What is an organizational ombudsman?

Click here for a video overview of the role of organizational ombudsmen [1]

What’s in a Name: Ombudsperson, Ombudsman, and Ombuds?
The name “ombudsman” (om bu’dz man) comes from Swedish and literally means “representative.” At the most fundamental level, an ombudsman is one who assists individuals and groups in the resolution of conflicts or concerns. There are a number of different titles or names for this position: “ombudsman,” "ombudsperson" or “ombuds” among others. (For the purpose of this document, the term “ombudsman” will be used.)

Ombudsmen work in all types of organizations, including government agencies, colleges and universities, corporations, hospitals and other medical facilities, and news organizations.

There are different types of ombudsmen with different roles, functional responsibilities and standards of practice including: organizational ombudsman, classical ombudsman, and advocate ombudsman. While the focus of this document is to describe what an organizational ombudsman does—and does not do—it is important to distinguish between different types of ombudsmen. The standards of practice and functional responsibilities can be very different for different types of ombudsmen.

The organizational ombudsman is defined as: “a designated neutral who is appointed or employed by an organization to facilitate the informal resolution of concerns of employees, managers, students and, sometimes, external clients of the organization.”¹ The classical ombudsman ... “typically is appointed by a legislative body to represent the public with concerns of the public with regards to the conduct of governmental agencies; they conduct formal investigations.”² An advocate ombudsman is defined as one who “advocates on behalf of a designated population, such as patients in long-term care facilities.”³

The Organizational Ombudsman—Role and Function
The primary duties of an organizational ombudsman are (1) to work with individuals and
groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution.

An organizational ombudsman operates in a manner to preserve the confidentiality of those seeking services, maintains a neutral/impartial position with respect to the concerns raised, works at an informal level of the organizational system, and is independent of formal organizational structures. Successfully fulfilling that primary function in a manner consistent with the IOA Standards of Practice4 requires a number of activities on the part of the ombudsman while precluding others.

**Activities and functions** most frequently undertaken by an ombudsman include, but are not limited to:

- Listens and understands issues while remaining neutral with respect to the facts. The ombudsman doesn’t listen to judge or to decide who is right or wrong. The ombudsman listens to understand the issue from the perspective of the individual. This is a critical step in developing options for resolution.
- Assists in reframing issues and developing and helping individuals evaluate options. This helps individuals identify the interests of various parties to the issues and helps focus efforts on potential options to meet those interests.
- Guides or coaches individuals to deal directly with other parties, including the use of formal resolution resources of the organization. An ombudsman often seeks to help individuals improve their skill and their confidence in giving voice to their concerns directly.
- Refers individuals to appropriate resolution resources. An ombudsman may refer individuals to one or more formal organizational resources that can potentially resolve the issue.
- Assists in surfacing issues to formal resolution channels. When an individual is unable or unwilling to surface a concern directly, the ombudsman can assist by helping give voice to the concern and/or creating an awareness of the issue among appropriate decision-makers in the organization.
- Facilitates informal resolution processes. An ombudsman may help to resolve issues between parties through various types of informal mediation.
- Identifies new issues and opportunities for systemic change for the organization. The unique positioning of the ombudsman serves to provide unfiltered information that can produce insight to issues and resolutions. The ombudsman is a source of detection and early warning of new issues and a source of suggestions of systemic change to improve existing processes.

**What an ombudsman does not do:**

Because of the informal, neutral, confidential and independent positioning of an ombudsman in an organization, they typically do not undertake the following roles or activities:

- Participate in formal investigations or play any role in a formal issue resolution process
- Serve in any other organizational role that would compromise the neutrality of the ombudsman role
- Receive notice for the organization
- Make binding decisions or mandate policies
- Create or maintain records or reports for the organization
Skills, Training and Professional Requirements of Ombudsmen

The most important skills of an effective ombudsman include active listening, communicating successfully with a diverse range of people, remaining nonjudgmental, having the courage to speak up and address problems at higher levels within an organization, problem solving and analytical ability, and conflict resolution skills. Specific career background or academic degree is less important than acquiring and demonstrating the skill set described above. Within the ranks of IOA, you will find outstanding ombudsmen from numerous professional and academic backgrounds, including scientists, human resource professionals, mediators, professors, line managers, engineers, lawyers, accountants, and consultants.

Some organizational ombudsmen are hired internally, assuming this role after fulfilling previous roles in an organization where they have exhibited the above mentioned skills and established a widely known reputation for integrity, confidentiality and knowledge of organizational processes across functions. When hiring from the outside, an organization will often seek someone who has a background in conflict resolution and/or has established standing as an ombudsman through prior organizational experience. Ombudsmen coming from outside the organization, with no history or relationships, may be able to provide fresh perspectives and the perception of neutrality may be enhanced. Organizations might also turn to an independent ombudsman who contracts his or her services.

