

An Ombudsman office does not replace but rather complements and supplements other resources within an organization (e.g., human resources, ethics, legal, EAP) by providing important functions that are not provided, in full, by these other services. An Ombudsman often works in concert with different services in an organization to help with resolution of concerns, but does so in a manner that preserves the confidentiality of the individual(s) who seek Ombudsman services.

These functions include (but are not limited to):

- Provide a safe and confidential forum to surface individual, group and systemic problems
- Listen to and help clarify concerns
- Help identify underlying issues and interests
- Explore possible options through formal or informal channels
- Collect general data on emerging trends and patterns in the organization
- Make systemic recommendations for change

Typical Services Provided:

- Clarifying the Ombuds role:
 - ✓ When meeting with visitors, the Ombuds provides oral and/or written information about the role of the office and explains the cornerstone principles.
- Listening:
 - ✓ The Ombuds provides a safe place for individuals/groups to express their concerns and know that they will be heard.
- Asking strategic questions:
 - ✓ Asking strategic questions helps the Ombuds accurately understand a speaker's story, perspective, priorities, and goals.
- Providing Information and Options:
 - ✓ Ombuds provide information about policies, procedures, rules, and formal or administrative options for addressing concerns within an organization.

- **Assisting With Decision-Making:**
 - ✓ Ombuds assist visitors to determine which options are most likely to achieve their goals. Often visitors are aware of all of the options from which they may choose but, for one or more reasons, are unable to make a decision about which one(s) to implement.

- **Reviewing Correspondence:**
 - ✓ Visitors may ask Ombuds to review written correspondence before it is sent to others.

- **Making Appropriate Referrals:**
 - ✓ Ombuds sometimes refer individuals to other offices or services in the organization to assist with problem resolution.

- **Clarifying Next Steps:**
 - ✓ Before visitors leave the Ombuds Office, the Ombuds clarifies with the visitor what, if anything, will happen next and who will be responsible for taking those actions.

- **Communicating With Others:**
 - ✓ With the agreement of the visitor, the Ombuds may contact a specific party or parties to gather information relevant to a visitor's concerns or to invite another party to participate in the resolution of the concern.

- **Mediation:**
 - ✓ Mediation provides a structure allowing disputing parties to talk with one another and identify mutually acceptable solutions.

- **Group Facilitation:**
 - ✓ Facilitation assists groups to identify issues and make decisions.

- **Data Collection and Analysis:**
 - ✓ Ombuds often collect data regarding the types of problems individuals face within the organization. Using this data, Ombuds identify patterns that the Ombuds share with organizational decision-makers. This data collection and analysis function is performed while maintaining the confidentiality of all visitors to the office.