

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Iowa Office of Ombudsman



This annual report about the exercise of the Office of Ombudsman functions during the 2025 fiscal year is submitted to the Iowa General Assembly and the Governor pursuant to Iowa Code section 2C.18.

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Iowa Office of Ombudsman

Table of Contents

Message from the Ombudsman 1

Fiscal Year 2025 Accomplishments 1

On the Horizon 2

Public Report Highlights Restraint Chair Use in Jails 3

Case Summaries and Topical Statistics 4

Local Government 4

Human Services 9

State Government 11

Medicaid 14

Corrections and Jails 20

FY24 and FY25 Financial Information 27

Total Cases Opened by Year 27

Cumulative Statistics 29

Staff 30

MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSMAN



It is my pleasure to write my fourth Annual Report column as Iowa's Ombudsman. I would like to take this opportunity to talk about my office's fiscal year 2025 accomplishments, and to share my goals for the next year.

For those who are not familiar with the Ombudsman's office, we are a good-government Legislative branch agency tasked with investigating state and local government with the goal of improving government services.

Fiscal Year 2025 Accomplishments

During fiscal year 2025, the period covered in this report, my office opened 6,266 cases - a 9.6% increase from fiscal year 2024. This is the second-highest number of cases in the history of the office and 57% more cases than we opened in 2014. Of the total cases, 5,208 were complaints about state or local government agencies within our jurisdiction and 340 were requests for information.

The only year in which we opened more cases was fiscal year 2022 – my first year in office and a year when the COVID-19 pandemic was still raging. In my first Ombudsman's Annual Report, I pointed out the need to prioritize our cases, saying: "With such a big workload, we must be selective about the cases we choose to investigate." I committed to improving processes to better prepare us for future increased caseloads.

I am pleased to report that our efforts paid off. With years of experience handling high caseloads, my staff are more practiced at prioritizing cases than ever before. As a result, we can better handle situations when we are called to do more with our finite resources. We continue to be selective about the cases we choose to investigate, devoting our time to those cases that will have the biggest impact for the greatest number of Iowans.

In addition, we continue to prioritize communications – both with the state and local governments we oversee, and with the public. My staff and I have built relationships with key employees of governmental entities across the state. Good relationships have made us more efficient in our investigative work and increased the probability that state and local government officials will be receptive to our recommendations.

Our communications with the public have also been a priority. Foremost among the improvements to our public communications was an overhaul of our website. The new website, whose first full year of operation was fiscal year 2024, provides many more resources for Iowans looking for information about government services. It also provides guidance and tips on how to interact with state and local government. But another huge improvement has been to our online complaint form. A new webform makes complaints easier to submit than ever before and asks questions to help complainants focus on the essentials. This, in turn, has made our complaint-taking speedier and more efficient. Today, 1 in every 9 complaints opened by our office arrives through our web-based complaint form.

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We also released a public report in December 2024 on the use of restraint chairs in jails, which we feature on page 3 of this report. Our restraint chair report was featured in a documentary on restraint devices in several Midwestern county jails. Numerous jails said they changed their restraint chair policies after reading our report.

The report and the agency responses can be found on our website: https://ombudsman.iowa.gov/reports.

On the Horizon

We are close to publishing another public report on an important local government issue. As always, the goal of issuing local government-focused reports is to allow cities and counties to learn from the experiences of their neighbors and, hopefully, not make the same mistakes.

While that is good news, I want to point out that most of what we do with state agencies occurs behind the scenes, meaning we solve systemic issues and other problems without issuing a public report. This is also important work because we are a feedback loop for government agencies that would not otherwise receive such feedback. Agencies can use that feedback to fix issues with their processes and improve their services. That is consistent with our mission statement: “Making Good Government Better.” I want to take this opportunity to thank our staff for advancing that mission, as well as the agency officials who understand what we do and work in good faith to improve government for the public good.

Finally, like all government agencies, we must continue to maximize our limited resources, and I continue to identify opportunities to be more efficient in carrying out our duties. We will continue to leverage technology to improve our processes and be as efficient as possible in carrying out our duties.

What We Do

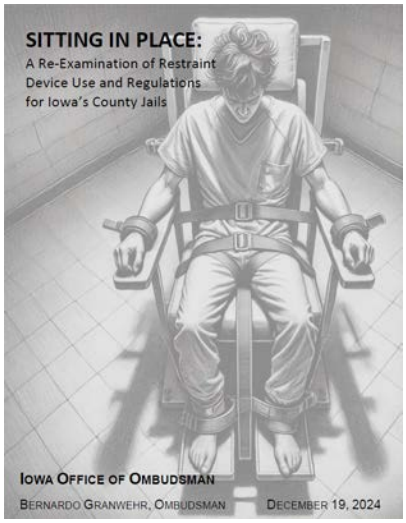
We investigate complaints against agencies or officials of state and local governments in Iowa.

We work with agencies to attempt to rectify problems when our investigation finds that a mistake, arbitrary, or illegal action has taken place.

We have a unique statutory responsibility to investigate and determine if an action was fair or reasonable, even if in accordance with law.

We have access to state and local governments’ facilities and confidential records to ensure complete review of facts regarding a complaint.

PUBLIC REPORT HIGHLIGHTS RESTRAINT CHAIR USE IN JAILS



The Iowa Office of Ombudsman is tasked with investigating complaints and systemic issues involving state and local government agencies, including correctional institutions. In December 2024, our office released a public report titled *Sitting in Place: A Re-Examination of Restraint Device Use and Regulations for Iowa's County Jails*, which reviewed the policies, practices, and oversight surrounding the use of restraint chairs in county jails.

Restraint chairs are used in correctional settings to immobilize individuals who pose a risk to themselves or others. While these devices can serve a legitimate safety function, their use must be carefully regulated to prevent abuse, excessive force, or unnecessary harm. Our office initiated this review after receiving complaints and inquiries about restraint chair practices, including concerns about prolonged use, lack of medical oversight, and inconsistent documentation.

The report found that while Iowa jail standards do address restraint device use, there are gaps in clarity, enforcement, and consistency across counties. Some jails lacked written policies that aligned with state standards, and others failed to document the duration and justification for restraint chair use. In certain cases, individuals were restrained for extended periods without adequate monitoring or medical evaluation.

Iowa law requires that restraint devices be used only when necessary and individuals placed in them be regularly observed. However, our review revealed that some facilities relied heavily on video surveillance rather than in-person checks, which does not meet the standard for "personal observation." Additionally, the lack of centralized reporting makes it difficult to track how often restraint chairs are used statewide and under what circumstances.

The Ombudsman's report recommended several improvements, including:

- **Policy Standardization**: All county jails should adopt written policies that align with Iowa jail standards and clearly define when and how restraint chairs may be used.
- **Documentation Requirements**: Facilities should be required to document the reason for restraint, duration of use, and all observations made during the restraint period.
- **Medical Oversight**: Jails should ensure that medical staff are involved in decisions to use restraint chairs and that individuals are evaluated before, during, and after restraint.
- **Training and Accountability**: Staff should receive regular training on restraint device use, and oversight mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure compliance.

The Office of Ombudsman will continue to monitor restraint chair practices in the interest of the safety of jail inmates while supporting the operational needs of county jails. We will also continue to urge the Department of Corrections to complete needed revisions to jail administrative rules.

Copies of the Ombudsman's report are available at the Ombudsman's website at https://ombudsman.iowa.gov/.

CASE SUMMARIES AND TOPICAL STATISTICS

Local Government

City Persuaded to Enforce Building Code and Clear Alley

Fair and vigilant enforcement of local ordinances is important, especially when public safety is at stake. In this case, a southeast Iowa resident contacted our office after city officials failed to act on a neighbor's fence construction that blocked both her driveway and a public alleyway.

The resident explained that her neighbor had drilled a fence post at the edge of his property, partially obstructing her access to her garage and rendering the alley impassable to vehicles – including emergency responders and utility crews. Despite multiple complaints, city officials hesitated to intervene, citing cost concerns and the neighbor's persistent behavior.



The neighbor continued to install additional posts, even after objections were raised.

Our office reviewed the city's ordinances and discovered that the neighbor had not obtained a required permit for the fence. Furthermore, it appeared the city had a setback requirement mandating that structures be placed at least five feet from the property line. A city official admitted that no staff member was designated to enforce building codes, which contributed to the lack of action.

Given the safety implications and the clear violation of city code, we urged the city to take formal action. The city ultimately filed a court case against the neighbor. After several failed settlement attempts–including the neighbor's refusal to relocate two posts–the matter proceeded to trial. The judge ruled in favor of the city, imposed $3,000 in fines, and warned of future penalties if the fence remained without proper permitting.

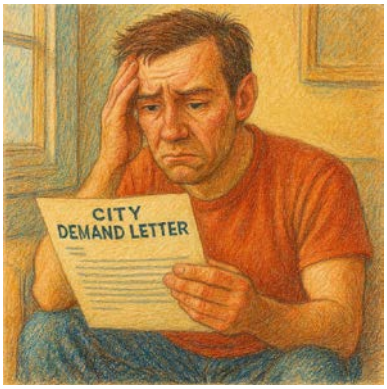
This case highlights the importance of proactive code enforcement and the need for municipalities to designate staff or procedures for investigating and resolving building code complaints. We have recommended that the city establish a permanent enforcement mechanism to prevent similar issues in the future and to ensure public safety is not compromised by inaction.

Errors Identified, Errors Resolved

The Ombudsman investigates complaints to ensure that government agencies follow the law and treat residents fairly. In this case, a city resident contacted our office after receiving a demand letter to pay for nuisance abatement costs–specifically, for grass the city had cut on his property. The letter, postmarked December 24, stated that if payment was not made by December 27, a lien would be placed on the property.

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The resident said he had received no prior notice that his grass exceeded the city's height limit. Under city ordinance and Iowa Code section 364.12, property owners must be notified when grass is too long and be given seven days to correct the issue before the city may take action. While the law allows cities to assess costs and collect them through property taxes, it does not authorize placing a lien for unpaid mowing charges.



We contacted a city official who confirmed that no prior notice had been issued before the grass was cut. In response, the city agreed to write off the assessed costs and implement review procedures to prevent similar errors in the future.

We also recommended that the city revise its demand letter to remove references to liens and instead explain the correct legal process for collecting unpaid costs. After consulting with its attorney, the city agreed to update the letter.

This case highlights the importance of following proper procedures and ensuring that communications with residents are accurate and legally compliant. We encourage all cities to regularly review their nuisance abatement policies and correspondence to ensure they comply with Iowa law.

