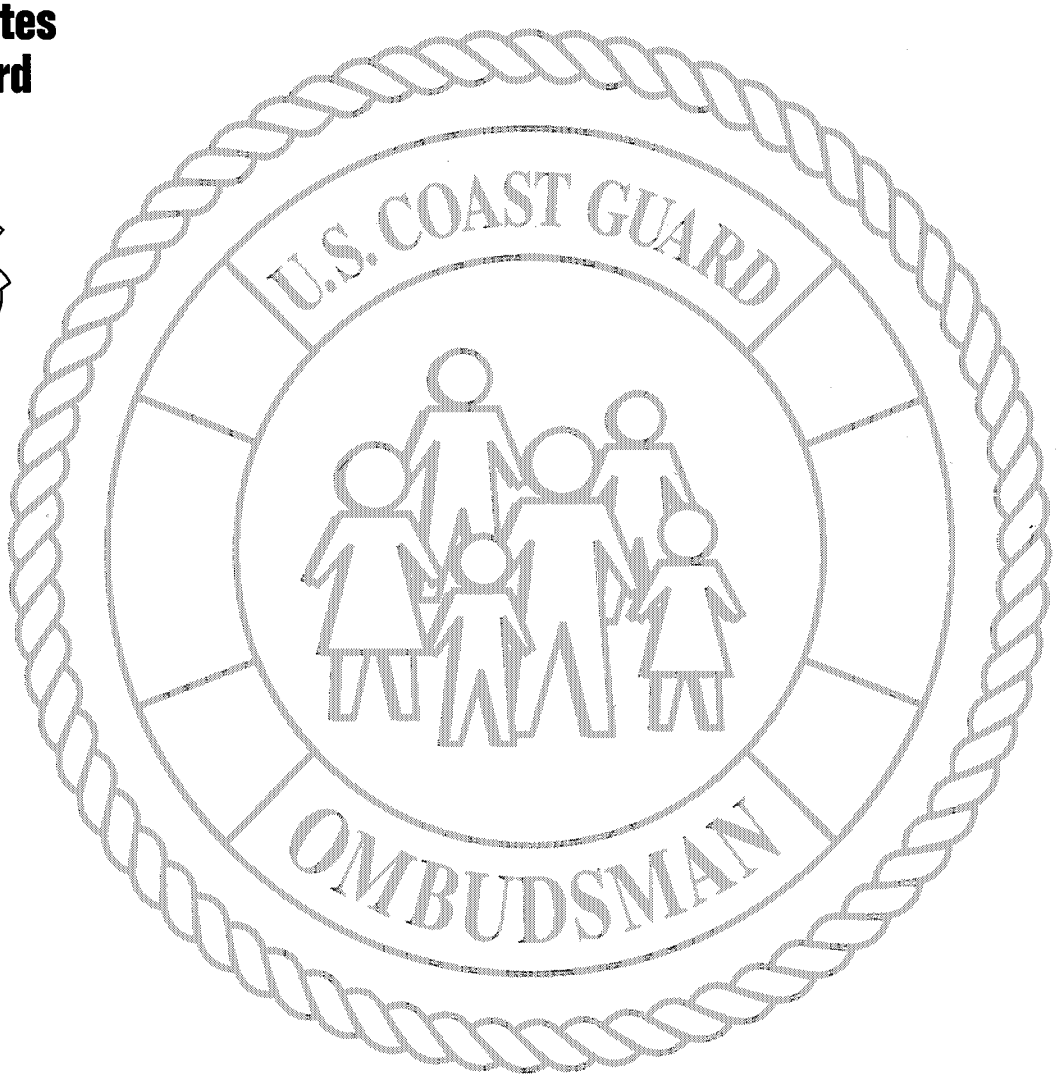
Ombudsman Handbook

United States Coast Guard



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CHIEF, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL AND TRAINING
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20593-0001

Ombudsmen of the Coast Guard,

Since the Coast Guard's Ombudsman Program began in the early 1980's, Ombudsmen have been providing a vital link between commands and families. An Ombudsman is an important resource who can refer families to sources of assistance available to them in the community. Likewise, Ombudsmen serve an important advisory role to Coast Guard field commands. I have observed the Ombudsman Program evolve over the years and constantly adapt to the changing needs of the Coast Guard. I value the dedicated service Ombudsmen provide.

As I am committed to improving the quality of life for our Coast Guard members, I strongly support the Ombudsman Program. I encourage you to utilize this handbook which provides basic guidance about the program.

Sincerely,

J.M. LOY
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard

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Introduction

Welcome to the unique experience of being the Command Ombudsman! The concept of the ombudsman dates back one hundred and seventy five years when the people of Sweden demanded that a position be created for a new kind of public official. This "ombudsman" was able to help them cut through bureaucratic red tape in order to get things done. Today the Coast Guard is concerned that our members and their families are provided with information and assistance to minimize the disruptions of deployment and moving. They are also concerned that their members and dependents are able to access necessary resources.

