

# **FY2016**

# **MENTAL HEALTH**

# **OMBUDSMAN**

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## **ANNUAL REPORT**

The Mental Health Ombudsman works to improve Montana citizens' access to public mental health services and to resources available when citizens are transitioning between services. This is our annual report to the Governor and includes recommendations for the continuing transformation of the public mental health system.

**Mental Health Ombudsman Office**

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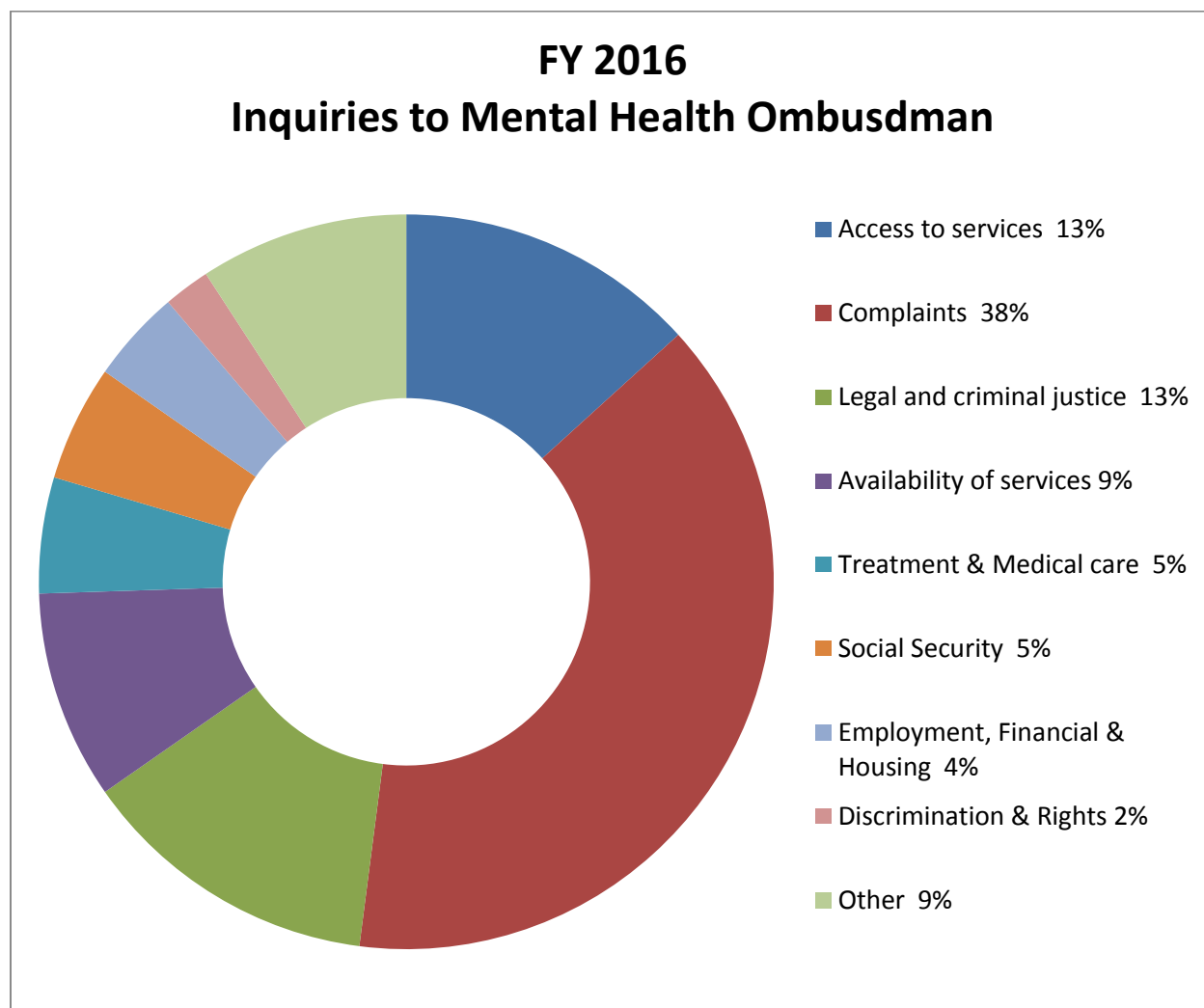
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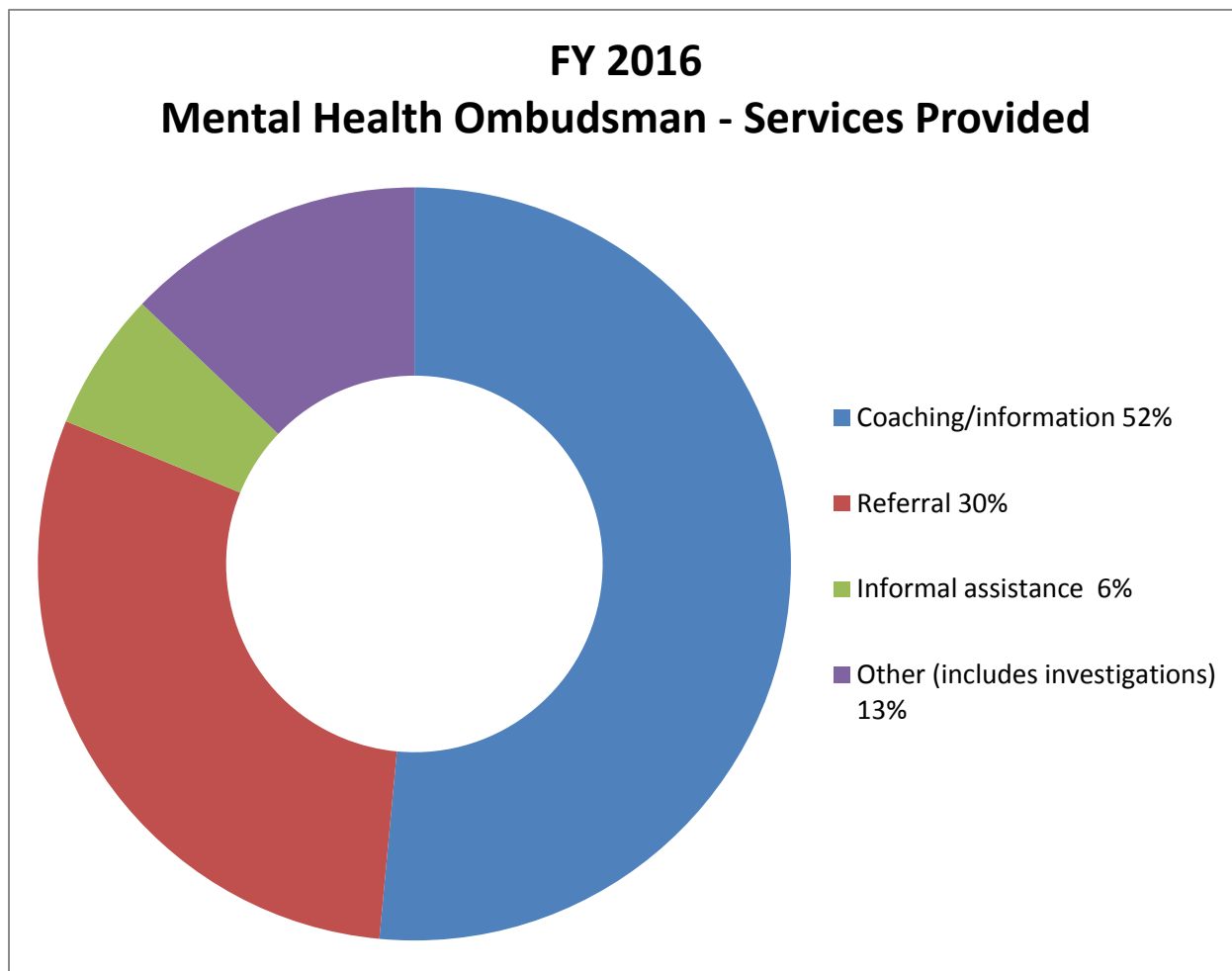
## **Office of the Mental Health Ombudsman - FY2016**