Public Safety First – Street Parking Revisions in Eastern Iowa

Our office was contacted by an eastern Iowa homeowner who expressed frustration over proposed changes to street parking regulations in their neighborhood.

The city had introduced a plan to eliminate on-street parking in certain residential areas to ensure that emergency vehicles—particularly fire trucks and ambulances—could safely navigate narrow streets during urgent responses. The proposal was met with public resistance, prompting city officials to temporarily pause implementation. When a revised plan was brought back for city council consideration, the complainant reached out to our office, alleging that city leaders were disregarding citizen input.

Our review began with an assessment of whether the city had followed proper legal procedures. Under Iowa Code, municipalities have broad authority to regulate street parking to promote public safety and welfare. However, our office also considers whether such decisions are made reasonably and whether affected residents are given meaningful opportunities to participate in the process.

City officials explained that the reassessment of parking policies was prompted by a 2021 emergency where responding firefighters were hindered by parked vehicles. In response, the city initiated a multi-step review process that included evaluation by a traffic advisory committee, notification to impacted residents, and public hearings before the city council.

Initially, the street in question was slated for a complete ban on parking. After residents voiced concerns, city officials revisited the plan. Several months later, a revised proposal was introduced that allowed parking on one side of the street, with additional restrictions on garbage collection days to ensure unobstructed access for sanitation and emergency services.

Our office determined that the city's revised approach struck a reasonable balance between public safety and resident convenience, in response to citizen input. While we understand the importance of accessible street parking, the ability of

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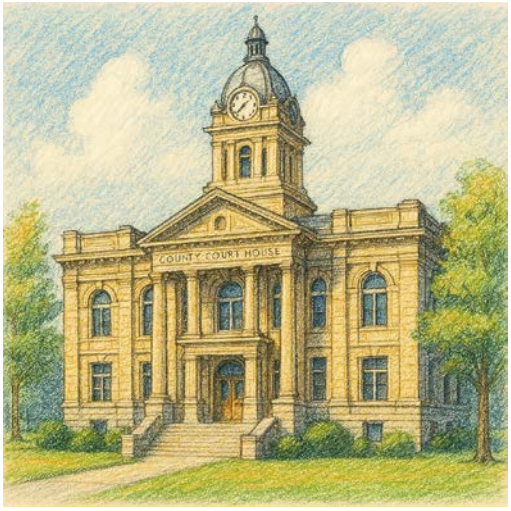
emergency responders to reach homes quickly and safely must remain a top priority. Snow removal, garbage collection, and other essential services also depend on clear and navigable streets.

We commend the city for its willingness to reconsider its initial plan and incorporate public feedback into the final decision. We encourage other municipalities to follow similar practices—engaging residents early, documenting safety concerns, and ensuring transparency in decision-making.

Paying the Bills – Clarifying Auditor Authority in County Government

Our office sometimes receives questions about how local governments handle taxpayer money. One such inquiry came from a southwestern Iowa resident who was concerned about county bills being paid without apparent approval from the board of supervisors.

The concern arose during a public meeting where discussion touched on bills that had already been paid. The resident suspected that the county auditor may have bypassed the board's standard approval process, potentially violating state law.



We reviewed the documentation provided and examined public records on the county's website. Our focus was on whether the payments were authorized under Iowa law and whether the county had followed proper procedures.

Under Iowa Code section 331.506, county auditors are generally required to wait for board of supervisors' approval before paying bills. This process ensures transparency and accountability. However, the law also allows for efficiency. Specifically, Iowa Code section 331.506(3) permits county supervisors to adopt a resolution authorizing the auditor to pay certain routine bills—such as those for utilities, postage, and freight—without prior board action.

In this case, we confirmed that the county had adopted such a resolution. The bills in question fell within the categories allowed for prepayment under the law. As a result, we were able to reassure the complainant that the payments were lawful and consistent with state policy.

This case illustrates how counties can balance oversight with operational efficiency. While public scrutiny is essential, not all deviations from standard procedures are improper. The law provides flexibility for counties to manage routine expenses without compromising transparency.

We encourage counties to clearly communicate their financial policies and resolutions to the public. Making this information accessible—through meeting minutes or online postings—can help residents understand how and why certain payments are made. Informed citizens are better equipped to engage constructively with their local governments.

Iowa Office of Ombudsman Mission Statement

"Making Good Government Better"

An Overview of Zoning Laws in Iowa

Helping Iowans understand how local government works is a core function of the Iowa Office of Ombudsman. Each year, our office receives questions and complaints about the decisions made by local boards and commissions—especially those related to zoning. These inquiries often come from residents who are directly affected by land-use decisions and want to know what options they have to contest or understand those decisions.

Zoning can be a complex and sometimes confusing topic, but it plays a critical role in shaping communities. It regulates how land and buildings can be used, promoting orderly development and compatibility among neighboring properties. For example, zoning helps ensure that residential neighborhoods are not disrupted by incompatible uses like junkyards or late-night entertainment venues.

Zoning also supports public health and safety and facilitates the delivery of essential services such as water, sewer, parks, and greenspace. The Iowa Code provides the legal framework for zoning through Chapter 414 for cities and Chapter 335 for counties. These chapters authorize local governments to establish planning and zoning commissions, adopt comprehensive plans, and enact zoning ordinances.

Two key entities involved in local zoning decisions are the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) and the Board of Adjustment (BOA). While their roles are distinct, both are essential to the zoning process:

- **Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z):** These advisory bodies are made up of volunteers appointed by city councils or county boards of supervisors. P&Z commissions help guide comprehensive planning efforts and make recommendations on zoning ordinances, rezoning requests, and site plans. Their decisions are not binding; final authority rests with the city council or county board.
- **Board of Adjustment (BOA):** These semi-judicial boards address exceptions and variances to zoning ordinances. BOA members, also volunteers, hear appeals from property owners seeking relief from zoning requirements or contesting staff decisions. Unlike P&Z commissions, BOA decisions are binding and can be appealed in district court.

P&Z and BOA Contact Information

There is no central P&Z or BOA list, so they must be searched at the county level.

The State of Iowa maintains a county services page with a link to each county's website:

https://www.iowa.gov/local-government

Our office often assists residents by explaining these roles and helping them understand the procedures involved in zoning disputes. While we do not intervene in every case – especially when local officials have followed proper notice and acted within their legal authority – we can help clarify zoning terms and processes. In cases where a zoning issue appears to have been mishandled, we may inquire and help facilitate corrective action.

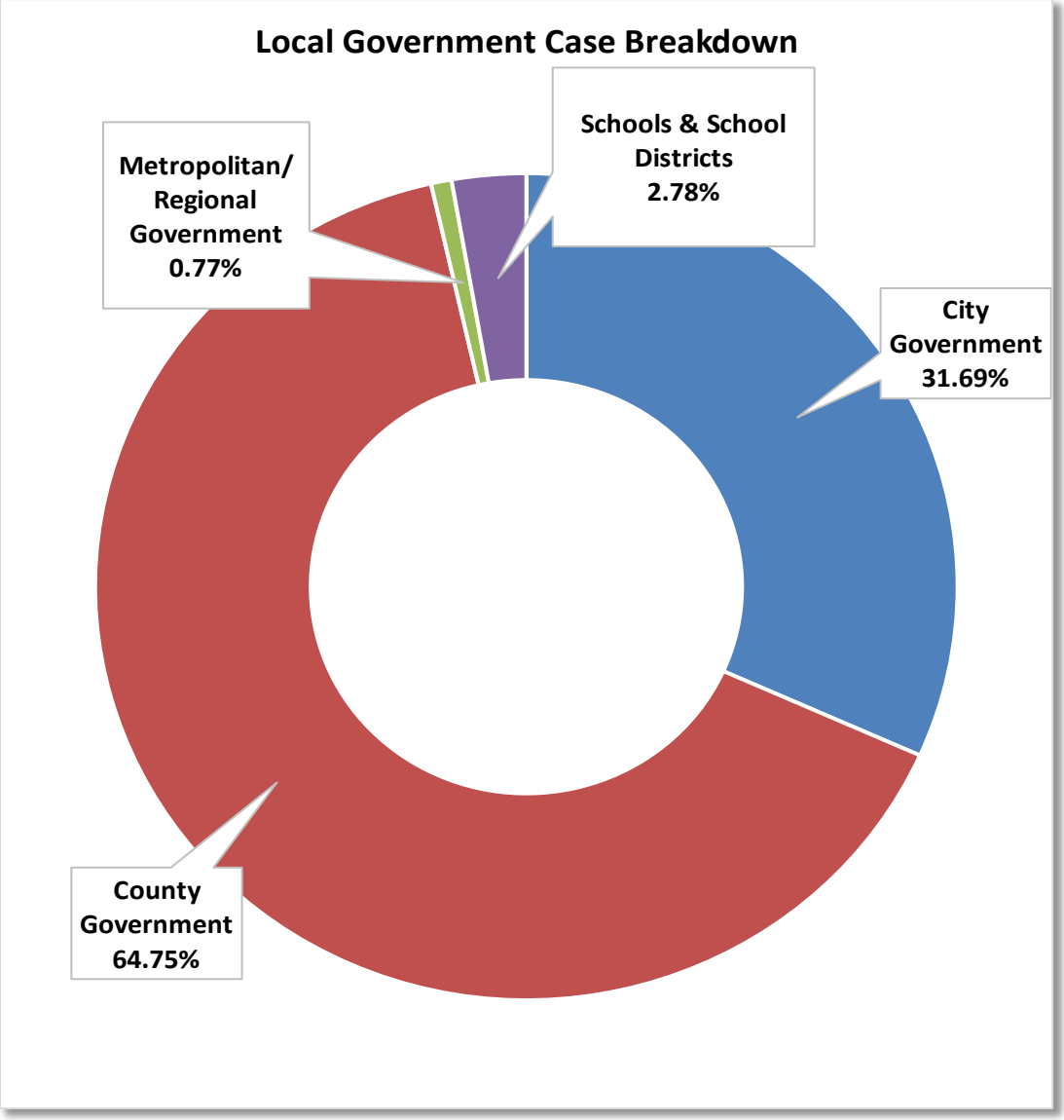
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Information About County Government on the Ombudsman Website:

https://ombudsman.iowa.gov/services/for-the-public/what-the-iowa-office-of-ombudsman-can-do/1/county-government

Phone: 515-281-3592

Zoning decisions can have lasting impacts on neighborhoods and property values. That's why it's important for citizens to be informed and engaged. We encourage residents to review local zoning ordinances, attend public hearings, and communicate with their elected officials. Understanding how zoning works is the first step toward ensuring that land-use decisions reflect the needs and values of the community.



