
NORTH SOUND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION**OMBUDS SERVICES****I. PURPOSE**

Ombuds, when requested, investigate and advocate on behalf of consumers while working to resolve any complaint regarding mental health services for service recipients.

Whatcom County shall assure:

- a. Ombuds have access to Whatcom County and all subcontractors regarding:
 - i. The quality of care provided to public behavioral health consumers;
 - ii. The degree to which services are service recipient focused/directed;
 - iii. Whatcom County quality management activities;
 - iv. The extent of development of alternatives to hospitalizations, cross-system coordination and range of treatment options; and
- b. Ombuds shall have the authority to enter into a Whatcom County facility for purposes of outreach, fact finding, assessing systemic customer service issues, and to resolve individual complaints or systemic issues related to the contracted services, provided that reasonable time, notice, and confidentiality requirements are met.
- c. Ombuds shall have access to Whatcom County personnel for purposes of outreach, fact-finding, assessing systemic consumer service issues, and to resolve individual complaints or systemic issues related to the contracted services, provided that reasonable time, notice, and confidentiality requirements are met.
- d. Assure Ombuds have the ability to perform their duties free of retaliation and demonstrate effective intervention on behalf of Ombuds should retaliation issues arise.

II. PROCEDURE

Ombuds submit semi-annual reports for broad distribution to at least the following stakeholders:

- a. Whatcom County Administrator/Governing Board/Advisory Board
- b. Local consumer/family advocate groups
- c. Service Area mental health advisory boards
- d. Public behavioral health providers
- e. DBHR

Whatcom County and all subcontractors shall consider Ombuds findings and reports in good faith. Whatcom County and subcontractors shall demonstrate how Ombuds reports, recommendations and findings are analyzed, and how decisions are made regarding follow-up activities and interventions, as well as, demonstrate how issues are addressed and incorporated into ongoing operations, including but not limited to, contracting activities and other management decisions.