

OSBM

**STAFFING ANALYSIS OF
THE YOUTH ADVOCACY &
INVOLVEMENT OFFICE**

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Prepared By:

Office of State Budget and Management

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study: In accordance with Section 22.4 of S.L. 2008-107, the Office of State Budget & Management (OSBM) conducted a staffing analysis of the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (YAIO) to determine if the staffing is appropriate for the workload volume.

BACKGROUND

In 1972, the General Assembly created the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth in the Department of Human Resources and the Youth Involvement Office in the Department of Administration (DOA). In 1983, the General Assembly merged these advocacy functions into a single State office, the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (YAIO). The N.C. Child Advocacy Institute, later renamed Action for Children, also emerged during this time to provide statewide reporting, data collection, and advocacy services.

As stated in Results-Based Budgeting (RBB) documents completed by YAIO, the purpose of the office is to:

- Promote positive programs for youth;
- Provide college and law students with state government internship experiences (G.S. 143B-417-419);
- Act as an advocate for children and youth in state and local government (G.S. 143B-414);
- Identify unmet needs of children and youth and recommend new programs or improvements in existing programs by law (G.S. 143B-414); and
- Provide administrative and staff support for the Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) program and four councils: State Youth Council, State Youth Advisory Council, N.C. Internship Council, and the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth (G.S. 143B-385-388; 143B-415-416).

YAIO incurred \$945,817 in 2007-2008 expenditures, including staffing costs of \$582,711 for 10 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions and payments of \$300,822 for 100 summer interns, who were employed in various State agencies.

Methodology: OSBM analysts:

- Reviewed YAIO budget and position data for three years;
- Studied staff time records and production reporting methods;
- Conducted core duty exercises;
- Studied caseload reviews;
- Analyzed organizational charts and operational span of control;
- Conducted interviews with 10 full-time staff, a number of related state agencies, non-profits, and other states with similar agencies; and
- Reviewed the YAIO mission and statutory requirements, missions of other North Carolina child service agencies, and missions of child service agencies in selected other states.

FINDINGS

1. Findings Related To YAIO Staffing and Workload Volume

Using an OSBM functional area mapping exercise, YAIO staff grouped their duties and time spent among eight core functions: executive management, technical assistance, outreach and marketing, employee education and training, human resource management, fiscal management, budget and analysis, and purchasing. This exercise helped to identify where staff spent most of

their time among the YAIO's core functions. Table 1 shows how salary dollars and FTEs were allocated among YAIO's core mission areas:

Table 1

Function or Service	2007-08 Actual Expenditures	Salary Dollars	FTEs
Youth Legislative Assembly/Youth Councils	\$145,324	\$74,668	1.77
SADD	\$123,099	\$63,249	1.44
Internship Program	\$402,139	\$52,058	1.33
Case Advocacy	\$125,141	\$64,298	1.58
Class Advocacy	\$150,112	\$77,128	1.69
Administration*	*Included with above functions	\$117,803	2.19
Total	\$945,817	\$449,204	10.00

Table 1 indicates that the 10 FTEs are fairly evenly distributed among YAIO's functional areas, although YAIO staff have areas of specialty and primary focus.

YAIO's core areas include:

Youth Legislative Assembly: Approximately 1.77 of YAIO's 10 FTEs are allocated toward activities in the Youth Legislative Assembly (YLA) and State Youth Councils. YLA is a mock legislative session for high school students held at the General Assembly. Other work includes administrative work for State and Local Youth Councils and oversight of a mini-grant program that allows youth to allocate funds for local projects. The YLA event itself is annual, but planning and set up for the event involves more than one staff person in the three to four months prior to the actual event.

SADD Program: Approximately 1.44 of YAIO's 10 FTEs are allocated toward activities with the Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) program. Formerly known as Students Against Driving Drunk, the SADD program expanded to assist young people in conducting school awareness programs to combat use of drugs and alcohol. Duties in this category include preparation for an annual SADD conference and continued outreach and presence in the public schools.

Internship Program: Approximately 1.33 of YAIO's 10 FTEs are allocated toward the Internship Program. YAIO oversees the program and helps the N.C. Internship Council review project proposals and screen applicants for 100 paid internships in state agencies. Although internships are offered during the summer, applicant and project screening takes place in months prior to the project placement, and preparation work resumes shortly after the end of the summer term.

