

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 time line for the process.
- Decide 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 date of Ombuds presentation to 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 the 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.

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

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

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.
 - 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.
 - If desired and/or appropriate, Ombuds Services may make a presentation/educational workshop to the whole group.
 - 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.
- Purpose of visits. Include the specific question(s) you'd like the visitor to explore during their visit.
- Date of Ombuds presentation to team to answer any questions they may have.
- That Ombuds Services is confidential, independent, neutral and informal.
- To call Ombuds by XXX date to schedule a visit. Specific name of Ombuds to ask for, if appropriate.
- Ombuds website for more information <http://ombudsforstaff.unm.edu/index.html>

Sample Language

Ombuds Services offers a confidential, informal, neutral and independent process to build workplace communication and collaboration. Ombuds Services is providing a process to our team members to facilitate communication about workplace concerns and how to improve things.

To begin this process, please call to schedule a confidential visit with Ombuds Services.

Ombuds will not report who came in, nor the details of any visit. That visit is your opportunity to think out loud, off the record and with a neutral listener about: _____ (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.

To that end, you are invited to call Ombuds Services (277-2993) to schedule a confidential, informal visit with Ombuds Services. When you call, you may with the first available ombuds. 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>