Human Services

Interview Denied: Woman's Right to Respond in Child Abuse Case Restored

Our office is committed to ensuring that government agencies follow the law and respect the rights of individuals—especially in sensitive matters like child abuse investigations. In 2025, our office was contacted by an Iowa woman who had been denied her right to be interviewed by the state's child welfare agency after being named in a founded child abuse report.

Under Iowa law, individuals accused of child abuse are entitled to an interview with the investigating agency. This interview is a critical procedural safeguard, giving the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations before a finding is made. The right to an interview is reflected in both agency rule and policy and does not expire simply because an investigation has concluded.

In this case, the agency had offered the woman an interview during the investigation, but she declined at the time, citing intimidation and discomfort with the process. Later, when she learned that the allegation had been founded and her name placed on the child abuse registry, she requested the interview to finally tell her side of the story.

The agency initially refused, stating that the investigation was closed and the opportunity had passed. That's when the woman contacted our office.

We reviewed the applicable rules and found that the agency was obligated to reopen the investigation and offer the interview upon request. We contacted agency officials and cited their own policy language, which clearly affirms the right to an interview regardless of timing. After discussion, the agency agreed and provided the woman her long-overdue opportunity to respond to the allegations.

This case underscores the importance of procedural fairness in child welfare investigations. While agencies must act swiftly to protect children, they must also ensure that accused individuals are given a meaningful chance to be heard. The interview process is not just a formality—it is a legal right and a vital part of ensuring just outcomes.

We encouraged the agency to train staff on the importance of post-investigation interview requests and to respond promptly when such requests are made. Respecting these rights builds trust in the system and helps ensure that decisions are based on complete and balanced information.



Iowa's Child Welfare Agency Streamlines Foster Care Licensing for Relatives

In the Ombudsman's 2023 annual report, we highlighted a key shift in federal child welfare policy: states can now set separate foster care licensing standards for relatives. Previously, family members had to complete the same complex process as non-relatives to qualify for support payments—often an unrealistic expectation for those taking in children on short notice.

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As a result, many relative caregivers received little or no financial aid, while most federal funds went to non-relative, or "stranger," foster homes–despite broad agreement that children fare better with family.

Adopted in September 2023, the new federal rule allows states to streamline licensing for relatives. The Ombudsman encouraged the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to seize the opportunity to change state law consistent with federal regulations, and HHS acted swiftly by adding language to its agency bill to address the issue.



HHS's efforts culminated this year in the passage of Senate File 641, which, among its numerous provisions, updated Iowa law to allow the agency to create separate licensing standards for relatives. HHS is finalizing related rules and policies, with the new process set to launch July 1. The expedited and streamlined licensing process will make it easier for children in the foster care system to be placed with family members.

We appreciate all involved for taking this important step to better support children and families involved in the foster care system.

Complainant Rights and Responsibilities

You Are Entitled To:

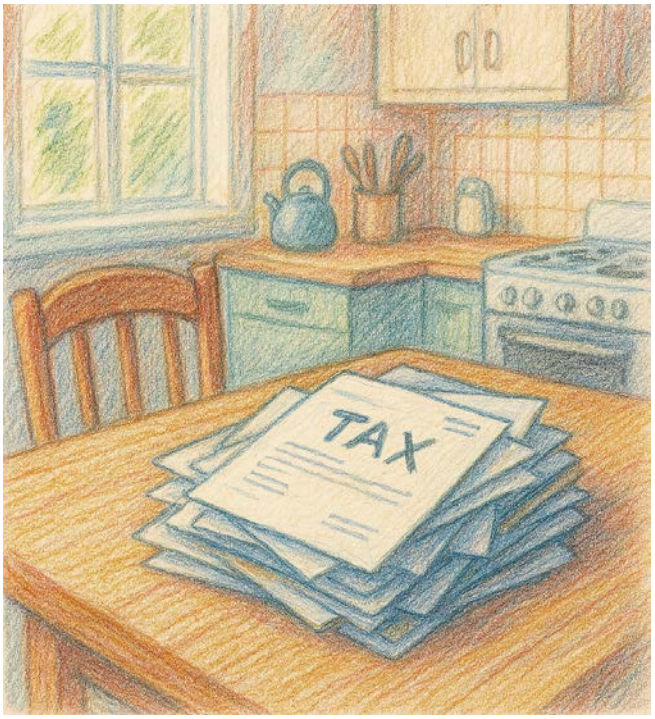
- make a complaint and to express your opinions in ways that are reasonable, lawful and appropriate;
- a reasonable explanation of the Ombudsman's complaint procedure, including details of the confidentiality, secrecy and/or privacy rights or obligations that may apply;
- a fair and impartial assessment and, where appropriate, investigation of your complaint based on the merits of the case;
- a timely response;
- be informed in at least general terms about the actions taken and outcome of your complaint;
- be given reasons that explain decisions affecting you;
- be treated with courtesy and respect;
- communicate valid concerns and views without fear of reprisal or other unreasonable response;
- one review of the decision on your complaint.

You Are Responsible For:

- treating the Ombudsman staff with courtesy and respect;
- clearly identifying to the best of your ability the issues of the complaint, or asking for help from the Ombudsman staff to assist you in doing so;
- providing to the Ombudsman to best of your ability all the relevant information available to you at the time of making the complaint;
- being honest in all communications with the Ombudsman;
- informing the Ombudsman of any other action you have taken in relation to your complaint;
- cooperating with the staff who are assigned to assess/investigate/resolve/determine or otherwise deal with your complaint.

State Government

Persistent Tax Billing Error Finally Resolved



The Ombudsman frequently assists individuals who find themselves caught in long-standing bureaucratic issues. In one such case, a South Carolina man contacted our office after nearly 16 years of receiving erroneous tax bills from the State of Iowa—despite repeated assurances that the matter had been resolved.

The man had previously operated a business that contracted with a client employing someone in Iowa between 2008 and 2012. Based on this connection, Iowa's tax agency determined that the man owed more than $9,000 in payroll taxes. The man disputed the charges, arguing that he was not responsible for the taxes related to the client's employee. The state agreed and confirmed he owed nothing.

However, the letters persisted.

Over the years, the man continued to receive notices claiming he owed nearly $10,000. Each time he contacted the state, he was told the issue would be corrected. At the state's request, he filed tax returns for the years in question, again showing no liability. His case was even referred to another agency for resolution. Despite these efforts, the notices kept coming.

Frustrated and out of options, the man contacted our office. We reached out to a division director at the tax agency and explained the situation. While the agency again assured us the issue was being addressed, this time the problem was actually resolved. The man's account was "zeroed out," and the erroneous billing was finally stopped.

Unfortunately, the letter confirming the resolution was initially sent to the wrong address. Our office followed up to ensure the correct documentation reached the complainant.

This case illustrates the importance of persistence and oversight in resolving long-term administrative errors. It also highlights the value of our office's role in cutting through red tape and ensuring that agencies follow through on their commitments.

We encourage agencies to implement stronger internal controls to prevent recurring errors and to ensure that once a billing issue is resolved, it remains resolved. Additionally, agencies should verify contact information before sending critical correspondence, especially when resolving longstanding disputes.

Man Loses License Despite His Case Being Dismissed

Our office investigates complaints and helps Iowans understand how government decisions are made—even when those decisions are frustrating or unexpected. In 2025, a northern Iowa man contacted our office after learning his driver's license had been revoked, even though his Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) charge had been dismissed in court.

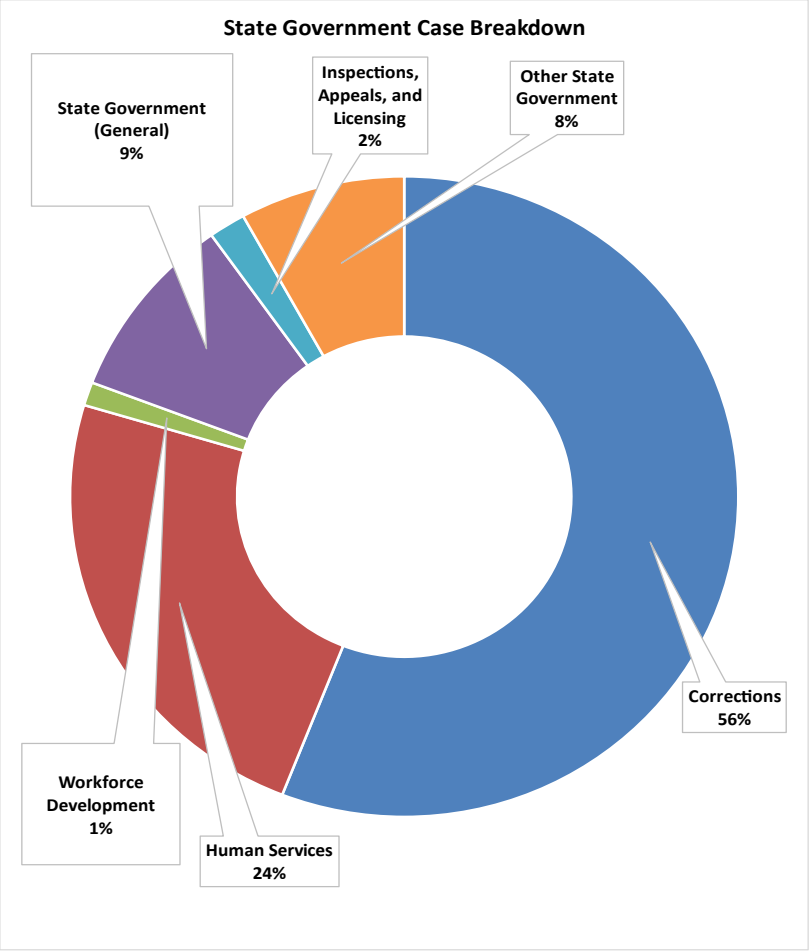
The man believed that since the criminal charge was dropped, his driving privileges should be restored. Our office reviewed his court records and confirmed that the OWI case had indeed been dismissed. However, we also reviewed Iowa law and the policies of the agency responsible for driver's license revocations.

Under Iowa Code and agency policy, a dismissal in court does not automatically prevent license revocation. According to the agency's website: "In Iowa, your driving privileges will be taken away (revoked) after an OWI offense, even if you aren't convicted in court." This is because Iowa law allows administrative action to be taken independently of the criminal process. What surprises many Iowans is that the licensing agency does not have to prove a driver was intoxicated. Rather, the license-holder carries the burden of proving the officer lacked reasonable grounds to believe the driver was operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated. This means that an acquittal or dismissal of the criminal charge will still result in a revocation if the driver does not appeal the administrative action and win. This is because Iowa considers driving to be a privilege, not a right.