Case Advocacy: Approximately 1.58 of YAIO's 10 FTEs are allocated toward Case Advocacy for children and youth. YAIO receives complaints by telephone or e-mail and either addresses the complaint directly or refers the complaint to a number of state and local resources or non-profit agencies. Complaints remain open and are considered "active" until resolution is achieved or "until all options for assistance have been exhausted." Table 2 distinguishes between the number of new or referred cases, and the average caseload per three advocacy specialists.

Table 2

Advocacy Cases:	2006-2007	2007-2008
New Cases	166	132
Information & Referral	48	87
Total Cases	214	219
Total Per Advocacy Specialist:	71	73

Although this appears to be a high level of cases per specialist, the time spent per case varies, and as noted in the table, between 22-40% of cases per year were for information and referral only, requiring less of their involvement.

Class Advocacy: Approximately 1.69 of YAIO's 10 FTEs are allocated toward Class Advocacy for children and youth. This area includes: serving on various statewide task forces and committees; attending legislative meetings and monitoring legislation; developing collaborative relationships with other state agencies and non-profits that serve children and youth; and helping to develop reports or legislation on related topics. The three advocacy specialists spend part of their time in this category, as well as the YAIO Executive Director and Assistant Director.

Administration: Approximately 2.19 of YAIO's 10 FTEs are allocated toward administration of the department. This category represents the heaviest responsibilities of the Executive Director and Assistant Director, with some involvement by the Administrative Secretary and Processing Assistant across agency functions.

Cross-Training/Succession-Planning

Agency cross-training seems adequate for an agency of this size. Although staff have primary functions, at least four positions can shift to assist with duties in another area. All staff indicated some time spent helping with statewide agency conferences, such as the Youth Legislative Assembly or SADD Conference. The Assistant Director indicated spending approximately 40% of her time on YAIO human resource management duties, thus freeing the Executive Director to spend more time on class advocacy work. The Assistant Director can act as agency director in the Executive Director's absence. Both the Executive Director and Assistant Director can shift to assist in different agency functions and divide a portion of their time across all areas of the agency.

Other States

OSBM analysts surveyed four other southeastern states with an identifiable youth advocacy agency. The size, supervising agency, and mission of these agencies varied, as illustrated in Table 3:

Table 3

State	Name	Supervising Agency	Number of Staff	Duties
North Carolina	Youth Advocacy & Involvement Office	Department of Administration (DOA)	10 (Full-Time) + 100 part-time summer interns	Administers Youth Legislative Assembly and councils; SADD; Internship program; Case and Class Advocacy
Florida	Florida Statewide Advocacy Council	Governor's Office	5 (+ 250 volunteers in Local Advisory Councils)	Serves as independent third-party to protect human rights of clients receiving state services – not specific to children; handles appeals from Local Advisory Boards
Georgia	Office of the Child Advocate	Governor's Office	11 (5 on Child Fatalities team; 6 on Operational, Investigative & Policy team)	Provides advice for at-risk families and foster children; researches complaints about state child-serving agencies; collects Child Fatality data.
South Carolina	S.C. Office of Children's Affairs	Governor's Office	1 (+ attorneys in Governor's Office)	Provides constituent services for children and refers to service providers; mediates cases that are appealed to Governor's Office
Tennessee	Tennessee Commission on Children & Youth	Independent Commission reporting to the Governor	44 (+ 26 commissioners in governance)	Improves coordination of services; collects and disseminates data; tracks legislation; evaluates delivery of services to children in state custody; administers federal and state grants.

Because of the varying size and nature of the work, it is difficult to make a direct comparison to the headcount or workload of North Carolina's YAIO. The following patterns are worth noting:

- Of the agencies in other states surveyed, most have some direct supervision by the Governor's Office, with one structured as an independent commission. North Carolina's YAIO reports to DOA.
- North Carolina's YAIO is larger than equivalent offices in South Carolina and Florida, but significantly smaller than Tennessee or Georgia. This is tied to what each agency has been asked to accomplish.
- North Carolina's YAIO does not have an attorney on staff, although Georgia does. In Tennessee, the director is an attorney. South Carolina's Office of Children's Affairs has access to Governor's Office attorneys. North Carolina's YAIO could access attorneys within DOA.

- The duties of North Carolina's YAIO do not precisely match any of the surveyed states. Of these states, only YAIO administers an internship program, a SADD program, and a Youth Legislative Assembly and youth councils. All the other agencies have some level of research and referral in case and class advocacy. However, YAIO has not been empowered to oversee or coordinate services for children, as in Tennessee, or to conduct a binding form of mediation between disputing state agencies, as in South Carolina. Although YAIO can conduct investigations, write reports, recommend legislation, and help coordinate communications among various agencies, its role is more of ombudsman than enforcer.

