A. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AGENCY SETTING

The 2013 Montana Legislature passed House Bill 76 to create the Office of the Child and Family Ombudsman (OCFO). The bill was approved as of July 1, 2013 and expires per current rule on June 30, 2015. The Office of the Child and Family Ombudsman is housed in the Department of Justice Children’s Justice Bureau. The position of Child and Family Ombudsman is selected and hired by the Attorney General, following recommendations by a committee as outlined in the law.

In short, the Child and Family Ombudsman is an independent, impartial, knowledgeable, and confidential resource for promoting the rights of Montana’s children and families. Specifically, the law tasks the Child and Family Ombudsman with investigating and improving services for children served by the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), Child and Family Services Division (CFSD).


B. DESCRIPTION OF CLIENT GROUP

Any individual concerned about the interests or rights of a child in Montana may request assistance from the Ombudsman.

C. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Practice interviewing and reflective listening skills.
- Assist in review of cases and in investigations of requests for assistance.
- Learn mediation skills.
- Practice advocacy for underserved populations.
- Research best practices in child welfare.
- Assist in the development of policies and procedures for the office.
- Assist in the development of legislation for continuation of the office.
- Assist in outreach and education through development of materials, trainings, and rights campaigns.

D. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS
This office is very visible and being monitored by the legislature and the public for its development and effectiveness. The student working in the office would need to possess a good deal of maturity, an ability to maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality, and a keen interest in how policy and practice intertwine. The student should already possess strong communication skills both verbal and written. The student will be organized and able to work independently with direction from the Ombudsman. Experience with Excel or Access is a plus. Experience in child welfare also a plus but not required.