We provided the man with the relevant legal citations and explained the distinction between criminal proceedings and administrative license actions. We also directed him to the agency's appeal process, which is publicly available on its website.

While the outcome was disappointing for the complainant, our office helped clarify the law and ensured he had the information needed to pursue an appeal if he chose to do so.

This case highlights the importance of understanding how administrative and criminal processes differ. It is important for agencies to clearly communicate these distinctions to the public and ensure that appeal procedures are easy to find and follow.



Changes to Property Tax Laws – Helping Iowans Understand What's New

The Ombudsman often hears from residents when changes to state law affect their daily lives—especially when those changes involve taxes. In 2023 and 2024, the Iowa Legislature passed several property tax reforms that expanded credits and exemptions and placed new limits on how much cities can levy based on rising property values.

These changes, while intended to provide relief and improve transparency, have also led to confusion. Even seasoned policy experts acknowledge that Iowa's tax code can be complex. When questions arise, our office helps Iowans understand the law and navigate their options.

One central Iowa homeowner contacted us after noticing a significant increase in their property assessment and taxes. They believed the increase exceeded what was allowed under the new laws. While our office does not specialize in property valuation or taxation, we were able to help the homeowner understand the key provisions and direct them to the appropriate resources.

Here are some of the facts we shared:

- Iowa law limits the growth in *aggregate* taxable value for residential and agricultural properties to 3% annually.
- This limitation applies to the *total* taxable value statewide for each property class—not to individual properties.
- As a result, an individual property's assessed value may increase more than 3%, even if the overall class is capped.

(Source: Iowa Department of Revenue)

We also explained that the Department of Revenue conducts a process called "equalization" every odd-numbered year to ensure assessments across counties are consistent with state law. Property owners with questions about equalization can contact the Department directly.

For questions about how a specific property's taxable value was calculated, the best resource is the county auditor's office. These local officials are responsible for implementing assessment changes and can explain how values are determined.

State of Iowa County Links to Government Services:

https://www.iowa.gov/local-government

Finally, we reminded the homeowner that Iowa law provides a formal appeal process for property assessments. Property owners may appeal to their local board of review, the Iowa Property Assessment Appeal Board, or district court. Details about these options, including deadlines, are outlined in Iowa Code Chapter 441.

While our office does not typically intervene in valuation disputes when officials have followed the law, we are always available to help Iowans understand their rights and responsibilities. When laws change, clear communication and access to accurate information are essential. We encourage agencies to continue educating the public and making resources easy to find.

Medicaid

Affluent Couple Qualifies for Medicaid and Faces Surprising Consequences

Our office frequently assists residents in understanding the intersection of state and federal benefit programs. In 2025, our office was contacted by an Iowa couple who were facing the loss of their Medicaid coverage due to a requirement that they apply for Social Security retirement benefits at age 62.

The couple, both 62 years old and still working, owned a home valued near $1 million that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The woman was a former attorney, and the man was a business owner. Despite their assets, they legally qualified for the program they were enrolled in for a couple of reasons. First, the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan has income limits but ignores assets. Second, the couple had investment losses that placed them at a low enough income level to qualify for benefits. However, they came to find out that the benefits also came with consequences.

They reached out to our office after receiving a notice from the state agency overseeing



Medicaid, informing them that they must apply for Social Security retirement benefits to remain eligible. The couple was concerned because applying at age 62 would result in a reduced monthly benefit—approximately 60% of what they would receive if they waited until full retirement age.

We contacted the state agency that administers Medicaid in Iowa to clarify the requirement. The agency confirmed that Medicaid applicants and members must apply for and accept any income benefits for which they are eligible. This includes Social Security retirement benefits, which become available at age 62. The policy is rooted in federal and state regulations designed to ensure that public assistance programs are used as a last resort.

While the requirement may be frustrating for individuals hoping to delay Social Security to maximize their benefits, it reflects a broader policy goal: ensuring that public funds are used efficiently and that individuals rely on available resources before turning to taxpayer-funded programs.

We encourage Medicaid applicants and members to reach out to the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services or their local DHS office with any questions about how income sources affect their eligibility and what obligations may result from their choice to enroll.

Wrong Number! – Protecting Privacy in Health Communications

We regularly receive complaints involving privacy concerns, especially when it comes to sensitive health information. In 2025, our office was contacted by an Iowa resident who had been receiving repeated phone calls from a Managed Care Organization (MCO) affiliated with the state's Medicaid program. The calls were not only unwanted—they included protected health information (PHI) about individuals the recipient did not know.

The man reported receiving approximately ten calls per month, each containing confidential medical details such as test results for a family he had no connection to. Despite multiple

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attempts to notify the MCO and request removal from their call list, the calls continued. Understandably, the man was frustrated by the inconvenience, but he was also deeply concerned that the intended recipients were not receiving critical health information—and that he was being exposed to private data he had no right to access.

By the time he contacted our office, he had documented 30 separate calls. We reached out to the MCO, provided them with the complainant's phone number and the number that had been calling him. The MCO confirmed the calls originated from their system and promptly added the man's number to their internal "do not call" list.



Following our intervention, the complainant confirmed that the calls had stopped.

This case highlights the importance of safeguarding personal health information and maintaining accurate contact records. Under federal law, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), health organizations are required to protect PHI and ensure it is only shared with authorized individuals. While this case did not involve a state agency directly, the MCO operates under contract with the state's Medicaid program, making it subject to oversight and accountability.

We encourage all health-related entities—especially those serving vulnerable populations—to regularly audit their communication systems and verify contact information. When errors are identified, swift corrective action is essential to prevent further breaches and ensure that patients receive timely and accurate information.

For members of the public, we recommend documenting any repeated misdirected communications and contacting the responsible organization directly. If the issue persists, our office may be able to assist in resolving the matter and ensuring compliance with privacy laws.

Agency Error Nearly Led to Discharge of Medicaid Member

In 2024, our office was contacted by a Nebraska woman who held Power of Attorney for her 50-year-old brother, an Iowa resident receiving Medicaid and Medicare.

Following a stroke, the man was placed in a nursing home and later transferred to a brain injury rehabilitation facility. Although he had been discharged from the nursing home in September 2023, the facility did not report the discharge to the state agency until April 2024. During this time, the rehabilitation facility was not receiving Medicaid payments and began threatening to discharge the man due to nonpayment.

Concerned for her brother's well-being, the woman reached out to our office. We contacted the agency to determine why Medicaid payments had not been initiated for the new facility. The agency responded that the man had been approved for a slot in the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Brain Injury Waiver program in October 2023. However, at that time, he did not meet the required level of care. Due to a worker error, neither the man nor his sister were notified of the denial. This lack of communication left them unaware of the need to pursue further eligibility steps, and the facility remained unpaid.

Upon our inquiry, the agency acknowledged the mistake and reopened the waiver slot. A new level of care assessment was

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conducted, and the man was approved for the Brain Injury Waiver retroactively. Medicaid payments to the facility were also authorized retroactively, ensuring that the man could remain in care without interruption.

This case underscores the importance of timely and accurate communication in the administration of Medicaid services. When errors occur, they can have serious consequences for vulnerable individuals who rely on these programs for essential care. It also highlights the role our office plays in ensuring that agencies are accountable and correct mistakes when they arise.

The complainant in this case expressed deep gratitude for our assistance, calling our office the "difference maker" in resolving the issue. We remain committed to helping Iowans navigate complex systems and ensuring that government agencies act fairly, lawfully, and with accountability.

The agency confirmed that the staff member responsible for the error had been made aware of the issue, and corrective steps were taken.



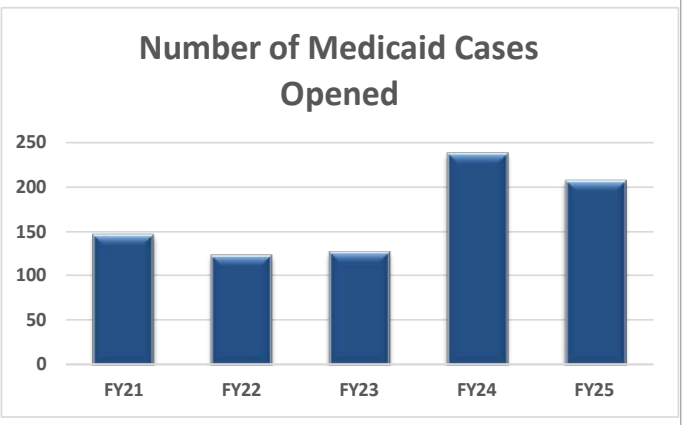
What to do before calling the Ombudsman

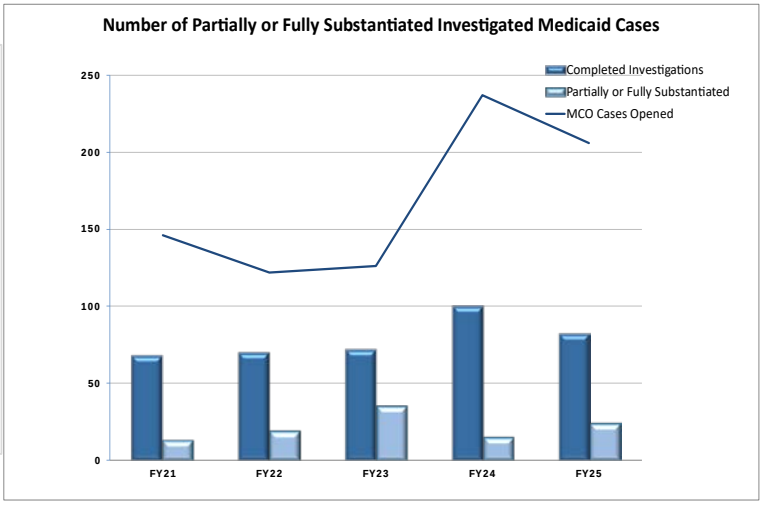
If you have a problem with a state or local government agency, take the matter up with the agency involved first before calling the Ombudsman. Here are some basic steps to take:

- Be prepared. Know what questions you are going to ask. Be sure to have any relevant information you need available before you contact the agency.
- Be pleasant. Treat public employees as you like to be treated. Becoming angry or rude will not resolve your problem and may only cause officials to close off communications.
- Keep records. Take notes, ask for the names and titles of employees you speak with, and save any emails or letters.
- Ask questions. Ask why the agency acted as it did. Ask employees to identify the rules, policies or laws that governed their actions. Keep asking questions until you understand what happened and why.
- Talk to the right people. Do not get angry with the first employee you meet; usually, he or she does not have the power to make or change policy. If you cannot resolve the matter, ask to talk with a supervisor.
- Read what is sent to you (including the fine print)! Carefully read all information sent to you. Many agency decisions may be appealed, but there are deadlines. Be sure to follow appeal rules and deadlines.

