clients to the appropriate departments.

Beginning January 2017, we will evaluate our internal and external communication to various customers for clarity of the objectives.

By July 2017, we will update our infonet and internet with comprehensive information regarding OCA services.

By July 2017, we will develop an online system that provides access to links for filing complaints, grievances, reporting abuse and/or neglect, and requesting special advocacy services.

Important Results:

- The increased number of trainings regarding the various functions of DHS to ensure our awareness of who to refer customers to and how we can assist them
- The increased knowledge of staff of the various functions of DHS
- The increased percentage of complaints filed electronically
- The improved ability for the customer to obtain information regarding our services and to request services
- The increased understanding of OCA's mission and objectives for our internal and external customers

OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.

Goal 1: We will promote safe, healthy work environments.

Objective 1: We will improve staff knowledge regarding safety at work and personal wellness beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

By January 2017, we will identify training opportunities to reduce employee stress and increase office safety.

By January 2017, we will ensure wellness opportunities are available for our employees.

By January 2017, we will ensure all employees are informed about the employee assistance program (EAP).

By January 2017, we will ensure all of our offices have up-to-date safety plans and staff are aware of those plans.

Important Results:

- The increased number of employees who have completed safe driving classes
- The increased number of workplace wellness programs
- The increased number of office safety plan trainings
- The increased percentage of Quality Service survey respondents reporting safety is present in their interactions with OCA personnel

OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.

Goal 2: We will improve the effectiveness of our workforce.

Objective 1: We will increase the quality of our work and the productivity of OCA's workforce beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

Beginning January 2017, we will implement the recommendations of OCA's Quality Standards subcommittee for outcome measures.

Beginning July 2017, we will ensure our performance management process measures balance quality with quantity of work.

By July 2017, we will increase our Lean Six Sigma participation and understanding of process improvement methodology.

By July 2017, we will enhance our staff's training curriculum through shared training with other DHS divisions.

By July 2017, we will have statewide Advocate, Investigator and Management trainings at least quarterly.

Important Results:

- The increased balance of measures of quality and quantity in the performance review process
- The increased percentage of employees reporting satisfaction with the performance management process
- The increased number of employees enrolled in Lean Six Sigma
- The increased knowledge of employees regarding process improvement tools and methodology
- The increased percentage of employees reporting their supervisors make data-driven decisions
- The increased percentage of employees reporting their unit has a culture of continuous quality improvement

OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.

Goal 3: We will continue to improve employee engagement.

Objective 1: We will communicate with our staff and monitor employee feedback to ensure employees feel supported, encouraged and engaged while ensuring accountability beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

Beginning January 2017, we will ensure our division management regularly communicates with our staff and news is conveyed timely.

Beginning January 2017, we will identify ways to ensure OCA staff feel connected with all of OCA rather than just their individual units, including increasing communication between units.

Beginning January 2017, we will implement the recommendations of OCA's Quality Standards subcommittee for Employee Engagement and Communication.

Beginning January 2017, we will ensure our supervisors utilize tools to increase engagement, such as the "5 Questions Supervisors Must Ask" on the Infonet.

By July 2017, we will ensure our supervisors create development plans designed to improve employee skills.

Important Results:

- The decreased percentage of employee turnover
- The increased percentage of employees reporting satisfaction with internal communication
- The increased percentage of employees reporting feeling their input is valued
- The increased percentage of staff reporting their contributions are recognized by others

OUTCOME 3: We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of Oklahomans.

Goal 1: We will build and strengthen community partnerships.

Objective 1: We will engage multiple community partners to improve availability of resources for the clients we serve beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

Beginning January 2017, our Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO) will engage with, and provide training to foster parent support groups and foster care adoptive associations.

Beginning January 2017, we will collaborate with external providers of services to vulnerable adults and children by participating in collective efforts to improve services for individuals served.

Beginning January 2017, we will implement the recommendations of OCA's Quality Standards subcommittee designed to improve communication.

Important Results:

- The increase in OCA's participation in organizations and groups external to DHS
- The increase in FCO direct contact with foster parents throughout the state
- OCA administration will attend, at a minimum, one meeting of providers for vulnerable adults receiving DDS services quarterly
- OCA administration will attend, at a minimum, one meeting of providers for children quarterly
- The increased number of external partners who report satisfaction with OCA services

OUTCOME 3: We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of Oklahomans.

Goal 2: We will help Oklahomans who are vulnerable access community resources.

Objective 1: We will ensure our workforce is informed and our web page is conducive to assisting those seeking various community resources by January 2017.

Action Plan:

By January 2017, we will ensure our special advocates are informed regarding available community resources.

By July 2017, we will help Oklahomans who are vulnerable access a variety of resources via links from our website.

Important Results:

- The increase in the quantity and quality of advocate trainings regarding community resources
- The improved knowledge of service recipients regarding available community resources

OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.

Goal 1: We will continue to improve the department’s effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

Objective 1: We will ensure our internal processes maximize efficiency and ensure accountability beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

Beginning January 2017, we will provide comprehensive and timely Administrative Reviews and Foster Parent Retaliation investigations to facilitate systemic change.

Beginning January 2017, we will implement the recommendations of OCA's Quality Standards subcommittee for Process Improvement.

By January 2017, our programs managers will ensure our investigations follow substantiation protocols.

Important Results:

- The increase in efficiency resulting in an increase in timeliness of work for advocacy and investigations
- A decreased percentage of OCA cases overturned by the Program Review committee
- The increased percentage of partners reporting the prompt and accurate delivery of our services or information

OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.

Goal 2: We will continue to evaluate the impact our services and benefits have on Oklahomans who are vulnerable.

Objective 1: We will employ surveys and data measures to evaluate our services and improve our processes beginning January 2017.

Action Plan:

Beginning January 2017, we will ensure those who file grievances have an opportunity to complete a survey regarding their experience with the grievance process.

Beginning January 2017, we will continue to survey and improve our Foster Care Ombudsman's internal data for effectiveness with internal clients.

Beginning January 2017, we will work with OK Foster Parent Voices to help resolve issues of foster parents, increase retention, and improve customer service and process concerns throughout our state.

Beginning January 2017, we will employ data measures utilizing available information through the CCM system, KIDS and the grievance database.

Important Results:

- The increase in accountability for local grievance coordinators
- The increase in creating data that is sought after and useful for our internal clients
- The increase in our review of available investigative statistical reports with a target frequency of weekly reviews 90 percent of the time
- The increased percentage of partners reporting our services meet or exceed expectations for assistance

S16049 DHS

Issued 12/2016

This publication is authorized by Oklahoma Department of Human Services Director Ed Lake and printed by DHS in accordance with state and federal regulations at a cost of \$31.14 for 53 copies. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.