Formal training is invaluable in preparing for an ombudsman role. IOA offers a series of professional training courses that include skills training as well as practical instruction in establishing and maintaining an ombudsman office. Formal training in mediation and/or other conflict resolution processes is also very valuable. In order to stay on the leading edge of critical ombudsman issues, such as confidentiality and privilege, and to maintain and enhance ombudsman skills, active membership in relevant professional associations, such as the International Ombudsman Association, is vital. These associations also provide invaluable information and professional support.

1 Wesley, Margo, The Compleat Ombuds A Spectrum of Resolution Services, CPER Journal No. 166 (June 2004).
2 Rowe, Mary, Options, Functions and Skills-What an Organizational Ombudsperson Might Want to Know (1995).
3 Id.
1. What is an Organizational Ombudsman?

An Organizational Ombudsman is an individual who serves as a designated neutral within a specific organization and provides conflict resolution and problem-solving services to members of the organization (internal ombudsman) and/or for clients or customers of the organization (external ombudsman). There are Organizational Ombudsmen in all sectors (corporate, academic, governmental, non-governmental, and non-profit). Some may serve both internal and external constituencies.

An Organizational Ombudsman provides confidential, informal, independent and impartial assistance to individuals through dispute resolution and problem-solving methods such as conflict coaching, mediation, facilitation, and shuttle diplomacy. The Organizational Ombudsman responds to concerns and disputes brought forward by visitors to the office and may report trends, systemic problems, and organizational issues to high-level leaders and executives in a confidential manner. He or she does not advocate for individuals, groups or entities, but rather for the principles of fairness and equity. The Organizational Ombudsman does not play a role in formal processes, investigate problems brought to the office’s attention, or represent any side in a dispute.

2. Why the word “Ombudsman”?

The word “Ombudsman” is Scandinavian and means “representative” or “proxy.” The term is gender-neutral in origin and is used by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA)
to communicate to the widest possible community. Variations of the term exist (i.e. ombuds, ombudsperson) and are common among those practicing in the ombudsman field.

3. Are there other kinds of Ombudsmen?

Yes.

**Classical Ombudsmen**  
These Ombudsmen receive and investigate complaints and concerns regarding governmental policies and processes. The authority and mandate of Classical Ombudsmen are typically provided by statutory language. These Ombudsmen may be elected by constituents or appointed by a legislature or organization to monitor citizens’ treatment under the law. Classical Ombudsmen generally have authority to conduct investigations and make recommendations for appropriate redress or policy change.

**Advocate Ombudsmen**  
An Advocate Ombudsman may be located in either the public or private sector. He or she evaluates claims objectively but is authorized or required to advocate on behalf of individuals or groups found to be aggrieved. Advocate Ombudsmen are often found in organizations such as long-term care facilities or agencies, and organizations that work with juvenile offenders.

**Hybrid Ombudsmen**  
Hybrid Ombudsmen are usually established by policy or terms of reference by both private and public sector organizations. They primarily use informal methods to resolve complaints but also have the power to investigate and the authority to publish annual and special reports.

**Executive Ombudsmen**  
An Executive Ombudsman may be located in either the public or private sector and receives complaints concerning actions and failures to act of the organization, its officials, employees and contractors. An Executive Ombudsman may either work to hold the organization or one of its programs accountable or work with the organization’s officials to improve the performance of a program.

**Legislative Ombudsmen**  
A Legislative Ombudsman is a part of the legislative branch of a government entity and addresses issues raised by the general public or internally, usually concerning the actions or policies of government entities, individuals or contractors with respect to holding agencies accountable to the public.

**Media Ombudsmen**  
The Media, or News, Ombudsman is familiar to many people. The News Ombudsman’s primary objective is to promote transparency within his or her news organization. This Ombudsman can receive and investigate complaints about news reporting on behalf of members of the public and then recommend the most suitable course of action to resolve issues raised in the complaints. The News Ombudsman is an independent officer acting in the best interests of news consumers. He or she explains the roles and obligations of
journalism to the public and acts as a mediator between the expectations of the public and the responsibilities of journalists. (For more information, see http://newsombudsmen.org/ 1.)

4. What is “IOA”?

IOA is the International Ombudsman Association. IOA’s mission is to “support and advance the global Organizational Ombudsman profession and ensure that practitioners work to the highest professional standards.” For more information, please go to www.ombudsassociation.org [2]. There are currently more than 500 members in the IOA.

IOA has established a set of ethical principles for Organizational Ombudsman practice. These ethical principles are:
- Independence
- Impartiality
- Confidentiality
- Informality

IOA has also established Standards of Practice, which are based on the ethical principles. For more information on the IOA Code of Ethics or Standards of Practice, please go to: http://www.ombudsassociation.org/standards [3].

5. How does an Ombudsman differ from an Employee Relations/Human Resource professional?

Employee Relations and Human Resource (ER/HR) professionals assist managers and employees of the organization in establishing, following and applying Human Resource-related policies and procedures. They may conduct formal investigations, make or modify policies, and accept formal notice of a claim on behalf of the organization. As a result, the ER/HR professional cannot always extend complete confidentiality to individuals who come forward with issues. The ER/HR professional's role is not completely neutral because they are part of the management structure and they must directly represent and protect the interests of the organization.