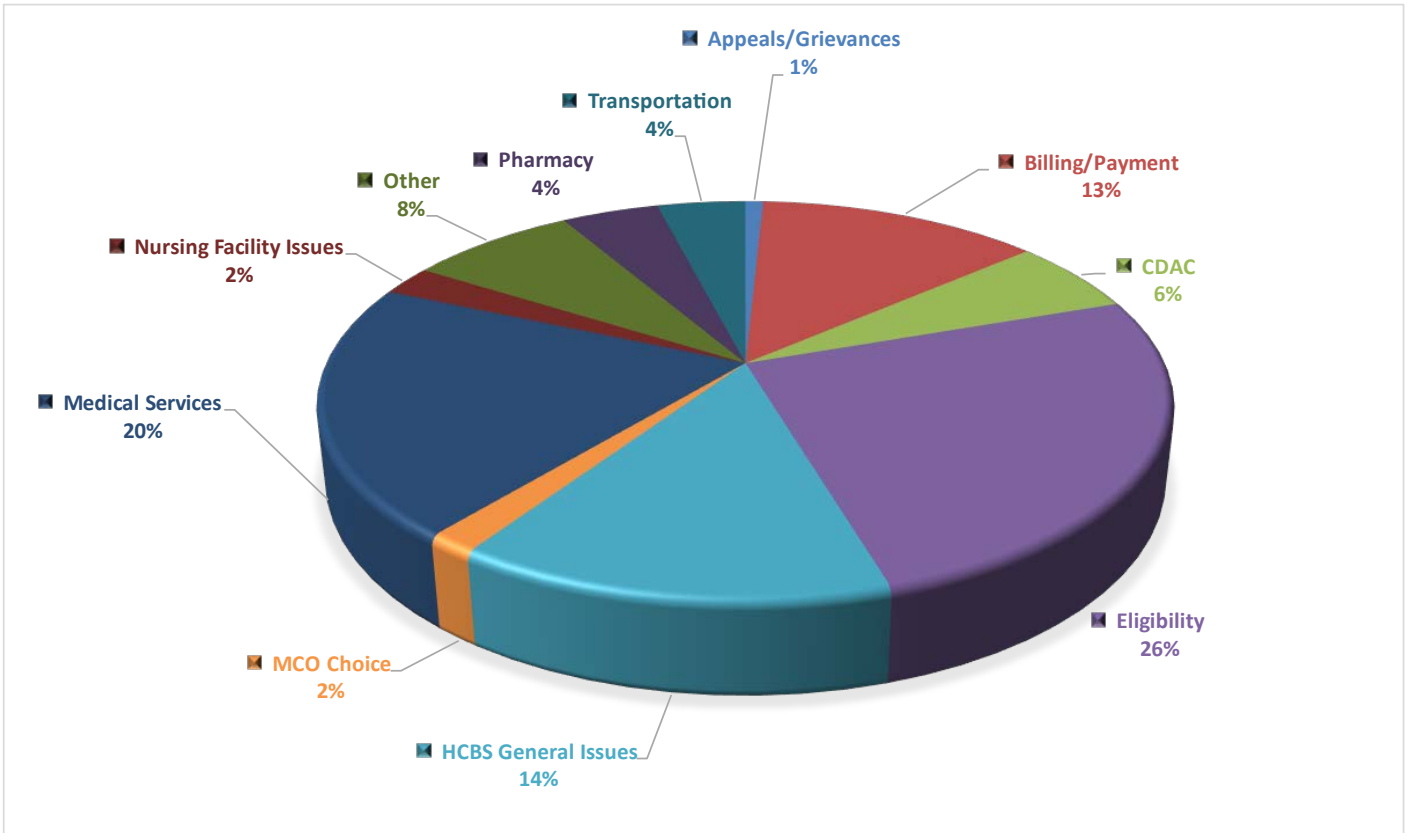
If you follow these suggestions and still cannot resolve your problem, then contact us. We may be able to help.

Medicaid - Statistics





Medicaid Cases by Category



Delay Caused by Switching to a Different HCBS Waiver

The Ombudsman regularly assists Medicaid members and their families in navigating the complexities of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waivers. These waivers are designed to help individuals remain in their homes or communities rather than enter institutional care. Iowa offers seven different HCBS Waiver programs, each tailored to specific needs.

In 2024, our office was contacted by the mother of a Medicaid member who had recently switched from one HCBS Waiver to another. She reported that her son's support staff had not been paid, and she was concerned that the transition between waivers had caused a disruption in services. The agency had previously assured her that switching waivers would not interrupt care or payments.

Despite those assurances, the member's case manager continued to tell the mother that the budget was "under review" or "processing." With staff unpaid and services at risk, she reached out to our office for help.

We marked our inquiry to the agency as "time sensitive" due to the urgency of the situation. The agency responded the following day and confirmed that the delay was caused by a procedural oversight: the case manager had failed to authorize the member's service plan in the agency's system. As a result, the financial management company responsible for paying the staff had not received the necessary funding.

Following our inquiry, a program manager at the agency worked directly with the case manager and the financial management company to approve the plan and release the funds. The issue was resolved quickly, and the member's staff were paid.

The agency acknowledged the error and assured our office that all parties involved had been informed of the correct procedures to prevent similar delays in the future. Additionally, the member's mother was provided with a direct agency contact to use if the issue reoccurs.

This case highlights the importance of clear communication and procedural accuracy when managing Medicaid services. While HCBS Waivers offer flexibility and support for individuals with complex needs, transitions between programs must be handled carefully to avoid service disruptions.

CDAC Enrollment Delays and Program Changes

Consumer Directed Attendant Care (CDAC) is a program that allows Medicaid members to hire caregivers to assist with daily living tasks such as bathing, dressing, cooking, and cleaning. CDAC is a vital support for many Iowans, especially those in rural areas or with limited access to traditional care providers. However, in 2024, our office received multiple complaints regarding delays in the enrollment process for individual CDAC providers. These delays raised concerns about access to care and the potential for service disruptions.



In two cases brought to our attention, prospective CDAC providers reported long wait times after submitting their applications—one in March 2024 and another who had applied twice, in September 2023 and again in August 2024. Given the ongoing shortage of CDAC providers statewide, our office initiated an inquiry to determine whether systemic issues were contributing to the delays.

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We learned that a key component of the enrollment process is a comprehensive background check, which includes reviews of criminal history, the Sex Offender Registry, and the Child and Dependent Adult Abuse Registries. If any concerns arise, applicants must submit detailed explanations and supporting documentation. The process cannot move forward until record check evaluators complete their review and determine eligibility.

In both cases, the delays were not due to agency inefficiency but rather to the applicants' reluctance to provide the requested documentation. The applicants believed the information was overly intrusive. Our office explained that the agency has a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure the safety of Medicaid members, and that the documentation is necessary to fulfill that obligation.

While these cases were resolved, they occurred during a period of significant transition for the CDAC program. As of July 1, 2025, Iowa Medicaid will no longer enroll new individual CDAC providers. By December 31, 2025, all existing individual CDAC providers will be disenrolled. This change follows guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which found Iowa out of compliance with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules regarding the federal tax treatment of service recipients in publicly funded HCBS programs.

Going forward, Medicaid members who use CDAC services must either work with a CDAC agency or transition to the Consumer Choices Option (CCO) program. CCO allows members to manage a targeted budget and hire caregivers directly, including friends and family members. While this model offers greater flexibility and control, it also requires members to take on more responsibility in managing their care.

Our office continues to monitor this transition and remains available to assist members and providers with questions or concerns. We encourage Iowa Medicaid to provide clear, timely communication to affected individuals and to ensure that support is available for those navigating the shift to agency-based CDAC or the CCO program.

As the state adapts to federal requirements, it is essential that the needs of Medicaid members remain at the forefront. Ensuring continuity of care and minimizing disruption will be key to a successful transition.

Information About Managed Care Organizations

The Ombudsman does not have jurisdiction over Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). We do have jurisdiction over the Department of Health and Human Services, which administers the Medicaid program. Before you make a complaint to us, we want to make sure the person you are complaining about has had an opportunity to review and resolve your complaint.

More information is available at the Ombudsman's website: https://ombudsman.iowa.gov/services/for-the-public/what-the-iowa-office-of-ombudsman-can-do/2/managed-medicaid

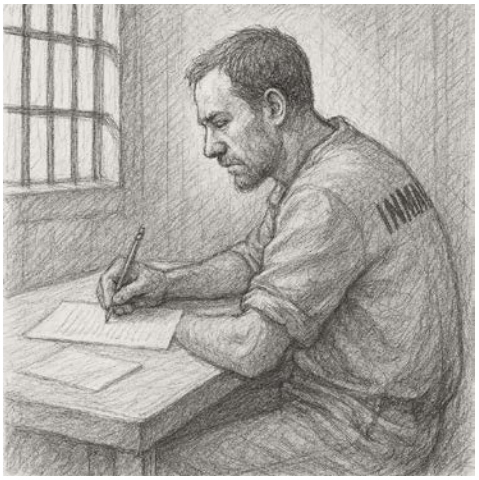
Corrections and Jails

Communication Restrictions in Violation of Correctional Policy

Our office reviewed a disciplinary matter involving an inmate whose communication privileges were restricted for 90 days following a contraband-related disciplinary report.

The inmate was found guilty of "unauthorized possession" after contraband was discovered in his cell during a routine search. Following the disciplinary process, a classification team met with the inmate to discuss his placement and status. During this meeting, the team informed the inmate that all his communication privileges—except those with legal counsel and the Ombudsman's office—would be suspended for 90 days.

The inmate contacted our office, asserting that the restriction was contrary to correctional policy. According to the applicable policy, communication privileges may be restricted only "when evidence shows that communication was used for the introduction of any contraband into the institution." Upon reviewing the disciplinary report and the evidence cited by the Administrative Law Judge, our office found no indication that communication methods were used to facilitate the contraband's entry.



We raised our concerns with both the deputy warden and the warden. Despite our findings, both officials maintained that the restriction was justified, with one stating, "The contraband had to get in here somehow." This rationale, however, lacked evidentiary support and did not meet the policy's threshold for restricting communication.

Our office maintains that while other forms of communication may be restricted, mail is not merely a privilege—it is a constitutional right. Courts across the country have affirmed this principle. Any restrictions on other forms of communication must be supported by clear evidence of misuse. In this case, no such evidence was presented.

