

GME Ombudsman

The Ombudsman for Graduate Medical Education exists to promote a positive climate for residency and fellowship education by providing an independent, impartial, informal, and confidential resource for residents, fellows, and faculty with training-related concerns. To confidentially contact the Ombudsman, call Dr. Susan Orrange at 829-6129.

Ombudsman Goals:

- provide safe and informal opportunities to be heard
- assist in identifying options for managing or resolving concerns
- educate about administrative and policy options
- refer individuals toward appropriate formal processes and resources
- facilitate communication between or among conflicting parties
- provide an alternative, confidential channel for recommending internal operations/systems/policy/process changes in GME
- share feedback about trends in conflicts, hot-button issues or other matters of importance to GME leadership

Ombudsman Guiding Principles

Confidential

The Ombudsman maintains the privacy of the identity of residents, fellows and faculty, as well as the content of their conversations. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no reasonable option other than disclosure. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.

With a visitor's permission, the Ombudsman may contact individuals within the institution whose help is necessary to resolve a problem.

The Ombudsman does not keep records containing personally identifiable information beyond the time needed to handle a client matter. The Ombudsman does not testify in formal proceedings, and does not make reports of specific matters to University or GME leadership, although general trends and analysis of concerns may be shared.

Neutral

The Ombudsman promotes fair processes and does not advocate for individuals on the basis of affiliation or constituency status. However, recognizing that residents and fellows hold positions of lesser authority within organizations, the Ombudsman may serve as an advocate. Following a discussion of issues, the Ombudsman will offer feedback, information, advice, and/or referrals. This service is meant to ensure fair treatment and solid education of residents and fellows, giving residents a sense of empowerment and reducing feelings of helplessness and frustration. In order to maintain its integrity, the Ombudsman cannot promote causes that are vindictive or without merit. Advocacy will be performed in a fair, non-partisan, reasonable and compassionate fashion.

Independent

The Ombudsman has no authority to make decisions on behalf of the institution, but instead provides assistance, education, referrals and feedback.

Informal

The Ombudsman engages informally with visitors and will not retain written records for confidentiality reasons.

Ombudsman Services

- Residents & fellows may seek guidance on matters related to: academic issues; administrative policies, procedures, and/or practices; employment questions; disciplinary matters; interpersonal conflicts; harassment/discrimination; environment, safety, and parking; clinical training issues; and career planning.
- Residents, fellows, and faculty seeking assistance from the Ombudsman may experience some of the following during a visit with the Ombudsman: exploring options for resolution; brainstorming to identify or clarify issues and next steps; sharing of information and options; identifying and clarifying applicable policies and procedures; referrals to formal channels with investigatory powers; facilitating dialogue and group discussions; reviewing correspondence; making referrals; arranging for formal mediation; sharing self-help tools and resources for support
- In addition to individual meetings, the Ombudsman may conduct workshops, prepare publications and resources, review GME and training program policies, procedures, and protocols relevant to concerns; recommend policy establishment or revision; and report on new and changing trends within the UB GME community.

Services Not Provided

- The Ombudsman will not perform formal investigations; make/change/set aside administrative decisions; or participate in any formal grievance/complaint proceedings.
- Notice to the Ombudsman does NOT constitute legal notice to the University.
- Ombudsman services are meant to supplement current grievance and complaint reporting and resolution mechanisms, not replace them.
- The Ombudsman keeps no official University/GME records, except annual reports to GME leadership regarding trends, use of office, etc. These reports would not contain any individually identifiable information.