Ombuds Services for Teams

"You can't empower people. You can provide a process where people can find their power."¹

Ombuds Services for Teams is such a process.

A few of the reasons teams come to Ombuds:

- To improve communication
- To build collaboration
- To prepare for strategic planning or retreats
- To manage a crisis
- To improve morale
- To navigate change

Process Outline

1. Leadership meets with Ombuds Services to:
   - Discuss goals, clarify the process and its limitations, and set a timeline for the process.
   - Discuss what questions visitors should focus on during their 1:1 visit to Ombuds. The questions relate to specific goals the group is working towards.
   - Determine the date of the Ombuds presentation to the team.

2. Leadership sends Ombuds Services a draft of the e-mail which will be sent to the team explaining this initiative
   - Leadership sends Ombuds Services a copy of the draft announcement for review before the e-mail announcing the initiative is sent to the team members.
   - See last page of this document for talking points and a sample.

3. Ombuds recommends changes to draft e-mail or confirms it’s good-to-go

4. Ombuds Services makes a presentation to group
   - Presentation includes: what a visit to Ombuds will look like, how a visit might be helpful to the individual and group, Ombuds confidentiality, limitations of the process, next steps, Q&A.

5. Leadership sends out e-mail to team announcing initiative and sharing logistics

6. Individual visits to Ombuds
   - Each individual comes to Ombuds Services for a confidential 1:1 visit.
   - What is a visit?
     - A visit starts with reviewing a Privacy Agreement which explains that Ombuds Services will not reveal the identity of any individual contacting the office, nor what was said during a visit without the express permission of the individual.

¹ Dr. Laura Parajon, Executive Director for the Office for Community Health UNM HSC; Strategy Officer for Global and Community Health AMOS Health and Hope
The ombuds then invites the visitor to think out loud about the workplace situation from the visitor’s perspective. The ombuds listens, ask clarifying questions, and offers neutral, constructive acknowledgement.

The ombuds gives input about available resources: services Ombuds for Staff offers (such as facilitated conversations), UNM policies that offer guidance, and other resources available to UNM staff and their co-workers.

The ombuds explores with the visitor how they might approach the situation to improve communication and collaboration.

7. After the 1:1 visits
   • After the visits, leadership is encouraged to listen for and to staff concerns and ideas, respond constructively, and generally notice if or how the team dynamics shift.
   • The group leader meets with Ombuds Services again within 3 weeks after the individuals have completed their visits to think through next steps.
     o If desired and/or appropriate, Ombuds Services may make a presentation/educational workshop to the whole group.
     o If desired and/or appropriate, Ombuds Services may facilitate a conversation among all who were invited to have a visit. The focus of the conversation is usually based on the questions the leadership asked the visitors to focus on during their visits.

Consider including in your announcement of this initiative:

• Purpose of the initiative.
• Include the specific question(s) you’d like the visitor to explore during their visit. Sample questions:
  o What are three “gifts” (attributes) that you bring to our work?
  o What is your favorite/least favorite thing about our work right now?
  o What’s one thing that could make your work more satisfying, and why?
  o What would you like to see change here? Why do you say that?
  o How would you describe the personality of the team? How would you like our team’s personality to be described?
  o What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing? What might help managing that challenge?
  o What do you think is the most needed conversation for this group to have now?

• That Ombuds Services is confidential, independent, neutral, and informal.
• To complete their individual visit by XXX date.
• Ombuds website for more information: ombudsforstaff.unm.edu

Sample Language

Ombuds Services is working with us to provide a process to our team to facilitate communication about workplace concerns and goals.

Please reach out Ombuds Services to schedule your confidential 1:1 visit. Ombuds will not report who came in, nor the details of any visit. This visit is your opportunity to think out loud, off the record and with a neutral listener about:

• ____________ (your group’s question(s) here)
• ____________ (your group’s question(s) here)
This process of exploring the questions and our situation in a confidential setting with a neutral listener can prepare each of us for moving forward constructively.

You are invited to email Ombuds Services (ombuds@unm.edu) to schedule your confidential, informal visit. Please complete your visit by ________ (date). Plan for the visit to be between 1- 2.5 hours. This is considered University business and so may be done on work time (University Policy 3300).

Here's a link from their website on their principles and what you can expect: http://ombudsforstaff.unm.edu/our-principles.html