Ultimately, the inmate served his disciplinary time, and his communication privileges were reinstated after 90 days. While the issue was resolved, we continue to encourage jails and prisons to ensure that restrictions on inmate communications are grounded in documented facts, consistent with policy, and mindful of inmates' constitutional rights.

Delayed Property Inventory Leads to Loss for Inmate

The Ombudsman frequently receives complaints from incarcerated individuals who believe they've been treated unfairly by correctional staff. While prison life is inherently restrictive, it is not meant to be punitive beyond the sentence imposed by the court. When inmates report that their rights or property have been compromised, our office investigates to ensure policies are followed and fairness is upheld.

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In early 2025, an Iowa inmate contacted our office after being moved to segregated housing due to a pending disciplinary report. He alleged that many of his personal property items were lost or stolen during the transfer and his efforts to resolve the issue with prison staff had gone nowhere.



Iowa prisons are authorized to impose disciplinary sanctions for rule violations, but forfeiting personal property is not among them. Our office reviewed the inmate's property records and found that more than 20 items listed in his inventory were not accounted for when staff collected his belongings. More concerning, staff did not pack up his property until more than a week after he had been removed from his cell. During that time, other inmates in the housing unit may have had access to the unsecured property.

This delay in securing the inmate's belongings created an unreasonable risk of loss. Prison policy requires timely and secure handling of inmate property, especially during transfers to segregation. The failure to promptly inventory and secure the inmate's items represented a lapse in procedure.

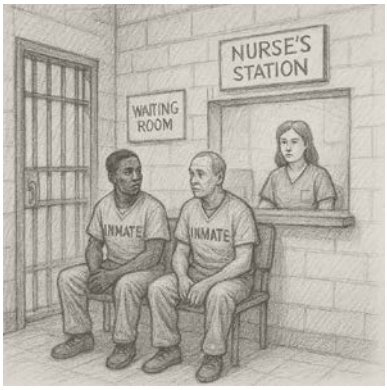
Our office recommended that the prison replace any items it could reasonably verify. While some items—such as individual food packages from the commissary—could not be tracked, the prison agreed to replace the remaining items. The total value of the replaced property exceeded $100.

The inmate was ultimately found guilty of the rule violation and served his disciplinary sanctions. However, thanks to our intervention, those sanctions did not include the financial burden of replacing lost property.

This case highlights the importance of timely and accurate property handling in correctional settings. We encourage all facilities to review their procedures for securing inmate property during transfers and to ensure staff are trained to follow those procedures consistently. Prompt action can prevent unnecessary loss and reinforce fairness within the correctional system.

Jail Medical Mishaps

Our office frequently receives complaints related to inmate medical care. In fiscal year 2025, our office investigated two separate incidents involving apparent violations of basic medical standards in county jails.



In the first case, an inmate reported that he refused one of his prescribed medications but agreed to take the remaining ones. However, jail staff administering the medications informed him that refusal of any single medication would result in denial of all medications for that session. This practice raised serious concerns about medical ethics and inmate health.

Our office contacted the jail administrator, who acknowledged that this was not standard procedure. He agreed to speak with the staff involved and review the jail's medication administration policy. The inmate was released shortly after the issue was addressed, and no further complaints were received.

The second case involved a more serious breach of universal health precautions. An inmate observed jail staff failing to change gloves after exposure to bodily fluids from one inmate

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before administering medications to another. This practice poses a significant risk of cross-contamination and violates widely accepted medical protocols.

We brought the matter to the attention of jail administration, who confirmed that such behavior was not consistent with their policies. The issue was addressed directly with the staff member involved, and corrective action was taken. These cases underscore the importance of proper training and adherence to medical standards in correctional settings. Universal precautions—such as changing gloves between patients—are not only common knowledge among healthcare professionals but are also essential to preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

We encourage all correctional facilities to regularly review their health and safety protocols and ensure that staff are adequately trained in basic medical hygiene. Inmates are entitled to safe and competent medical care, and lapses in practice can have serious consequences for both inmates and staff.

Bedsheet Obscures Young Inmate's Overdose Death

Our office investigates deaths in correctional facilities to ensure that policies are followed and systemic issues are addressed. In the summer of 2024, our office reviewed the sudden death of a 24-year-old inmate who died while incarcerated.

Initial details were scarce, prompting our office to examine the inmate's medical records and autopsy report. The pathologist concluded that the inmate had died from a fatal dose of K2, a synthetic cannabinoid known for its unpredictable effects and frequent abuse in Iowa's prisons. These drugs are often smuggled in on slips of paper and can cause severe illness or violent behavior.



Further investigation revealed that the inmate had collapsed while using the toilet in his cell. Normally, such a medical emergency would be detected during routine officer rounds. However, the inmate had hung a bedsheet for privacy, obscuring him from view. While technically against policy, the use of sheets for temporary privacy is sometimes tolerated by staff.

Video footage showed that the sheet had remained up for more than two hours without any officer verifying the inmate's condition. This lapse delayed the discovery of the emergency and may have contributed to the fatal outcome.

In response, prison administrators convened staff meetings to reinforce the importance of visual checks during rounds. Officers were reminded that they are responsible for ensuring inmate safety, even when privacy sheets are present. A new protocol was introduced requiring inmates who hang sheets to show their heads to passing officers to confirm their well-being.

This case underscores the need for consistent enforcement of safety procedures and the dangers posed by contraband substances in correctional environments. We commend the agency for taking corrective action and encourage continued vigilance to prevent similar tragedies.

Missed Surgery Referral Corrected After Ombudsman Inquiry

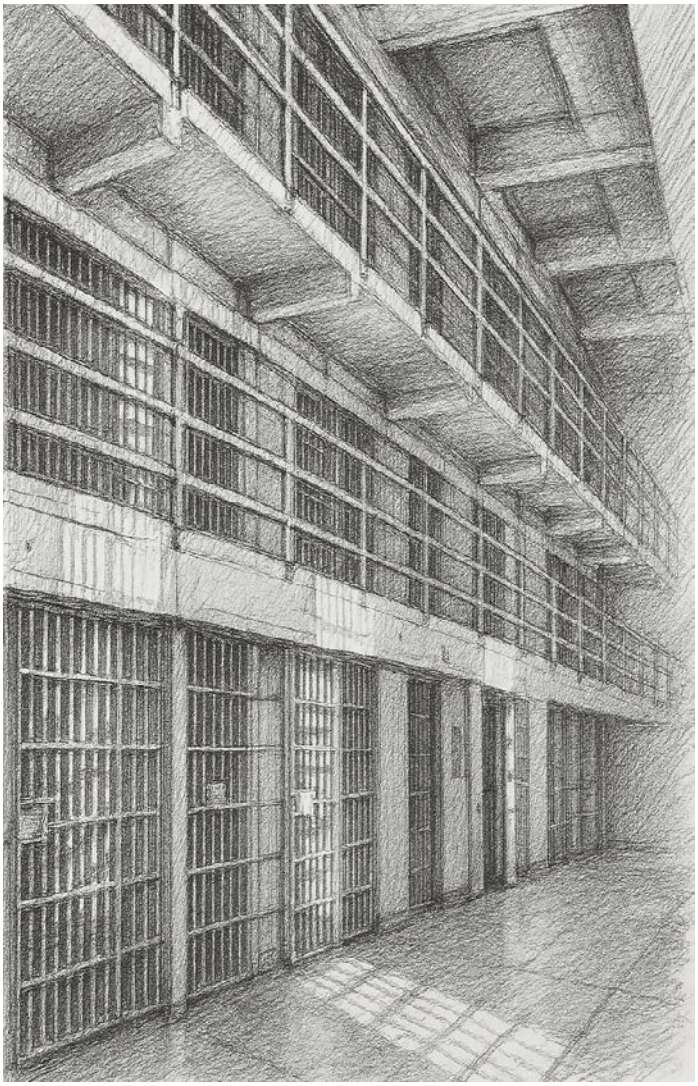
The office regularly receives complaints from incarcerated individuals about a wide range of issues—from disciplinary actions to medical care. While not every concern falls within our jurisdiction, we take each complaint seriously and work to ensure that Iowa's correctional institutions follow policy and provide fair treatment.

In 2025, a prison inmate contacted our office with a long list of grievances. Among them were concerns about his criminal sentence, allegations of excessive force, food quantity, disciplinary reports, and a surgery he claimed was months overdue. As is standard practice, our office separated each issue and investigated them individually.

One complaint stood out: the inmate's surgery to remove a bullet fragment from his arm, which was deemed by the agency to be a serious health condition. Unlike the other concerns, this issue appeared both legitimate and unaddressed.

In Iowa's prison system, routine medical care is provided by on-site medical staff. For more complex procedures, inmates are referred to a state-run hospital facility in Iowa City. Once a referral is submitted, the hospital is responsible for scheduling the procedure.

In this case, the inmate's surgery referral had been submitted, but no appointment had been scheduled. Our office confirmed that the referral had been received but had not been processed. The oversight meant the inmate was left waiting for a medically necessary procedure with no timeline for resolution.



Upon our inquiry, the hospital scheduled the surgery—months later than originally intended. While the delay was unfortunate, our intervention ensured the inmate finally received the care he had been waiting for.

This case highlights the importance of follow-through in medical referrals within the correctional system. Inmates rely entirely on staff and institutional processes to access care. When those processes break down, the consequences can be serious.

We encouraged the agency to implement safeguards that prevent referrals from being lost or overlooked. Regular audits, clear communication between facilities, and timely follow-up can help ensure that inmates receive the care they need without unnecessary delays.

Time Computation Error Corrected After Ombudsman Review

The Ombudsman routinely receives complaints from incarcerated individuals who believe they have served their full sentence and should be released. While our office does not serve as an advocate for complainants, we take these "time computation" concerns seriously. Incarceration periods must be determined by judicial order—not by administrative error or oversight.

In one such case, an Iowa prison inmate contacted our office, claiming he had completed his sentence and was being held improperly. He believed he was in custody as a "safekeeper," a status used for individuals who have completed their criminal sentence but are being evaluated for civil commitment. However, he was not undergoing any such evaluation, raising questions about the legitimacy of his continued incarceration.

Our office investigated the claim and quickly confirmed that the inmate was not being held under safekeeper status. State records showed he was still serving a criminal sentence. However, during our review, the assistant ombudsman noticed a discrepancy in the recorded start date of the inmate's sentence.

Further investigation revealed that the start date had been incorrectly entered into the system—off by approximately six months. This clerical error meant the inmate's incarceration would have extended half a year beyond what the court had ordered.

We brought this issue to the attention of the prison's time computation office, which acknowledged the mistake. A full audit of the inmate's sentence was conducted, and the start date was corrected. While the inmate was not eligible for immediate release, the correction ensured that his sentence would now reflect the actual duration ordered by the court.

