

## WHAT IS THE COALITION?

---

In July 1996, the Coalition of Federal Ombudsmen (COALITION) was formed as an organization of Ombudsmen practitioners within the Federal Government.

The goals of the COALITION are to support, assist, advance, and edify:

- Those who serve Federal Government institutions as Ombudsmen;
- Those institutions considering, developing, and hosting Ombudsmen programs; and
- Those who benefit from Ombudsmen programs.

The COALITION promotes Ombudsmanship--our own and that of new practitioners--by continuously advancing attitudes, knowledge, skills and experiences.

The COALITION recognizes and honors the widely divergent constituents we serve, practices we use, and people we are.

The COALITION strives for fairness when assisting those involved with and affected by Federal agencies.

## WHAT IS AN OMBUDSMAN?

---

An Ombudsman is part of an integrated conflict management system, complementing, but not replacing, the formal dispute resolution processes.

An Ombudsman is:

### **Confidential**

The Ombudsman will not identify you or pass on information you provide in confidence to anyone without your permission, except in cases of imminent threat of serious physical harm or as required by law.

### **Neutral**

The Ombudsman considers the interests and concerns of all parties to disputes, with the aim of achieving fair outcomes.

The Ombudsman does not arbitrate, adjudicate, testify or participate in *any* formal grievance process.

### **Independent**

The Ombudsman usually reports directly to senior management and is authorized to work with all members of an organization and the public, depending on their charter.

The Ombudsman looks for trends and reports systemic and individual issues.

## WHAT DOES THE COALITION DO?

---

The COALITION represents the Federal Ombudsmen community at the Alternative Dispute Resolution Interagency Workgroup and other Ombudsmen organizations.

The COALITION members:

- share their professional skills,
- develop training opportunities that address the unique Federal environment,
- provide assistance to agencies developing Ombudsman programs,
- mentor new Ombudsman,
- work toward common goals to advance the Ombudsman profession,
- identify and communicate “best practices,” and
- promote a commitment to an inclusive workforce and excellence in program administration.

The COALITION consolidate member concerns and presents comments on proposed policies affecting Federal Ombudsmen.

## WHO CAN BE A COALITION MEMBER?

The COALITION is open to any federal employee working as an:

- Ombudsman,
- Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialists (not all positions acting under Ombudsman standards have the title Ombudsman), or
- other similar positions in a federal agency may join.

Others interested in Ombudsmanship may attend the COALITION meetings.

## WHEN AND WHERE DOES THE COALITION MEET?

The COALITION meets on a bimonthly basis at various locations sponsored by a member Ombudsman. These meetings are informal and topics discussed are brought up by the member Ombudsmen.

The COALITION holds an annual conference that includes speakers and topics related to serving as Ombudsmen in the Federal environment.

Locations and dates of these meetings are posted on the COALITION web site.

*The word OMBUDSMAN (om - buds - man) originated in Sweden during the 19th century, where the term applied to a public official appointed to investigate citizens' complaints against governmental agencies. According to one scholar, the term refers to a "person who has an ear to the people".*

*Ombudsmen listen, focus on issues and explore options, clarify procedures and policy, open channels of communication, serve as a neutral third party, and work to achieve fair and equitable solutions.*

For additional information:

See the Coalition of Federal Ombudsmen's Web Site:

at

<http://federalombuds.ed.gov>

or call

202-693-5179

## COALITION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMEN



Advancing  
knowledge, skills and experiences  
of  
Ombudsmen  
and other similar positions  
in the Federal Government.