Internal Tracking

OSBM analysts noted some difficulty in quantifying some of YAIO's accomplishments, particularly in the areas of case and class advocacy. Part of the explanation may be that it is difficult to put a numeric value on outcomes in the human service field. Some YAIO functions, such as the level of satisfaction with the Internship Program, are relatively easily quantified and reflected in Results-Based Budgeting (RBB) documents. It is more challenging to measure the impact of YAIO involvement with task forces or attendance at legislative meetings.

An internal tracking database, such as Microsoft Access, could be developed with internal DOA resources and would allow YAIO to automate case statistics, help track time spent, and document objectives and results of their class advocacy and other functions.

Section Summary Related To Staffing and Workload

Based on a review of YAIO's functional area mapping exercises, study of the case workload volume for advocacy specialists, interviews with staff, and analysis of the youth advocacy and involvement function in neighboring states, YAIO has an adequate staffing level for its current workload volume. The agency could do a better job of measuring program outcomes through an automated internal tracking system.

2. Findings Related To YAIO's Mission & Location

As explained in Section 1, YAIO's stated mission is shaped by legislation (G.S. 143B-385-388 and 143B-414-419). The agency's services and success measures are documented in OSBM's RBB documents. Yet YAIO's involvement with many state agencies and non-profit entities can yield confusion as to how it can best fulfill these missions.

Statutory Authority

Legislation creates certain powers and duties for DOA to advocate for children and youth, through the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth. DOA assigned YAIO to provide many of these functions.

Table 4 summarizes key provisions of the statute, whether or not YAIO has a role in providing the service, and possible other agencies or non-profits that might fulfill that role. The table distinguishes between language that establishes a council or group and language that prescribes a mission or action.

Other state agencies include the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); Justice and Public Safety (JPS) agencies; and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

Table 4	YAIO	Local Schools	DHHS	JPS	AOC	Non-Profits, Universities	Special Task Forces
Statute and Function Summary							
Statutes Related to YAIO “Mission” Functions:							
143B-414(2): Governor’s Advocacy Council on Children and Youth in the Department of Administration (GAC-DOA) provides assistance in development and coordination of child advocacy systems.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
143B-414(3): GAC-DOA performs continuing review of existing programs for children, youth, and families.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
143B-414(4): GAC-DOA identifies needs of children, youth, families not currently being met; recommends new programs.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
143B-414(5): GAC-DOA reviews new programs proposed by State agencies; recommends changes to avoid duplication.							
143B-414(6): GAC-DOA meets at least annually with Governor with written report on health, well-being of children.							
143B-414(7): GAC-DOA provides information to public about agencies serving children, youth, families	X	X	X	X		X	
143B-414(8): GAC-DOA performs other advisory functions assigned by DOA or legislative committee.	X						
143B-416: Requires entities that direct children/youth programs to provide GAC with all related information.	X						
Statutes that “Establish” Functions:							
143B-385 (1-5): Creates State Youth Advisory Council	X						
143B-386: Establishes membership of Youth Advisory Council, including clerical help by DOA staff.	X						
143B-387: Establishes State Youth Council	X						
143B-387.1: Creates Youth Advocacy and Involvement Fund	X						
143B-388: Establishes purpose for Local youth councils	X						
143B-414(1): Creates GAC-DOA to advocate for children and youth in State/local governments and agencies.	X						
143B-415: Establishes membership of GAC, including clerical help by DOA staff.	X						
143B-417(1-3): Creates N.C. Internship Council in DOA; authorizes to screen applications and select agency proposals.	X						
143B-418: Establishes Internship Council membership, including clerical help by DOA staff.	X						
143B-419: Establishes committees for screening applications.	X						

Although General Statutes did not create YAIO specifically, the legislation did charge the DOA with the above responsibilities. In turn, DOA determined YAIO to be the logical agency to fulfill most of these duties. A review of the above shows that in a few instances, mandated functions are not being done by the division. Specifically, OSBM analysts could not determine that there had been any meetings of the Governor’s Advocacy Council on Children and Youth since 2002; YAIO is not producing the report on the health of our children, nor is there a formal process by which it reviews new programs to ensure no duplication occurs.