1. From the period of July 2015 through June 2016, the Mental Health Ombudsman Office received over 375 calls. Some of the issues this office was contacted with include:
  - Limited availability and/or access for individuals regarding mental health services
  - Housing – little or very limited/no housing options
  - Lack of or limited access to mental health providers
  - Social Security and Medicaid
  - Individual mental health rights
  - Access to mental health care within or transitioning from the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems
  - Guardianship issues/concerns for parents/loved ones of individuals with mental illness
2. As of September 2015, the Mental Health Ombudsman brought on board Christina Ward, Mental Health Services Specialist, with this office. Christina came from Montana Psychiatry (Billings) and brought expertise in helping individuals navigating through the mental health system and services.
3. As the Mental Health Ombudsman, attended and participated in numerous meetings and on committees, with the following being some of the highlights:
  - Service Area Authorities around the state (Western Service Area Authority, Central Service Area Authority, Eastern Service Area Authority).
  - Montana Mental Health Oversight Advisory Council (MHOAC)
  - Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities.
  - Admission and Discharge Review Team (ADRT) meetings in Warm Springs.
  - MACO Jail Advisory Group (JAG)
  - Montana Lifespan Respite Coalition
  - Local Advisory Councils (LAC)
4. The Mental Health Ombudsman was involved in many outreaches/activities throughout the state, including:
  - Assisted Montana Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors with some of their schedules site visits to mental health facilities around the state.
  - Participating in multiple events around the state, including: Montana Conference on Mental Illness, Montana Recovery Conference, Healthy Minds Mental Health Fair, Montana Conference on Suicide Prevention, Big Sky Policy Summit, along with many others.
  - Attended the Mental Health (Enhanced Treatment) Court in Billings and Co-Occurring Treatment Court in Missoula.
  - Actively involved with CIT Montana, assisting with training and resources for law enforcement and mental health professionals regarding the Crisis Intervention Team model.
  - Working with the Montana Suicide Prevention Coordinator and the EAP Program Manager, travelling throughout the state on the Suicide Prevention Campaign providing Suicide Prevention trainings and awareness to State of Montana employees.
  - Travelled to various communities throughout the state networking with the local mental health facilities/providers, providing training and services available through the Mental Health Ombudsman Office.

## FY2016 Mental Health Ombudsman Statistics at-a-glance (Inquiries)



**FY2016 Mental Health Ombudsman Statistics at-a-glance (Services Provided)**



## **MENTAL HEALTH OMBUDSMAN WORK PLAN 2017**

The Mental Health Ombudsman shall represent the interests of individuals with regard to the need for public mental health services, including individuals in transition from public to private services. (M.C.A. 2-15-210)

### **Goal #1:**

The Mental Health Ombudsman will actively engage with Montana's mental health facilities, mental health providers, mental health organizations, and State of Montana agencies associated with mental health, to discuss and have continuous dialogue regarding mental health issues and/or concerns.

### **Goal #2:**

The Mental Health Ombudsman will work on creating/having an internal database to use when providing coaching, assistance, and referrals for consumers and their family members.

### **Goal #3:**

The Mental Health Ombudsman will maintain ongoing communication with the Governor's Office regarding major issues with the mental health system and the services that are available in mental health occurring throughout Montana.

### **Goal #4:**

The Mental Health Ombudsman will take part in and contribute to activities that promote good mental health system services, including conducting community education, town meetings, and community activities that involve mental health activities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Nearly every community in Montana has been designated as a mental health professional shortage area. This is a challenge that requires creative solutions to provide quality, appropriate public mental health services across our state. The following are the recommendations from my office:

### Children –

- ✓ Continue expanding in-state service options that can provide comprehensive, community-based, evidence-based, recovery focused programs to children.
- ✓ Increase capacity of providers to use wraparound services through training and funding opportunities.
- ✓ Develop long-term strategic planning protocols for children with developmental and mental disabilities that will continue through adulthood – helping with the transition between children’s and adult services.
- ✓ Further assure access to services for high risk children with multiagency needs.

### Adults –

- ✓ Increase the amount of funding available for individuals and family members to use legal services for legal/housing consequences that occur as a result of mental illness.
- ✓ Assisting providers with the recruitment and retention of front line mental health workers. This is the single most important hindrance to care in Montana – the fact that case managers, therapists, and social workers turn over and burn out at such a high rate.

### Other –

- ✓ Encourage active participation by consumers, family members, advocates and others in community based mental health services.
- ✓ Continuous support for:
  - Community integrated care
  - Community drop in centers
  - Community based suicide prevention training
  - Community crisis stabilization projects