

Listening Session Questions for Stakeholders: Foreign Embassies

Thank you all very much for attending this listening session. We are looking forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas. Your participation in this session is completely voluntary and you can decide to leave at any point. We will be taking notes during the session so that we may later review and reflect upon the ideas and to actively take them into consideration as we stand up the Unaccompanied Children Office of the Ombuds (UCOO). These notes will be used for internal use only and will not be shared with anyone outside of UCOO. Your identity will not be included in the notes and not associated with any responses, which will be kept private. The estimated time to complete the session today is one (1) hour.

Please note that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB number for this collection is: 0970-0630, and the expiration date is March 31, 2027. If you have any comments on this collection of information, please contact Leah Chavla, Senior Advisor to the Unaccompanied Children Ombuds, at leah.chavla@acf.hhs.gov or 202-838-3307.

The UCOO is an impartial and confidential entity that is independent from ORR and can conduct investigations and make recommendations to ORR regarding ORR's care and custody of unaccompanied children. The authority for the government to set up this new office became effective in July 2024. As we are working on hiring staff and building out the office, we wanted to meet with you very early on to hear your thoughts and ideas for how an office such as ours could be of most help to you, the respective Embassies and governments you represent, as well as on behalf of the children from your countries who are or have been in ORR care.

- 1) *Roles, Expectations, and Collaboration with the Unaccompanied Children Office of the Ombuds (UCOO)*
 - Keeping in mind the mandate and authority of the UCOO, as established in the Unaccompanied Children Program Foundational Rule, what roles do you envision the UCOO to have on:
 - o Individual inquiries
 - o Broader concerns (issues affecting multiple inquiries or multiple reports of the same or similar concern)
 - o Identifying positive / best practices that should be replicated?
 - Consistent with other Ombuds offices, UCOO will also work 'informally' – that is, it will work independent of formal compliance or adjudicative structures and does not issue binding decisions or mandate certain actions. What informal functions/what other activities or duties would you recommend that the UCOO take on?
 - How can UCOO foster collaboration with your Embassy/ies and consular networks? Can you provide some concrete examples? (For instance, if 'periodic stakeholder meetings' are suggested, additional details related to cadence/structure/desired outcome(s) of the meeting are helpful.)
 - What does success look like for the UCOO?

- 2) *Intake Form and Outreach*

Individuals who wish to reach out to the UCOO regarding the care or custody of unaccompanied children may currently do so via email or through an online inquiry platform. At present, the form collects only minimal information and individuals can submit the form anonymously. While UCOO will preserve the ability for individuals to contact UCOO anonymously, UCOO is considering the addition of several fields to help clarify important information about each inquiry, including the topic and resolution desired (if applicable), as well as adding text to share with the inquirer about UCOO's confidentiality policies and how the information will be used and stored. UCOO believes this will also help with its own reporting requirements and in better identifying and tracking trends.

- What fields would you recommend (if any) to add to UCOO's intake form?
- What information would be important to tell the inquirer up front prior to submitting the complaint or report?
- How can UCOO make the intake form more accessible?
- Outside of a form, what other ways/methods could UCOO utilize to make itself more available to individuals who may wish to contact our office?
- What other information or types of information would be helpful to include on the UCOO website?

3) *Reporting*

The UCOO has the authority and responsibility to receive, investigate and informally address complaints about government actions, make findings and recommendations and publicize them when appropriate, and publish reports on its activities.

- What would you recommend to UCOO when deciding whether to publish certain findings? How should UCOO determine the 'appropriateness' of doing so while maintaining confidentiality?
- What types of information would be helpful for UCOO to include in its annual report? (which will be made public)
- What other recommendations do you have for how the UCOO can best navigate public spaces/foster transparency around its work and build trust?

4) *Do you have any other recommendations or ideas you would like to share with us regarding the set up or operations of the UCOO?*