On the other hand, YAIO often serves the role of liaison between state and local entities and non-profit agencies. OSBM analysts found several examples of this inter-connectivity:

- State Agencies and Schools

OSBM analysts reviewed at least six specific cases where YAIO advocates helped citizens access services within schools or state agencies. In each case, YAIO served the role of facilitator and expedited resolution, helping explain a system process or providing the link between local and state entities across jurisdictions. OSBM analysts found that these agencies do provide appeals processes that could have resulted in the same outcome, although perhaps not as quickly without YAIO involvement.

- Non-Profits

Representatives of several non-profits told OSBM analysts that they refer cases regularly to YAIO, because YAIO is more informed and better connected to state agencies. Some non-profits, such as Advocates for Children Services, view their work as complementary to YAIO. While YAIO does not provide legal services, Advocates for Children Services does provide these services. Other non-profits, such as the Charlotte Council for Children, have a more defined geographic area, or in the case of Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina, have a more specific target mission than YAIO.

Action for Children, which shares a common history with YAIO from its formation in the early 1980s, refers cases to YAIO and receives statistical data from YAIO on children and families. YAIO also provides Action for Children with information on the work of state and local youth councils. As part of its data-gathering and research, Action for Children produces documents such as the *Child Health Report Card* and the *North Carolina Children's Index*. YAIO does not produce a regular report of this nature.

Although YAIO has an established role in fulfilling most of the statutory requirements, the agency's role with G.S. 143B-414(5-6) is unclear. These sections of the statute stipulate that the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth will:

- Review new programs proposed by State agencies and recommend changes to avoid duplication (Section 5);
- Meet at least annually with the Governor with a written report on the health and well-being of children and the effectiveness of current programs and the need for new programs (Section 6).

YAIO's review of new programs and its recommendations for change occur largely through its class advocacy efforts and membership on task forces. Action for Children has taken on more of a role of producing the statewide reports more closely identified with Section 6, although these reports are not specifically written for the Governor. OSBM analysts could not find evidence of an annual meeting between the Governor and the Advocacy Council.

OSBM's analysis shows that there is no one agency or one clear voice to fulfill all the duties outlined in G.S. 143B-414.

- Task Forces

YAIO staff serve on multiple child and youth task forces with other state agencies and non-profits. While such task forces and councils help fulfill the statutory goals of coordinating child advocacy systems, reviewing existing youth programs, and identifying needs that are not currently being met, no single work group or agency is designed to accomplish these goals. YAIO's presence on these groups can assist in providing a cross-agency connection and access to youth activities occurring in communities statewide. However, in the category of class advocacy, OSBM analysts could not verify clear objectives or related results attained by YAIO personnel.

Section Summary Of Findings Related To Mission And Functions:

As noted above, YAIO has collaborated with various state agencies and non-profits and has made itself a key player on task forces and boards. Depending on the case, YAIO may be a liaison, a central contact point, a process and procedure auditor, an information or referral source, or a voice for change. As YAIO has worked to accomplish its stated

mission, it has become the default contact point for many in North Carolina who do not know where else to seek assistance. However, specific objectives and accomplishments should be better identified and documented, especially in the class advocacy area.

Over time, different agencies and non-profits have taken leadership of fulfilling the legislative requirements. While YAIO has played a key role as information provider, the fragmentation of statutory obligations has helped decentralize children and youth services, with no key player ensuring that all legislative requirements are met.

Based on OSBM's review, other entities appear to perform similar functions as YAIO. OSBM analysts reviewed six specific cases provided by YAIO that involved cross-over with other agencies. YAIO's involvement helped expedite resolution. Analysts determined that agencies themselves might have resolved the issues if the citizen had been aware of agency procedures or appeals processes, but they were more familiar with YAIO. One advantage of YAIO's involvement in advocacy cases is that it serves as a neutral site under the DOA umbrella. However, the lack of central resource for youth advocacy programs was a recurring theme during the study.

In other cases, where YAIO is performing services (such as youth councils, youth legislature, and the Internship Program), there are other entities that are performing similar tasks and would require only additional funds for the direct cost of the services. For example, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Government convenes a Youth Advisory Committee through the N.C. Civic Education Consortium. The Office of State Personnel's mission is recruitment of current and future public service employees, and has access to all agencies to facilitate this. OSBM recognizes that these services are not always identical, and therefore recommends that DOA re-examine YAIO's mission and services to better align them with statutory goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although OSBM found that the staffing appears to be adequate for its current mission, OSBM analysts recommend an examination of YAIO's enabling statutes and the role of the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth due to concerns about clarity of mission and potential duplication of effort. OSBM provides the following options:

Option 1:

- Keep YAIO's current staffing structure intact, given that needed services are currently being provided with adequate staffing levels.
- Develop a more robust and quantitative internal tracking system using existing software within YAIO to benchmark accomplishments and show results of activities, most notably in class advocacy.
- Review and revise the statutes enabling the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth to determine whether to retain the Council and whether YAIO or some other agency or non-profit is to accomplish these goals.

