



COALITION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN

Scott M. Deyo
Chair

William Maurer
Vice Chair

Noreen Kinnavy
Co-Secretary

Andrea Brown
Co-Secretary

Guy Weber
Coordinator

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time: August 14, 2014, 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Location: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), William Jefferson Clinton Building North, Conference Room 6013

Agenda/Topics at a Glance:

1. Micro-aggressions “Paper cuts”
2. Announcements

Discussion Topics:

- 1. Micro-aggressions or “Paper cuts”** - Andrea Brown of the Department of State and CoFO executive committee member engaged participants in a discussion on micro-aggressions. During the discussion participants provided examples of what they have encountered in their practice and ways/ strategies for handling these issues as ombudsman.

“Micro aggressions are common verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile or negative slights to marginalized groups. Perpetrators of micro aggressions are often unaware that they engage in such interactions when they interact with minorities.” (Sue, et al Columbia University, Teachers Colleges, 2007).

The discussion led to strategies that could be used by the ombudsman to assist visitors who encounter micro-aggressions. Some of the options include:

- Creating and providing a safe space to allow one to be heard and raise concerns without being dismissed.
- Assist parties in becoming aware of blind spots (unconscious / conscious bias being expressed) utilize assessment tools such as 360, climate surveys, or courses in emotional intelligence, etc.
- Facilitated dialogues with parties.
- Relationship building engages parties in constructive patterns of interaction.
- Use of allies in addressing the behavior or slight.

Further reading, *Racial Micro aggressions in Everyday Life, Implications for Clinical Practice*, by Derald Wing Sue, PhD.

2. Other Announcements/Requests:

- a. **CoFO Conference 2014** – CoFO will hold its annual conference on Tuesday, September 30, 2014 8:00 am – 4:30 pm at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Headquarters, Madison Building, 600 Dulany Street Alexandria, Virginia. There is no fee to attend the conference.
- b. **Federal Ombudsman Peer Review** - Please continue to send your comments and feedback regarding the proposed peer review program. The goal is to assist programs in assessing whether they are “doing what they have set out to do” and to strengthen the professionalism of federal government ombuds programs. The peer review process is set up to be flexible and voluntary.
- c. **Ombuds Value Project** - Please submit one example (or more) of a success story demonstrating the value of the ombudsman role. The narratives, written in a way that protects the identity of the agency and individuals involved. They will be compiled into a reference tool available to the ombudsman and conflict resolution community.
- d. **OMB MAX as a collaboration tool for COFO** – there is a cost associated with using this tool. CoFO is continuing to look into other options to have a readily accessible repository of shared resource material for federal ombudsman.

Attendees:

In Person:

Andrea Brown, Department of State
Scott Deyo, Department of Defense - NGA
Tim Rice, Department of Homeland Security – US SS
Sigal Shoham, Department of Interior

By Phone:

Emily Albertson, Federal Reserve Board
Riley Barrar, Department of Defense - AF
Dawn Bedlivy, National Security Agency
Mollie Berg, Department of Defense - NGA
Neal Cohen, Consumer Product Safety Commission
Albert Conerly, Department of Health and Human Services - FDA
Joanne Dea, Department of Agriculture
Ayanna Epps, Department of Homeland Security - TSA
Janet Freimuth, Department of Energy
Claire Heffernan, Department of Homeland Security - TSA
Neal Cohen, Consumer Product Safety Commission
Wendy Kamenshine, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
Matthew Lascell, Department of Defense - NCIS
Kristina Lauritsen, Department of Health and Human Services - FDA
Karen Leichtnam, D.C. Superior Court
Matt Magee, Department of the Interior
Carrie McGuire, Office of Government Information Services
Celeste Merrix, Department of Homeland Security - FLETC

Sheryl Brown-Norman, Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Pamela Pontillo, Department of Energy
Sarah Roberts, Department of Homeland Security - TSA
Dale Shaw, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
Izabela Solosi, Northern Virginia Mediation Services
King Stablein, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Yolanda Swift, US Small Business Administration
Jeri Walker, National Credit Union Administration
Guy Weber, Department of Defense - NGA
Arthur Wigfall Jr., Department of Homeland Security – TSA
Joyce Wilson, Federal Housing Finance Agency
Tom Zrubek, Department of Defense - DoD IG

Minutes prepared by: Andrea Brown/ Noreen Kinnavy