

HOW AN OMBUDS OFFICE WORKS

An Ombuds Office serves your employees and/or customers, clients, and patients who interact with the products or services your organization provides. It is a no barrier, informal, first-stop for securing guidance, insight and information to constructively manage tough issues, and to improve processes and communication.

An Ombuds Office works with individuals and groups throughout your organization: easing tensions, building trust, and helping them to better understand, explore options, and possibly resolve their problematic issues. As an unsiloed resource for the whole organization, an Ombuds Office becomes aware of systemic concerns and, without identifying any particular source, alerts senior management before these issues become major problems.

Ombuds Offices are...

- ❖ ... *independent* and outside the organization's reporting structure. An Ombuds reports to the CEO or other C-Suite person with a big-picture familiarity of the organization's strategy, goals, and planning, someone who also has the power to change policies and procedures or to initiate those changes.
- ❖ ... *confidential* off-the-record resource that enables visitors to discuss problems and concerns without fear of repercussions – a place where visitors can increase clarity and understanding, expand the number and quality of their options, and process often traumatic events in a compassionate environment. An Ombuds Office protects the identity of its visitors and the confidential information they share unless there is an imminent threat of serious harm.
- ❖ ... *informal* in its nature and structure. It will not initiate a formal investigation, which often occurs with an HR conversation. Nor will it participate in formal procedures such as an EEO action, grievance process, or lawsuit. An Ombuds Office does not keep permanent records and consulting the Ombuds will not provide formal notice to the organization.
- ❖ ... *impartial* in its approach, working to uncover or address issues that promote fair process and support all of the parties – those seeking assistance and the organization. An Ombuds will not take sides or represent any of the parties.



An Ombuds does not have authority to establish, change, or set aside any rules, policies, or management decisions. An Ombuds cannot make decisions for anyone or require any person or the organization to take action to resolve any issue.

An Ombuds Office operates within the standards of the International Ombuds Association. The rules of operation are embodied in a Charter with the organization, executed as a legally binding contract, that guarantees its independence, confidentiality, impartiality, and informality, plus protections for those who visit the Ombuds.

An Ombuds Office builds and supports fair and respectful corporate cultures that improve production and lower costs – with, for example, better control of risks, less employee turnover, and decrease of legal liabilities. It is an opportunity to solve tough challenges informally and confidentially – without the lengthy processes of formal actions, including investigations, legal obligations, and written records.