



WASHINGTON STATE

## Office of the Education Ombudsman

[www.waparentslearn.org](http://www.waparentslearn.org)



**Got Questions about public Education?**

**Call an Education Ombudsman!**

### **What is the Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO)?**

OEO is an agency in the Governor's Office, which operates independently of the public education system. OEO provides information about the elementary and secondary public education system, promotes school-family partnerships, and offers assistance to schools and families to resolve conflict.

### **What do Education Ombudsmen do?**

Ombudsmen are trained problem-solvers who bring families and educators together to resolve conflict focusing on the best interest of the student involved. They have extensive knowledge of the public education system, education laws, policies, conflict resolution techniques, and are culturally competent. Ombudsmen can make recommendations but do not have authority to force schools or school districts to take a specific action, terminate school personnel or remove elected officials from public office.

### **How do Education Ombudsmen work to resolve conflict?**

OEO accepts requests for assistance from parents, legal guardians and students in public schools who are experiencing conflict with a school or school district. An Ombudsman is assigned to work with the parent or student and the school. The Ombudsman consults with all parties, gathers information and helps all parties focus on options that will positively affect the learning environment or academic success of the student.

### **Are Education Ombudsmen advocates?**

Education Ombudsmen are impartial. They do not advocate for any particular individual. Education Ombudsmen advocate for fair and equitable processes that support students' academic success.

### **What does the word "*Ombudsman*" mean?**

"Ombudsman" is a Swedish word meaning, "*a public official appointed to receive complaints against government.*" The first public sector Ombudsman was appointed by the Swedish parliament in 1809. The concept came to the United States in the 1960's. The title "Ombudsman" is gender-neutral, used by both men and women.

### **Is contact with OEO confidential?**

Individuals who contact OEO are able to speak in confidence. Ombudsmen do not contact school staff without a written permission from parents or legal guardians.

### **What is OEO's vision and mission?**

Our vision is that Washington State families, students, and schools will become empowered partners in a responsive, accountable, and equitable education system focused on student academic success. Our mission is to promote equity in education and the academic success of all students attending elementary and secondary public schools in the state of Washington.

**Call us toll-free at 1-866-297-2597. Interpreters available for over 100 languages.**

**Visit our website: [www.waparentslearn.org](http://www.waparentslearn.org)**