An Ombudsman's function is to provide informal assistance in surfacing and resolving issues. While they can recommend that an organization consider establishing or revising policy, the Ombudsman plays no formal role in enforcing or deciding to implement policy. The Ombudsman does not conduct formal investigations. However, they do assist in identifying or creating options for resolution, including referrals to formal channels with investigatory powers. Because they are not part of the management structure of the organization, an Ombudsman does not accept notice for the organization and can extend near absolute confidentiality (except in the instance of imminent threat of serious harm, as jointly defined by the organization and the Ombudsman, at the discretion of the Ombudsman). The Ombudsman acts as a neutral party and does not advocate for the individual, groups or the organization. The only advocacy role is for fairness and equity.
The roles of the Ombudsman and the ER/HR professional are not competing roles, they are complementary. When the two functions work together in an effective partnership, they can yield tremendous benefit to an organization by maintaining an environment that encourages the use of multiple options to surface and resolve issues and to improve systemic policies and procedures.

6. How does an Organizational Ombudsman differ from a lawyer?

The Organizational Ombudsman’s role is quite different from that of a lawyer, who is associated with more formal processes and the legal system. An Organizational Ombudsman maintains neutrality and impartiality when working with visitors, while a lawyer must advocate for his or her client and generally uses adversarial approaches to resolve issues. Though some Organizational Ombudsmen may have legal training and experience with issues of the law, Ombudsmen do not provide legal advice.

7. Is an Ombudsman the same as a mediator?

No. An Ombudsman works to manage conflict within an organization, whereas Mediation is a specific process used for conflict resolution. Many Ombudsmen are trained as mediators and often use mediation skills and techniques as one of many approaches to problem solving and conflict management. Some Ombudsmen write written agreements after parties have reached an agreement. However, in accordance with IOA Code of Ethics, the Organizational Ombudsman engages informally with visitors and will not retain written records for confidentiality reasons. If a written agreement is reached, others in the organization, such as the HR department, will retain that document in a file.

8. How can an Organizational Ombudsman contribute to an organization?

An Organizational Ombudsman can:

1) "Humanize" an organization by providing constituents with safe and informal opportunities to be heard; assistance in identifying options for managing or resolving concerns; facilitation of communication between or among conflicting parties; conflict resolution skills training; and upward feedback to management about trends in conflicts, hot-button issues or other matters of import to organizational leaders (see Question 9 for more).

2) Help organizations reduce costs related to conflict by resolving disputes informally and helping to avoid the waste of resources, time and energy of parties in formal grievance processes and litigation.
3) Help keep top management abreast of new and changing trends within the organizational community. (See Question 9 for more).

4) Help executives and managers avoid spending excessive time attempting to resolve conflicts.

5) Refer individuals toward appropriate formal processes and resources within the organization.

For more information on the benefits of an Ombudsman office, please see: http://www.ombudsassociation.org/members/documents/BenefitsofanOmbudsmanOffice.pdf

9. Why should the leader(s) of an organization listen to an Ombudsman?

The Ombudsman is interested in being helpful to the leader, in the same way that the Ombudsman is helpful to others within the organization. An Ombudsman's orientation is toward "fair process" so he or she is likely to be sensitive to the interests and concerns of a wide range of people. An Ombudsman is likely to have a different perspective than most others to whom organizational leaders listen. He or she is likely to be familiar with multiple points of view regarding any given situation and be able to appropriately articulate the concerns of those whose voices often go unheard. The Ombudsman can also:
- Brief the leader on issues or 'hotspots' of which he or she ought to be aware, and the possible implications of those issues.
- Share what has been done so far to address the issues, taking care to maintain confidentiality.
- Identify serious potential problems that may be unforeseen or downplayed by management or employees.
- Create an opportunity for the executive to talk about things they might not be able to talk to others about.

10. Is the Organizational Ombudsman field growing?

The modern Organizational Ombudsman role began to take shape in the 1960s and 1970s. In the decades that have followed, Organizational Ombudsman offices have been established within hundreds of organizations worldwide and in every sector of society. There are various reasons for that growth, including federal legislation in the United States promoting alternative dispute resolution; legal settlements in the private sector that required the creation of ombudsman offices; and a growing recognition of the need for alternative channels for communication within organizations.
11. Would an Organizational Ombudsman work with a union to help resolve issues?

The extent to which an Ombudsman would work with a union depends in large part upon the nature of the issue. Most Ombudsmen refrain from significant involvement in issues that are specifically covered by a union contract and for which a specific, formal resolution process is mandated by the contract. However, an Ombudsman can often be a very useful informal resource for union leadership or union employees for issues that are not governed by the contract.

12. What is a charter or Terms of Reference?

The charter or Terms of Reference of an Organizational Ombudsman office is the document that generally defines the role of the Ombudsman and scope of his or her duties.