Option 2:

- Retain Option 1's recommendation to develop an internal tracking system to benchmark accomplishments.
- Retain Option 1's recommendation to review and revise the statutes enabling the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth.
- Given the current economic climate, temporarily reduce the number of internships in order to reduce expenses. A reduction of available internships would diminish opportunities for students and state agencies. In 2009, YAIO has received 714

applications for 100 vacancies, reflecting an increased demand of about 20% over the previous year.

Option 3:

In light of the findings discussed on pages 7-9, the Department of Administration, with assistance from an independent body, should initiate a review of youth advocacy and involvement functions being performed throughout state government and the not-for-profit community. This should be done in addition to reexamining the specific functions of YAIO and objectively determining the best location for each mandated statutory service. Based on that objective review, DOA should develop a plan to streamline and, where appropriate, relocate functions by June 2010. Appendix A has a summary of organizational options that have been discussed in prior years.

As part of this review, DOA should first examine the statutes enabling the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth, as explained in Options 1 & 2.

CONCLUSIONS

1. YAIO staffing levels seem appropriate for the existing workload and mission, based on a review of YAIO functional areas, workload volume, comparison to neighboring states, and interviews with staff.
2. YAIO should identify its goals and objectives for each advocacy activity and document these results accordingly.
3. YAIO can better track the progress of cases and results of activities through an internal database or some other electronic tracking system. Such a system would help quantify the agency's accomplishments, especially in service areas more difficult to measure.
4. Statutes governing the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth should be reviewed. At least one task assigned to this Council – to provide the Governor with an annual written report of the health and well-being of North Carolina's children and the effectiveness of current programs – has not been completed, and there is no record of the Council meeting since 2002. YAIO has assumed most (but not all) of the duties outlined in related statutes, per the authority of DOA.
5. A review of functions and budget constraints may dictate the reorganization of YAIO services. Such a restructuring would involve statutory revisions and budget reallocations. If this is pursued, OSBM recommends that this review take place by June 2010.

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Related to the Governor's Advocacy Council

A statutory change would be needed to move functions from DOA and to revise the powers and duties of the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth. As summarized in a May 2004 study by the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University, North Carolina is one of only two states to house child advocacy and youth involvement programs in a DOA-type agency. Most states, such as those illustrated in Table 3 of this report, locate this function in the Office of the Governor.

However, proponents of maintaining YAIO's current location within DOA explain that this structure allows YAIO to be a neutral information and advocacy source, where it does not need to represent the interests of any one agency. Relocating all of YAIO's functions to another state agency could remove this neutrality and compromise YAIO's ability to mediate across different stakeholders. Locating YAIO in the Office of the Governor could add a political element to the agency that complicates this neutrality as well.

As mentioned earlier in this report, several agencies and non-profits YAIO have assumed different functions outlined in G.S. 143B-414. If reorganization is to take place, OSBM analysts recommend a corresponding examination of these statutes to ensure that legislative intent is being met.

Related to a State Advocacy Office

The Sanford Public Policy study recommends an option to combine all six existing state advocacy agencies into a single state advocacy office:

- YAIO;
- Department of Veterans' Affairs;
- Council for Women and Domestic Violence Commission;
- Commission on Indian Affairs;
- Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities;
- Human Relations Commission.

The advantages of such a consolidation include: (1) producing economies of scale, eliminating duplicative functions, consolidating administrative support; (2) bringing together agencies with a common purpose – advocacy services for citizens; and (3) increasing the visibility of advocacy agencies. If the new office is administered under the DOA umbrella, it could maintain an indirect relationship with DOA for accounting, administrative, and personnel support. Under this plan, the office would be managed by a Governor-appointed executive director, with each of the six executive directors becoming non-exempt agency directors.

The disadvantage of such a plan, at least given the current economic climate, is the initial expense and re-education effort of creating a new office. Eventually, advocacy services could be housed at one location, eliminating the need for some rental space now being occupied. The public would also need to be educated about the existence and purpose of the new office.