

Ombudsperson Fairness Checklist

Communication

- ❖ Public information is available and understandable
- ❖ Forms are in plain language
- ❖ Clients are given all the information they need
- ❖ Clients are treated with courtesy

Facilities and Services

- ❖ Telephones are answered promptly
- ❖ Voicemail, answering machines or toll-free numbers are available
- ❖ Premises are easily accessible and suited for wheelchairs
- ❖ The environment is safe and healthy for workers
- ❖ The public's right to privacy is respected

Decision Procedures

- ❖ Those affected by a decision have a chance to give information and evidence to support their position
- ❖ Decisions are made within a reasonable time
- ❖ Reasons are given for decisions

Appeal, Review and Complaint Procedures

- ❖ At the time of decisions, people are told of any existing appeal or review procedures
- ❖ Complaint procedures are clearly defined
- ❖ The public is asked for ideas on improvements in service

Organizational Issues

- ❖ Staff are given clear titles for the functions they perform
- ❖ Agencies consider whether reorganizing would provide better quality service
- ❖ Agencies cooperate with one another to provide better service to the public

Agency Review and Planning

- ❖ The public is invited to participate in planning programs
- ❖ How decisions will be made is clear from the beginning
- ❖ Statistical information needed to evaluate and improve performance is recorded and maintained

Mailing Address:

Office of the Ombudsperson
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Victoria BC V8W 9A5

Telephone:

General Inquiries Victoria: (250) 387-5855
Toll Free: 1-800-567-3247

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Or visit our website at:

www.bcombudsperson.ca



Brochures are also available in French,
Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Punjabi, Spanish
and Vietnamese

What does the Ombudsperson do?

The Ombudsperson receives inquiries and complaints about the practices and services provided by public agencies. While not an advocate, the Ombudsperson can conduct impartial and confidential investigations to determine if a public agency is being fair to the people it serves.

The Ombudsperson is:

- ❖ an officer of the provincial legislature
- ❖ independent of government and political parties
- ❖ responsible for ensuring that the administrative practices and services of public agencies are fair, reasonable, appropriate and equitable

The Ombudsperson can:

- ❖ provide information about what steps to take in dealing with a public agency
- ❖ try to settle complaints through consultation
- ❖ investigate complaints about administrative unfairness by a public agency
- ❖ make recommendations to a public agency to resolve an unfairness
- ❖ report to the provincial legislature
- ❖ issue public reports

Who can the Ombudsperson investigate?

The Ombudsperson has jurisdiction over a wide range of public agencies. Examples include:

- ❖ provincial government ministries
- ❖ Crown corporations such as ICBC and BC Hydro
- ❖ government boards such as WCB and the BC Human Rights Tribunal
- ❖ hospitals, regional and local health agencies, and health-related government agencies such as Medical Services Plan and PharmaCare
- ❖ schools and school districts
- ❖ universities and colleges
- ❖ municipal and regional governments
- ❖ self-regulating professions such as the Law Society, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia

The Ombudsperson does not have jurisdiction to investigate certain agencies.

Some examples are:

- ❖ federal government departments or agencies
- ❖ private corporations
- ❖ courts
- ❖ police

What kind of complaints can the Ombudsperson investigate and who can make a complaint?

- ❖ complaints may be about the unfair administrative decisions or actions of a public agency, including delay, rudeness, negligence, arbitrariness, oppressive behaviour or unlawfulness
- ❖ the Ombudsperson may investigate complaints from individuals or groups of people
- ❖ the Ombudsperson has discretion to decide which complaints are investigated and which complaints will not be investigated

When should a complaint be brought to the Ombudsperson?

Whenever possible, you should try to resolve your complaint directly with the public agency before coming to the Ombudsperson. If you are not able to reach a resolution and you feel that you have been treated unfairly by the public agency, the Ombudsperson may be able to help.

When you are dealing with a public agency try to:

- ❖ get the names of the people you are dealing with
- ❖ keep track of their responses, including any relevant dates
- ❖ keep copies of all relevant papers and letters
- ❖ ask how and why the decision was made
- ❖ find out if there is a review or appeal process, and pursue that process where possible (this office may be unable to investigate a complaint where a right of appeal exists)

How do I contact the Ombudsperson?

For more information about our services or to file a complaint, you can contact us by letter, telephone, Internet, or fax machine.

We have an office located in Victoria. Please contact our office prior to visiting to ensure that someone will be available to meet with you.

Our Internet website provides detailed information about the Office of the Ombudsperson. A complaint form can be printed directly from our website to assist you in filing your complaint. You can fill out the complaint form and mail it or you can send it to us directly from the web page. If you choose to submit your complaint over the web, a secure Internet connection will be established to maintain confidentiality. We will not use e-mail to communicate about a complaint until methods exist to ensure confidentiality.

Services of the Ombudsperson are free and confidential