13. How does someone become an Organizational Ombudsman?

There is currently no established path to becoming an Organizational Ombudsman. A specific career background or formal academic degree is less important than one’s demonstration of skills, including non-judgmental listening; the ability to communicate successfully with a diverse range of people; courage to speak up; discretion; creativity in developing options; and problem solving and analytical ability. That is why, within the ranks of IOA, you will find Ombudsmen from all disciplines, ranging from the sciences to academia, management, human resources, law, engineering, accounting, consulting, and everything in between.

Many new Organizational Ombudsmen assume their roles after holding other jobs within their organizations. Often, they are tapped to become the Ombudsman because they have established a widely known reputation for integrity, confidentiality, and knowledge of organizational processes across functions. Their specialized experience within their organizations can make them even more effective as Ombudsmen because they have a deeper understanding and awareness of the specific issues that affect people and organizations in these fields.

Ombudsmen also may be hired from outside the organization after having served as an Ombudsman in other organizations.

Occasionally, when an organization does not or cannot appoint an Ombudsman from within, they may turn to Ombudsmen who work independently and contract their services. These Ombudsmen have typically established their professional credibility through prior experience in organizations, success with clients, and formal conflict resolution training.

Formal training can be invaluable in preparing an individual for an Ombudsman role. The IOA offers a series of professional training courses that include skills training as well as
practical instruction in establishing and maintaining an Organizational Ombudsman office. Formal training in mediation and/or other conflict resolution processes, such as facilitation and conflict coaching, is also very valuable. For more information on IOA training opportunities, please see: www.ombudsassociation.org/training/.

14. Do individuals need a license to be an Ombudsman?

There is no licensure requirement at this time. The Organizational Ombudsman field is still relatively new in the U.S. so people are selected for the position from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds (see Question 12). In 2009, the International Ombudsman Association launched a certification credential called the Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (see http://www.ombudsassociation.org/boc/ for more information). However, certification is currently not required to serve as an Ombudsman.

15. How do I become a member of IOA?

For more information on IOA and how to become a member visit: http://www.ombudsassociation.org/membership/

16. How can I get involved in IOA?

There are a number of ways in which you can get involved in the International Ombudsman Association. The organization sponsors a number of excellent training sessions and meetings each year in addition to an annual conference. For more information on these professional development events, please visit: http://www.ombudsassociation.org/training/

The work of IOA is largely completed by a number of busy and effective committees made up of volunteers. For a complete listing of the IOA committees and their functions, please visit: http://www.ombudsassociation.org/about/committees.asp

Additional resources:
Mary Rowe, MIT. Selected Ombudsman publications: http://web.mit.edu/ombud/publications/index.html


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Source URL: http://www.ombudsassociation.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions

Links:
The IOA is dedicated to excellence in the practice of Ombudsman work. The IOA Code of Ethics provides a common set of professional ethical principles to which members adhere in their organizational Ombudsman practice.

Based on the traditions and values of Ombudsman practice, the Code of Ethics reflects a commitment to promote ethical conduct in the performance of the Ombudsman role and to maintain the integrity of the Ombudsman profession.

The Ombudsman shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the organization he or she serves, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of those organizations’ practices, processes, and policies.

**ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

**INDEPENDENCE**
The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

**NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY**
The Ombudsman, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombudsman does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**
The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

**INFORMALITY**
The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.
PREAMBLE
The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.
Each Ombudsman office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE
1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.
1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.
1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate an action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman’s direct observation.
1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.
1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY
2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.
2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.
2.3 The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures.
2.4 The Ombudsman should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.
2.5 The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman’s neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.
2.6 The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.

CONFIDENTIALITY
3.1 The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following: The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual’s express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman takes specific action related to an individual’s issue only with the individual’s express permission and only to the extent permitted, and even then at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.
3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.
3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization or testify in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor’s contact with the Ombudsman or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.
3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.
3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.
3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.
3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.
3.8 Communications made to the ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The Ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the ombudsman may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

INFORMALITY AND OTHER STANDARDS
4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.
4.2 The Ombudsman as an informal and off-the-record resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.
4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.
4.4 The Ombudsman supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.
4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.
4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.
4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.
4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.
IOA Best Practices

A Supplement to IOA’s Standards of Practice

Version 3, October 13, 2009

The Best Practices guide is intended to provide guidance to Organizational Ombudsmen in practicing according to IOA Standards of Practice to the highest level of professionalism possible. Any questions or suggested revisions are welcome and should be sent to the Chair of the Professional Ethics, Standards, and Best Practices Committee.

PREAMBLE

The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.

Each Ombudsman Office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

Before implementing an Ombudsman program, an organization should educate all affected constituencies about the nature and scope of the program, including the role of the Ombudsman within the organization and the Standards of Practice that will govern the activities of the office.

