

Office of Recovery Services Ombuds Program

During the Accountable Base Budget Review for ORS on October 14, 2025, intent language was issued that reads:

The Legislature intends that the Department of Health and Human Services report to the Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee by January 13, 2026, on the estimated cost and staffing needed to establish an ombudsman position within ORS to help resolve client complaints.

There currently exists an Office of Ombuds, Division of Customer Experience (DCE) within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). It has been determined the ORS ombuds program should reside within the DCE Office of Ombuds to allow for independent reviews.

In alignment with the intent language, the following has been prepared to identify the estimated staffing needs and associated costs for an ORS ombuds program.

In addition to the information below, DHHS believes that creating a child support ombuds program would require statutory changes to ensure clarity on the role and responsibility of the child support ombuds program and to ensure proper access to child support data for program staff.

Personnel

Program Administrator: (1 position - \$40/hour)

- \$135,400 (includes benefits, DP current and current expense)

Assistant Ombuds: (2 positions - \$31/hour)

- \$222,600 (\$111,300 x 2) (includes benefits, DP current and current expense)

ORS Ombuds - Budget

Total Cost: \$358,000

Justification

DCE - Office of Ombuds (DCE) is modeling the proposed Office of Recovery Services (ORS) ombuds program after the established Child Protection Ombuds program (CPO) that resolves concerns involving the Division of Child and Family Services. For FY25, CPO opened complaints on 2.2% of the DCFS child protection services and foster care cases. Using the same 2.2% formula, we can project the following ORS ombuds cases per year:

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| ● FY25 ORS child support cases | 72,500 |
| ● Projected ORS Ombuds cases per year (2.2% x 72,500) | 1,595 |
| ● FY25 DCFS cases | 26,978 |
| ● FY25 CPO cases | 598 |

ORS has approximately two and half times more cases per year than DCFS and double the number of complainants with custodial and noncustodial parents as potential customers. Currently, CPO has a personnel budget of 1 Ombuds manager and 2 assistant ombuds. DCE is proposing that the ORS personnel budget mirror the CPO personnel budget as a starting point for the implementation of the new program. Based on actual ORS ombuds cases after implementation, there is a high probability that additional assistant ombuds will be required based on our 2.2% formula, or a narrowing of child support case criteria that would be accepted by the ORS ombuds.

Following is a high level overview of the phases in a case that our independent office would follow when investigating concerns about the Office of Recovery Services:

Phase 1: Intake

- Determine if the complaint falls under ombuds authority and if so, what steps the complainant has taken with ORS
- Option to refer back to ORS if steps have not been taken by the complainant to address the concern with the constituent services team from ORS

Phase 2: ORS response

- Mediate concerns with ORS and the complainant

Phase 3: Preliminary investigative review

- Gather additional information on unresolved concerns and ensure ORS policies, rules, and statute were followed
- Mediate concerns with ORS and the complainant

Phase 4: Formal investigation

- Comprehensive review of the unresolved concern that has potential policy, rule, or statute violations
- Interviews and final investigative report