Thus, in June 1986 the Coast Guard formally instituted an Ombudsman Program. The Ombudsman, known formally as the Command Family Representative, is a Coast Guard spouse who is designated by and responsible to the commanding officer and serves as a link between the command and families. The Ombudsman assists the command by providing information to families regarding sources of assistance available to them, informing families about Coast Guard and command policies, and providing information about activities of interest to family members.

The Ombudsman Program offers several advantages to the unit, its personnel, and the Coast Guard in general. First, it provides the unit commanding officer with a valuable advisor, someone who can keep up with the needs of the members' dependents. For the commanding officer of a deploying command, it can be especially useful to know the concerns of the unit families and to be able to deal with these concerns before deployment rather than after the vessel gets under way.

Second, the program provides a channel between families and the command. The Ombudsman role is one of liaison, not that of counselor. The Ombudsman should not substitute for the normal chain of command and must not impede routine unit working relationships. An Ombudsman is a means of two-way communication, bringing family concerns to the commanding officer's attention while allowing him/her a means of providing information and reassurance to these families. As a morale booster, this communication facilitation can be very important.

Third, it provides a real opportunity for Coast Guard spouses to serve "their unit" in a meaningful position. Although this is clearly a volunteer post, it is one which is honored. At its best, this role can facilitate harmony and understanding in the unit and can be a source of considerable individual satisfaction. The Ombudsman Program provides the spouse with a way of serving alongside the service member.

The morale and mission performance of Coast Guard personnel are closely related to the health and well-being of their families. Ombudsmen are invaluable in boosting morale, keeping information flowing, and solving minor problems. They provide the commanding officer with a valuable agent to maintain personal contact with family members and to say "this command cares about your welfare." This knowledge will help to ease the burden of the sacrifices our families must make, so our personnel can carry out the Coast Guard's missions. This program enables the Coast Guard to tap one of our greatest resources: the strength, courage, and deep concern for others held by Coast Guard spouses. A representative who combines motivation with maturity and experience with discretion can be very effective at helping commands meet family needs.

This handbook provides basic guidance about policy and activities typically undertaken by the unit Ombudsman.

Chapter One
The Ombudsman Selection

Selection

Command Requirements. Selection of an Ombudsman is the most crucial decision that the commanding officer will make about the program. The Ombudsman is appointed by and works for the CO/OinC. This person will represent the command and serve the unit families. The time spent up-front in selecting the right person will pay off in the end by having a successful program. The initial step in establishing a command Ombudsman Program is for the command to select an Ombudsman or Ombudsmen. The size and type of command is significant in determining the role of the ombudsmen in it. For instance, a large deploying command, in which there is a need for someone to conduct an aggressive program with multiple responsibilities, may require two who can serve. A smaller command, where the role of the Ombudsman may be more passive with emphasis on response, will require a mature person who is a good listener. A combination should be chosen to serve as Co-Ombudsmen (with equal status). A Chief Ombudsman may be designated and allowed to form an unofficial committee for assistance. Assistant Ombudsmen may be appointed and given official status. All of these options are possible within the scope of the program. By advertising the Ombudsman position widely, the command may be able to seek a pool of suitable candidates.

Designation

Guidelines. When designating the Ombudsman, commanding officers should utilize the following guidelines:

- Any spouse married to a member of the command is eligible to be the Ombudsman. This is the only criterion for eligibility. However, other considerations should be weighed. An Ombudsman who combines motivation with maturity, experience, and discretion can be effective in helping commands meet family needs.

- The person must be able to distinguish between issues more suitable for public discussion and those requiring confidentiality and discretion.

- Another factor that should be given careful attention is reputation within the command. There is no hard and fast rule about the service member's position in the command. A good image helps, regardless of position, and enough experience to be a source of information and support. Spouses of more senior members may be intimidating to those of younger personnel who may not turn to them for help even when help is needed. While this can be overcome, the composition of the command must be considered by the command before designating an Ombudsman. For maximum credibility, the spouse must be perceived by others as approachable and trustworthy. In situations in which the ombudsman function will be primarily informational, it may be worthwhile to utilize someone with a variety of good interpersonal and organizational skills, such as:

  – A positive attitude about life in general and about the Coast Guard in particular.

  – Understanding and support for command policies.

  – Familiarity with Coast Guard missions, organizations, and traditions.

  – Effective working relationships with the command and the families of both officer and enlisted personnel.

– Time to fulfill the responsibilities.

– Availability to assist the Coast Guard community.

– Outgoing, friendly, and self-confident.

– Motivated and a positive attitude.

– Patient, flexible, mature, and stable.