Each entity that establishes an organizational Ombudsman Office should make certain that the office has a Charter that ensures that the Ombudsman will function according to the Standards of Practices and the core values of independence, impartiality/neutrality, confidentiality, and informality. These Standards of Practice will govern the way in which the Ombudsman receives complaints, works to resolve issues, and makes recommendations for the general improvement of the organization. The Charter should also specify the Ombudsman’s scope of practice, limitations on Ombudsman authority, and qualifications to be an Ombudsman.

IOA asserts that communications with an ombudsman are confidential and strives to protect confidentiality for all protected communications.

One basis for protecting confidentiality is a claim of privilege. The law on this issue is still evolving and the determination of whether such a privilege is applicable is made by courts on a case-by-case basis since there is no statute creating such a privilege. In addition, ombudsman offices have been able to protect the confidentiality of communications where program materials

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1 IOA Standards of Practice are indicated by text boxes; recommended Best Practices follow each text box. IOA Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and Best Practices are designed to guide “Organizational Ombudsmen” as distinguished from “Classical”, “Advocate”, “Executive” or other types of Ombudsmen.

2 The term Ombudsman is used to communicate to the widest possible community and is not intended to discourage others from using alternatives. IOA respectfully acknowledges that many practitioners use alternative forms of this word.
adequately state that people who use the office agree to abide by expressed confidentiality principles or where statutes dealing with alternative dispute resolution or mediation are applicable to ombudsman communications.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE

1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.

The director of the Ombudsman Office should report directly to the highest level of the organization (such as board of directors, CEO, agency head, etc.) in a manner independent of ordinary line and staff functions.

The director of the Ombudsman Office should have terms of employment that indicate that his or her stature in the organization is not subordinate to senior officials.

The Ombudsman should be able to function independently from control, limitation, or interference imposed by any official in the entity.

The Ombudsman should be protected from retaliation (such as of elimination of the office or the Ombudsman, or reduction of the Ombudsman budget or other resources) by any person who may be the subject of a complaint or inquiry.

The Ombudsman should have a set and renewable term, or should be removable only for neglect of duty, misconduct, or medical incapacity, and only by means of a fair process and procedure.

The Ombudsman should obtain assurance from the organization at the outset, and apart from any particular dispute, of access to outside legal counsel at his or her own discretion.

The expense of outside counsel should be covered by the organization and included in the overall budget for the Ombudsman Office. The Ombudsman should have an understanding with the organization that the Ombudsman is not required to inform the organization when it communicates with or accesses outside counsel.

The purpose of outside legal counsel should be to enhance the Ombudsman’s ability to practice according to the Standards of Practice. The Ombudsman should consider how outside counsel may assist in a variety of situations, including when the entity and the Ombudsman need to strategize how best to handle a discovery request made of the Ombudsman, or when the Ombudsman and the entity could benefit from consultation with outside counsel regarding how best to establish and operate the office so as to ensure the integrity of function, and to protect the Ombudsman.

1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.
See Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual’s concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman’s direct observation.

The Ombudsman should bring to the attention of the appropriate office those policies, programs, procedures or practices which may be problematic for the organization or which negatively affect people’s health, safety or rights.

The Ombudsman should issue periodic reports summarizing activities, problem areas identified, and recommendations for systemic change. Ombudsman Office materials (websites, brochures, etc.) should state that all such reporting is conducted in a manner that protects the identity of individuals and does not place the organization on notice.

1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.

1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

The Ombudsman Office must be provided with sufficient resources to operate an independent and effective program. These resources include adequate space, equipment, staffing, staff development, and the production and distribution of informational materials.

The independence of the Ombudsman Office may be supported by having the selection and evaluation of the Ombudsman, as well as the establishment of an appropriate level of funding, be determined by or in consultation with committees representative of various institutional constituencies.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.

See Section 1.2.

2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.

All members of the specified community served by the Ombudsman may voluntarily seek services from the Ombudsman Office and will be treated with respect and dignity. The Ombudsman should assure access impartially, including to people with disabilities, people who
The Best Practices guide is intended to provide guidance to Organizational Ombudsmen in practicing according to IOA Standards of Practice to the highest level of professionalism possible. Any questions or suggested revisions are welcome and should be sent to the Chair of the Professional Ethics, Standards, and Best Practices Committee.

**PREAMBLE**

The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.

Each Ombudsman Office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

Before implementing an Ombudsman program, an organization should educate all affected constituencies about the nature and scope of the program, including the role of the Ombudsman within the organization and the Standards of Practice that will govern the activities of the office.

Each entity that establishes an organizational Ombudsman Office should make certain that the office has a Charter that ensures that the Ombudsman will function according to the Standards of Practices and the core values of independence, impartiality/neutrality, confidentiality, and informality. These Standards of Practice will govern the way in which the Ombudsman receives complaints, works to resolve issues, and makes recommendations for the general improvement of the organization. The Charter should also specify the Ombudsman’s scope of practice, limitations on Ombudsman authority, and qualifications to be an Ombudsman.