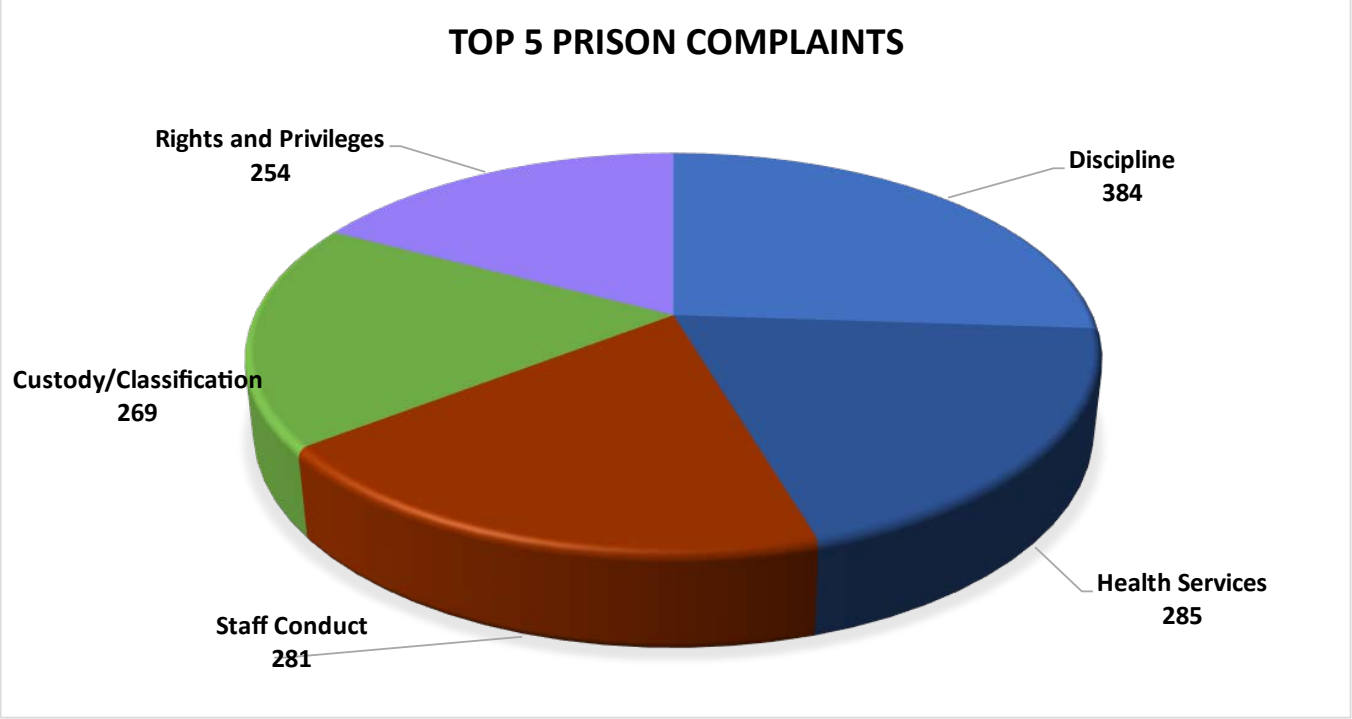
This case underscores the importance of accuracy in sentence computation. Iowa Code and administrative rules require that incarceration periods be based strictly on judicial determinations. Errors in data entry, if left unchecked, can result in unlawful detention and undermine public confidence in the justice system.

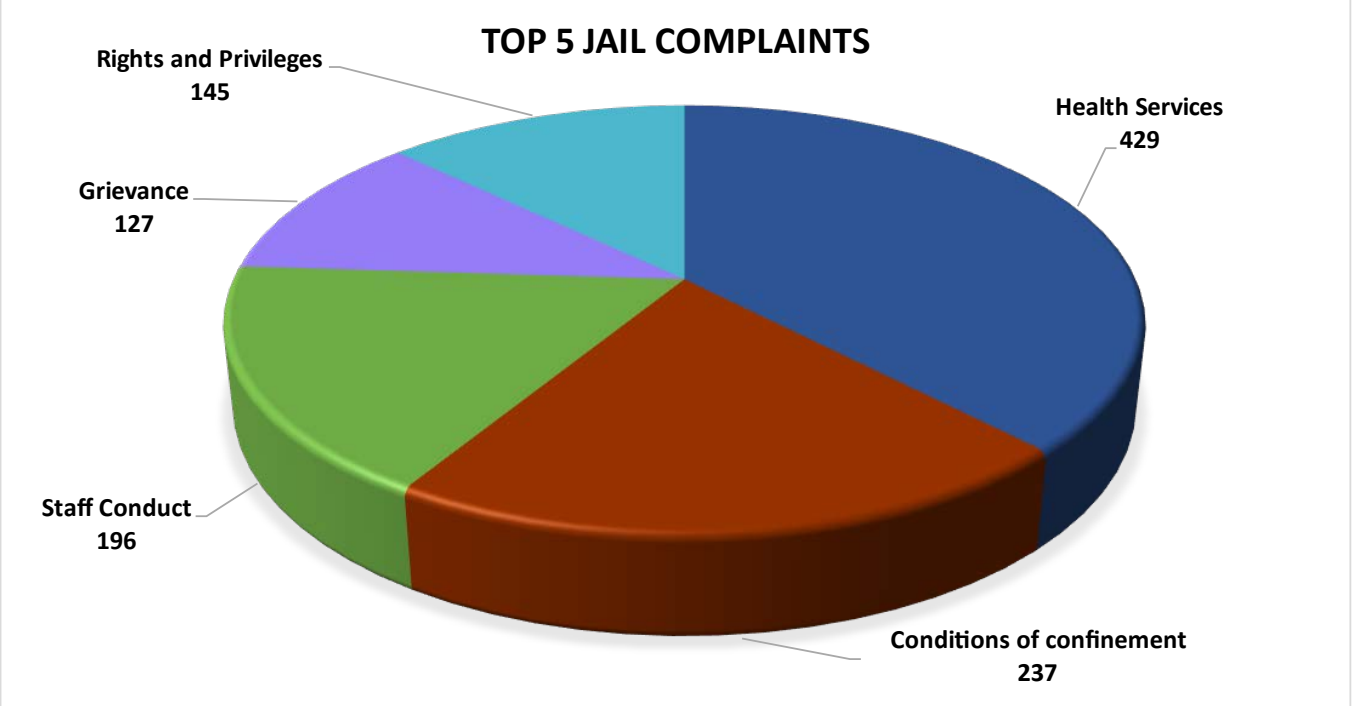
We commend the prison's time computation office for its prompt response and corrective action. We also encourage all correctional facilities to regularly audit sentence records and provide staff with training to prevent similar errors.

The Office of Ombudsman remains committed to ensuring that government agencies follow the law and that individuals are not held beyond the terms of their sentence due to administrative mistakes. Our involvement in this case helped uphold that principle and ensured that justice was served as intended.