IOA asserts that communications with an ombudsman are confidential and strives to protect confidentiality for all protected communications. One basis for protecting confidentiality is a claim of privilege. The law on this issue is still evolving and the determination of whether such a privilege is applicable is made by courts on a case-by-case basis since there is no statute creating such a privilege. In addition, ombudsman offices have been able to protect the confidentiality of communications where program materials

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1 IOA Standards of Practice are indicated by text boxes; recommended Best Practices follow each text box.

IOA Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and Best Practices are designed to guide “Organizational Ombudsmen” as distinguished from “Classical”, “Advocate”, “Executive” or other types of Ombudsmen.

2 The term Ombudsman is used to communicate to the widest possible community and is not intended to discourage others from using alternatives. IOA respectfully acknowledges that many practitioners use alternative forms of this word.
adequately state that people who use the office agree to abide by expressed confidentiality
principles or where statutes dealing with alternative dispute resolution or mediation are
applicable to ombudsman communications.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE

1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational
entities.

The director of the Ombudsman Office should report directly to the highest level of the
organization (such as board of directors, CEO, agency head, etc.) in a manner independent of
ordinary line and staff functions.

The director of the Ombudsman Office should have terms of employment that indicate that his or
her stature in the organization is not subordinate to senior officials.

The Ombudsman should be able to function independently from control, limitation, or
interference imposed by any official in the entity.

The Ombudsman should be protected from retaliation (such as of elimination of the office or the
Ombudsman, or reduction of the Ombudsman budget or other resources) by any person who may
be the subject of a complaint or inquiry.

The Ombudsman should have a set and renewable term, or should be removable only for neglect
of duty, misconduct, or medical incapacity, and only by means of a fair process and procedure.

The Ombudsman should obtain assurance from the organization at the outset, and apart from any
particular dispute, of access to outside legal counsel at his or her own discretion.

The expense of outside counsel should be covered by the organization and included in the overall
budget for the Ombudsman Office. The Ombudsman should have an understanding with the
organization that the Ombudsman is not required to inform the organization when it
communicates with or accesses outside counsel.

The purpose of outside legal counsel should be to enhance the Ombudsman’s ability to practice
according to the Standards of Practice. The Ombudsman should consider how outside counsel
may assist in a variety of situations, including when the entity and the Ombudsman need to
strategize how best to handle a discovery request made of the Ombudsman, or when the
Ombudsman and the entity could benefit from consultation with outside counsel regarding how
best to establish and operate the office so as to ensure the integrity of function, and to protect the
Ombudsman.

1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise
independence.
See Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual’s concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman’s direct observation.

The Ombudsman should bring to the attention of the appropriate office those policies, programs, procedures or practices which may be problematic for the organization or which negatively affect people’s health, safety or rights.

The Ombudsman should issue periodic reports summarizing activities, problem areas identified, and recommendations for systemic change. Ombudsman Office materials (websites, brochures, etc.) should state that all such reporting is conducted in a manner that protects the identity of individuals and does not place the organization on notice.

1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.

1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

The Ombudsman Office must be provided with sufficient resources to operate an independent and effective program. These resources include adequate space, equipment, staffing, staff development, and the production and distribution of informational materials.

The independence of the Ombudsman Office may be supported by having the selection and evaluation of the Ombudsman, as well as the establishment of an appropriate level of funding, be determined by or in consultation with committees representative of various institutional constituencies.

**NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY**

2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.

See Section 1.2.

2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.

All members of the specified community served by the Ombudsman may voluntarily seek services from the Ombudsman Office and will be treated with respect and dignity. The Ombudsman should assure access impartially, including to people with disabilities, people who
need language interpreters, or people whose work hours require flexibility in scheduling appointment times.

The organization should assure that all specified members of the organization have the right to consult with the Ombudsman, and retaliation for exercising that right will not be tolerated.

2.3 The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independently of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.

The Ombudsman should have direct access to the board of directors (or other oversight body as appropriate). See Sections 1.1 and 1.2.

While the Ombudsman should be an internal position, it should not report to, nor have the appearance of reporting to, any compliance office or function or the organization.

The Charter or Terms of Reference for the Ombudsman Office should state specifically that the Ombudsman does not serve as an agent of notice for the organization.

2.4 The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman’s neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.

See Sections 1.2, 4.4, and 4.5.

Except in the administrative capacity as manager of the Ombudsman Office, the Ombudsman should not participate in formal management functions or serve in any other role that poses an actual conflict of interest or creates the perception of one. For example, an Ombudsman ought not conduct formal investigations; serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization; serve as a voting member on a search committee (other than for Ombudsman staff); handle formal appeals of management actions; keep case records on behalf of the organization; or be charged in any way to make, change, enforce or set aside a law, rule or management decision.

If possible, the Ombudsman should hold only one position in the organization.

If the Ombudsman does hold another role within the organization, the different roles should be structured so that they are as separate and distinct as possible. The Ombudsman should not provide Ombudsman services to people whom the Ombudsman -- in the other role -- serves, manages, reports to, teaches, advises, or evaluates, in order to avoid partiality or perceptions of conflict of interest. The Ombudsman should provide Ombudsman services in a location that is different from the location in which the Ombudsman, in the other role, works, teaches, counsels, etc., to clarify the distinctions between roles, and to assure confidentiality and off-the-record
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informality of the Ombudsman communications. The Ombudsman’s support staff (people who take messages or receive visitors, for example) for the Ombudsman role should be separate and distinct from the support staff in any other role. The Ombudsman should continually call attention to the role in which he or she is acting at any given time, and repeatedly educate members of the organization about the principles in the Ombudsman Office’s Charter. The Ombudsman should attempt to provide alternatives for people and situations in which the Ombudsman cannot serve as Ombudsman due to actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

2.5 The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.

2.6 The Ombudsman helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.

An Ombudsman should help the visitor explore and assess an appropriate range of options, from the very informal to the most formal. Formal options may include ways to put management on notice of an issue, referrals to rights-based elements of the organization’s conflict resolution system, or the provision of information about the possibility of seeking external resources or assistance. The Ombudsman should never provide legal advice.

When the Ombudsman works with the visitor to address issues that may involve formal alternatives (under laws, policies, rules, or regulations), the Ombudsman should make clear to the visitor that an informal approach does not automatically exclude the visitor’s later participation in more formal options, but that the visitor should keep in mind possible time limits and their potential impact on the visitor’s formal options. See Section 4.4.

The impartiality of the Ombudsman Office may be supported by consultation with various organizational constituencies regarding the Ombudsman Office’s effectiveness.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

3.1 The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following: The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual’s express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman takes specific action related to an individual’s issue only with the individual’s express permission and only to the extent permitted, and even then at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.
The Ombudsman publicizes the confidential nature of Ombudsman work.

The Ombudsman Office should be situated in an appropriate location to protect the privacy of visitors to the office.

When an individual gives the Ombudsman permission to reveal his or her identity, disclose information, or act on his or her concerns, such permission must be given at the time that the Ombudsman is engaged in the informal conflict resolution process, not as part of a formal process.

The Ombudsman Office Charter for each organization should specify what types of events rise to the level of “imminent risk of serious harm.” The Ombudsman may negotiate with the organization to be exempt, based on Ombudsman confidentiality, from some mandates that require reporting by other employees. Best practice is to interpret “imminent risk of serious harm” as narrowly as possible – for example, imminent risk to human life.

3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.

The confidentiality privilege is critical to making the Ombudsman Office a place where people can raise any issue, including an alleged violation of statute, regulation, rule, policy, or ethical standard.

IOA asserts that communications made to the Ombudsman do not constitute “notice” to the organization. No one, including the employing entity, should consider the Ombudsman Office to be agent of notice (that is, an office that receives formal notice on behalf of the organization) and no one, including the entity, should seek information about communications to the Ombudsman Office.

The nature and role of confidentiality should be explained to the visitor, who should understand that the Ombudsman claims the privilege for the office and that it is not the visitor’s privilege to waive. Whenever possible, this information should be communicated prior to discussing the concerns brought by the visitor.

Visitors should understand that as a condition for accepting and benefiting from the Ombudsman Office services, they have the obligation to support the Ombudsman claim of privilege and not to attempt to breach this claim.

The Ombudsman should emphasize in office materials and with the management of the organization:

- that the ability to have confidential communications that do not constitute “notice” to the organization is essential to the effective functioning of an Ombudsman Office and distinguishes the Ombudsman from formal reporting channels;
▪ that it is the “off-the-record” aspects of the office that lead people who use the Ombudsman to do so before taking any official or formal action;
▪ that the Ombudsman Office enables people to come forward with an issue when they might otherwise be afraid to do so or when they fear retaliation from managers or peers;
▪ that only by offering the security of confidentiality can the Ombudsman facilitate organizational responsibility and accountability, which are at the heart of provisions contained in the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act that call for mechanisms of confidential reporting and/or guidance;
▪ that where issues cannot be confidentially raised, they may not be raised at all, thereby depriving the organization of an opportunity to address issues and rectify misconduct that has not yet surfaced through other channels.

3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor’s contact with or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.

The IOA Board has asked the IOA Standing Committee on Professional Ethics, Standards, and Best Practices to review the language and interpretation of 3.3. Please look for updates in the near future.

See Section 4 on informality.

3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systematically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.

Ombudsman materials should state that any Ombudsman reporting of trends, or communication of recommendations for systemic change, is done in a manner that protects the identity of individuals.

3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.

3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.

The Ombudsman record-keeping systems and/or database should be independent of the organization’s technology system, with access allowed only to Ombudsman Office personnel. The Ombudsman Office should also be secure to protect private information and records. The office should develop and implement processes and procedures to regularly purge information that could identify individual visitors to the office. Records such as phone bills, which may indicate with whom the office has communicated, should be made available only to the
Ombudsman Office staff. The Ombudsman should take all reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of any temporary notes or documents, such as locking file drawers and offices, and exercising extreme vigilance if any notes are carried from one place to another.