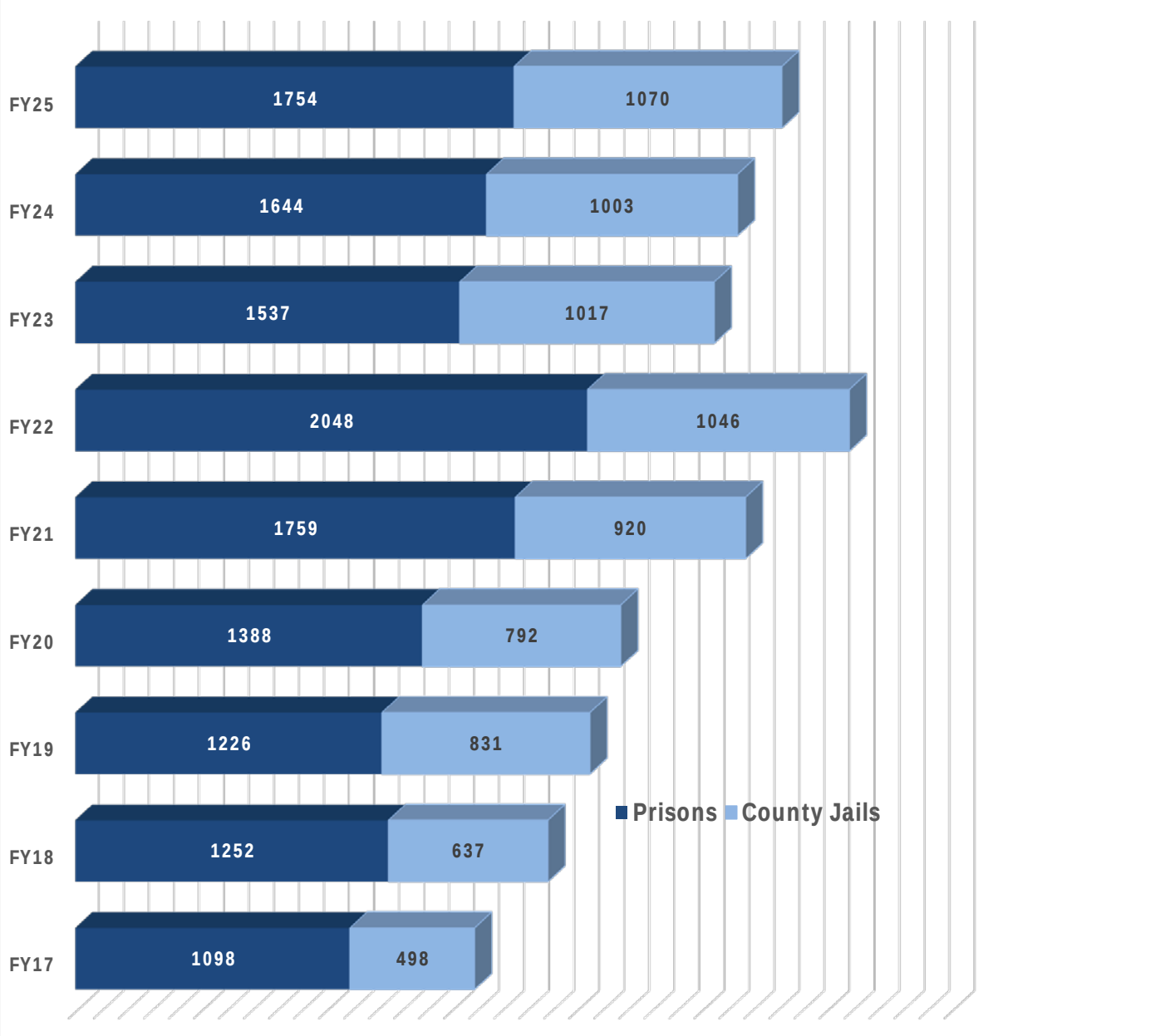
Corrections and Jails - Statistics





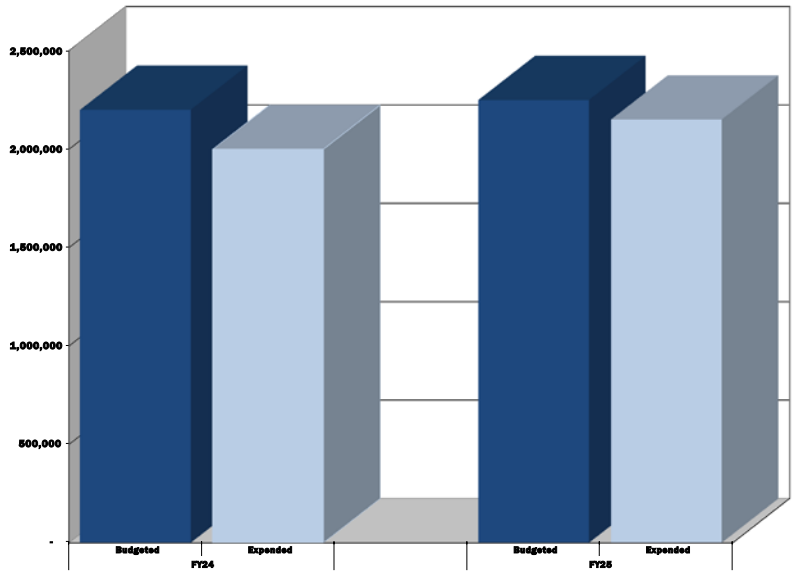
Corrections and Jails - Statistics

Number of Prison and County Jail Complaints

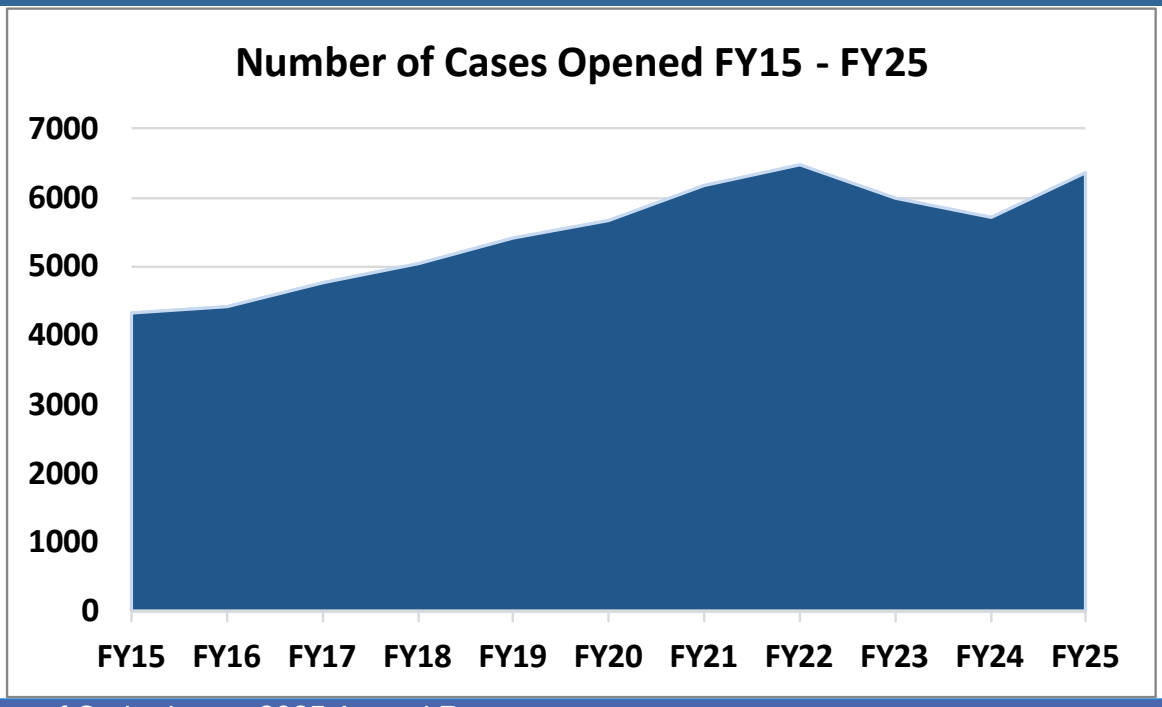


Office of Ombudsman
FY24 and FY25 Financial Information

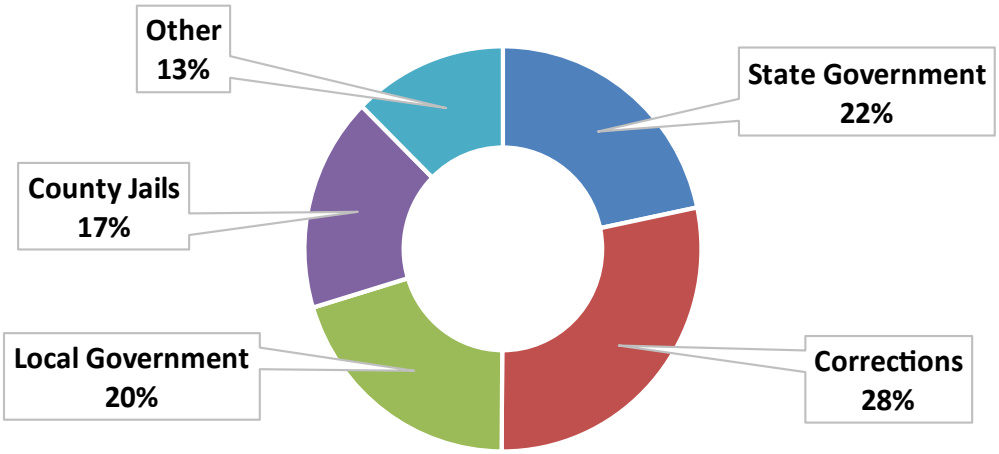
Presented to meet the requirement that state government annual reports to the Legislature include certain financial information.



Case Statistics



Subjects of Cases



What we can investigate:

- City governmental departments
- County government departments
- Most state agencies
- Public school districts
- Intergovernmental organizations
- Government contractors doing child-welfare or juvenile-justice work
- Prisons, jails and work-release facilities

What we cannot investigate:

- The Governor and staff
- The Legislature and staff
- Judges, court clerks and judicial staff
- Most public employee-employer disputes
- Federal government
- Private entities or businesses

Agency	Jurisdictional Complaints	Jurisdictional Information Requests	Non-Jurisdictional Cases	Non-Jurisdictinal Information Requests	Special Projects	Total	Percentage of Total
State Government							
Administrative Services	4	0	0	0	0	4	0.06%
Agriculture & Land Stewardship	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.02%
Attorney General/Department of Justice	11	3	0	0	0	14	0.22%
Auditor	2	0	0	0	0	2	0.03%
Blind	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
College Aid Commission	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Corrections	1702	47	0	0	5	1754	27.99%
County Soil & Water Conservation Districts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Cultural Affairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Drug Control Policy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Economic Development	2	0	0	0	0	2	0.03%
Education	4	1	0	0	0	5	0.08%
Educational Examiners Board	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.02%
Executive Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Human Services	687	55	0	0	0	742	11.84%
Inspections, Appeals & Licensing	54	2	0	0	0	56	0.89%
Insurance and Financial Services	11	2	0	0	0	13	0.21%
Iowa Communication Network	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Iowa Finance Authority	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.02%
Iowa Public Employees Retirement System	3	0	0	0	0	3	0.05%
Iowa Public Information Board	3	1	0	0	0	4	0.06%
Iowa Utilities Commission	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Iowa PBS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Law Enforcement Academy	3	0	0	0	0	3	0.05%
Management	0	2	0	0	0	2	0.03%
Municipal Fire & Police Retirement System	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Natural Resources	2	0	0	0	0	2	0.03%
Office of Chief Information Officer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Office of Ombudsman	4	24	0	0	7	35	0.56%
Parole Board	21	1	0	0	0	22	0.35%
Professional Teachers Practice Commission	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Public Defense	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Public Employment Relations Board	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Public Safety	25	2	0	0	0	27	0.43%
Regents	21	0	0	0	0	21	0.34%
Revenue & Finance	25	1	0	0	0	26	0.41%
Secretary of State	5	1	0	0	0	6	0.10%
State Fair Authority	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
State Government (General)	254	40	1	0	0	295	4.71%
Transportation	45	3	1	0	0	49	0.78%
Treasurer	1	1	0	0	0	2	0.03%
Veterans Affairs Commission	6	0	0	0	0	6	0.10%
Workforce Development	32	5	0	0	0	37	0.59%
State Government Non-Jurisdictional							
Governor	0	0	2	1	0	3	0.05%
Judiciary	0	1	139	17	0	157	2.51%
Legislature and Legislative Agencies	0	1	6	0	0	7	0.11%
Governmental Employee-Employer	0	0	11	0	0	11	0.18%
Local Government							
City Government	714	26	0	0	0	740	11.81%
County Government	1485	27	0	0	0	1512	24.13%
Metropolitan/Regional Government	17	1	0	0	0	18	0.29%
Community Based Correctional Facilities/Prograı	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Schools & School Districts	61	4	0	0	0	65	1.04%
Special Projects	1	0	0	0	8	9	
Non-Jurisdictional							
Non-Iowa Government	0	71	110	28	0	209	3.34%
Private	0	18	343	39	0	400	6.38%
Totals	**5208**	**340**	**613**	85	20	**6266**	**100.00%**

STAFF

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Website: https://ombudsman.iowa.gov/

Office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except on designated state holidays.

Robert D. Ray

Governor of Iowa

First Inaugural Message

January 16, 1969

"As a step in combatting the perilous impersonality of government and in giving citizens a renewed sense of direct participation in their government, the ***office of ombudsman should be established****, subject to appointment by the Governor and confirmation by the Senate. The concept has a 160-year history under consideration in more than half of our fifty states. An ombudsman would serve as a channel for redressing individual grievances which are beyond the reach of present court procedures and leave many people voiceless. Additionally, the ombudsman would analyze grievances and seek better administration of public agencies. He would improve the performance of legislative functions through identification of recurring problems which may require corrective legislation. Finally, experience has shown that an ombudsman improves the morale of public servants and increases public confidence in them, by ventilating unfounded criticism and rejecting unfounded complaints."*