3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.

3.8 Communications made to the Ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The Ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the Ombudsman may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

Except in the administrative capacity as manager of the Ombudsman Office, the Ombudsman is never an agent of notice (that is, an officer who receives notice for the organization), and communications to the Ombudsman Office never constitute notice to the organization.

If a visitor wishes to make a record, or put the organization “on notice,” the Ombudsman can provide information about how to do so.

Best practice is for the organization to receive allegations of wrongdoing directly from a complainant or witness, and not indirectly through the Ombudsman.

If the visitor is reluctant to make a formal report to the organization, the Ombudsman can work with the visitor to address the reasons the visitor resists reporting, or to work with the organization to make formal reporting channels more accessible.

If the visitor gives the Ombudsman permission to discuss a concern with a manager, and if the concern may involve some allegation of wrongdoing, the Ombudsman should pass on information only in general terms (without specifying names, dates, or events). If the Ombudsman does pass on allegations of wrongdoing, the Ombudsman should emphasize the he or she has not confirmed the accuracy of the allegations. It is not appropriate for the organization to take any adverse action on the basis of information reported informally through the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman may coach the manager on how to make reporting channels more accessible or how to gather information himself or herself.

An ombudsman may place the organization on “notice” when the ombudsman evaluates the circumstances and specifically elects to place the organization on notice by identifying an appropriate point of contact within the organization and communicating to that point of contact specific information which the ombudsman expressly intends to share for the purpose of placing the organization on notice of a specific concern or specific situation. If an ombudsman makes such an intentional notice communication, confidentiality is waived only with regard to the specific communication made with the point of contact for purposes of the notice communication. It is the conversation between the ombudsman and the appropriate point of contact within the organization that constitutes notice and not the conversation between the ombudsman and the visitor. Thus, under no circumstances, is the original communication to the ombudsman part of the notice communication.
All ombudsman offices should have a well-defined and generally available procedure detailing the limited circumstances and the processes under which the ombudsman may provide notice. If the ombudsman elects to place the organization on notice under the conditions above, the ombudsman should follow the protocol of the particular ombudsman office regarding this unusual action. The protocols should include specific steps so that it is clear that the ombudsman made an intentional decision to make a notice disclosure.

**INFORMALITY AND OTHER STANDARDS**

4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.

The Ombudsman should work with the organization to encourage it to provide its constituents with a variety of effective formal (rights-based) and informal (confidential and interest-based) options for surfacing and resolving concerns. All options should be well established and clearly and regularly communicated to the entire organization.

As the visitor may wish to consult with additional resources and services, such as the employee assistance program, human resources, or the benefits office, the Ombudsman should describe resources that might be appropriate to the visitor’s presenting circumstances. See Section 2.6

The Ombudsman may consider issues, perceptions, interpretations, information, and concerns about inappropriate acts, omissions, or improprieties presented by individuals or groups.

Ombudsman functions include informal third-party intervention, such as shuttle diplomacy, facilitating communication, and informal mediation, which is voluntary and may or may not produce a written agreement.

Any documents or written agreements resulting from informal processes should not be maintained by or within the Ombudsman Office.

The Ombudsman uses a flexible approach with regard to concerns brought to the Ombudsman Office; options are tailored to individual circumstances.

4.2 The Ombudsman as an informal and off-the-record resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.

4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.

The Ombudsman should not participate in formal management functions. See Section 2.4.
4.4 The Ombudsman supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.

For most entities, it is the combination of informal services and formal grievance procedures, embodied in a conflict management system, that provides the appropriate range of options to allow for early identification and resolution of potential legal issues or concerns. The Ombudsman should give visitors information about the entity’s formal procedures and remedies whenever appropriate. While a visitor may choose to explore informal options for a wide variety of reasons, the Ombudsman should remind the visitor to keep in mind possible time limits and their potential impact on the visitor’s formal options. See Section 2.6.

The Ombudsman Charter or Terms of Reference should define the role, if any, of the Ombudsman in relation to employees and issues covered by collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). This role definition should also, where possible, be incorporated in CBAs, and should include a statement that although the CBA permits the Ombudsman to function in these defined ways, the Ombudsman nevertheless retains the authority to decline to be involved. (See Section 1.3.) The union and management may also enter into an ad hoc agreement permitting an Ombudsman to handle an issue.

4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.

The Ombudsman may be requested or required to speak with public officials, in a private or public setting, about the functions of the Ombudsman Office, or about trends published in a written report. If so, the Ombudsman should still observe the confidentiality standards as stated in 3.1 and 3.3.

4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.

The Ombudsman should be particularly careful to maintain neutrality when making recommendations for system change.

4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.

4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.

1See www.ombudsassociation.org/standards/
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