– A good role model, someone who will be credible with the spouses of the command.

Experience should also be taken into consideration. The Ombudsman should have experience with permanent change of station (PCS) and deployments, knowledge of Work-Life resources, and other volunteer experiences.

The Ombudsman Program has suffered from time to time because a poor choice was made in the designation of Ombudsman. Sometimes it is difficult to assess potential problems until it is too late. Thus, it is advisable that some types of persons not be considered:

- Those who cannot maintain confidentiality
- Those who gossip and contribute to rumors
- Those do not have time to fulfill the role
- Those who volunteer only to advance their spouse's career

Appointment Procedure

When a suitable candidate (or candidates) is identified, the command will set up a panel of people to interview the prospective candidates. These people may consist of members of the Work-Life staff, the command enlisted advisor, and the chaplain. When the decision is made by the command to offer an appointment, certain steps should be taken.

Official Letter. After selection of an Ombudsman has been made, an appointment letter should be written by the command. One practice is to informally offer the appointment by phone and, after confirmation of acceptance, write the appointment letter. It is highly recommended that an appointment be made either on a mutually agreeable trial basis or for a limited period of time, for instance, three or six months, renewable with consent of both parties. It should be understood that resignation or dismissal are possible at any time with agreed procedures, i.e., a letter from the initiating party. This kind of clear understanding protects both sides from prolonging an awkward or difficult situation should either find it necessary to terminate the arrangement. When the appointment letter is written, copies should be sent by the command to the local Work-Life Staff, District Ombudsman Coordinator, and Commandant G-PSP-2.
A Standard Form 52, Request for Personnel Action, must be filled out to ensure coverage under Workman's Compensation and the Tort Claims Act. This form will state that the Ombudsman services are voluntary and without compensation. Contact the Work-Life Staff Ombudsman Coordinator for more information.

The Ombudsman Selection

Introductions

Official introductions should be made to all hands. This can be done by a number of methods, for instance:

- The Ombudsman can be personally introduced by the commanding officer to the crew at quarters.
- A picture could be posted on the ship's bulletin board or in the unit administration office for shore units, along with a brief resume and outline of the services provided by the Ombudsman Program.
- In larger commands, the Ombudsman should be taken around and introduced to the Work-Life Staff, the Family Advocacy Representative (FAR), the Command Enlisted Advisor (CEA), the chaplain, and other providers.
- The Ombudsman can be featured in the unit publication/plan of the day, etc., preferably with a picture.
- A letter of introduction from the Ombudsman can be included in the Welcome Aboard packet provided to new families.
- Official presentations are usually made to the Ombudsman. An Ombudsman is usually given an official badge with the emblem of the command, the title "Ombudsman," and the individual's name inscribed on it.

Training

There are a variety of opportunities for the Ombudsman to receive training in the skills needed for the position, including the following:

Regional: Coast Guard Ombudsman training is offered on the regional level by Headquarters. It directly targets the unique needs and strengths of Coast Guard communities and specific policies affecting the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program.

District Work-Life staffs: May offer Ombudsman training.

U.S Navy Basic Ombudsman Course: Regionally the Navy also offers training for Ombudsmen in all major Navy Family Service Centers on a regular basis.

Navy Relief Ombudsman Course: Contact the Navy Wifeline Association, Building 210, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. 20374

Red Cross: The Red Cross offers courses in "people skills" and preparing for family emergencies. Contact the local chapter of the Red Cross. The Red Cross also manages communications regarding service member emergency leave issues.

Adult Education and Community Colleges: Courses in communications skills which are inexpensive and may be accredited are usually offered.

Termination

The Ombudsman or the command can decide, at any time, that the appointment can be terminated. There may be a situation which requires immediate dismissal of the Ombudsman such as a breach of confidentiality, continual inaccessibility to command families, inability to do the job, or unwillingness to participate in any training.

By the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman decides to give up the position, the command should be notified as soon as possible to allow time for a new Ombudsman to be selected and trained. Ideally, the outgoing Ombudsman will be available to assist the new Ombudsman until training is completed. It is required that an Ombudsman submit an offer of resignation approximately 30 days after a new commanding officer's arrival, which may or may not be accepted.

By the Commanding Officer. The commanding officer also has the right to terminate the appointment at any time. If the Ombudsman is terminated by the command, there is no recourse. The CO/OinC has absolute control over the program.

Recognition

The Ombudsman should be given recognition at the end of the term of service. This can vary from a letter of appreciation from the command to a luncheon and a presentation of a command plaque, etc. If there is an area council in which the Ombudsman represents the command, a personal commendation might be made in that assembly by the CO/OinC or, if absent, by a designated representative. An added personal touch to express appreciation to an Ombudsman could be a "To Whom It May Concern" letter of recommendation regarding performance and duties, as might be included in a resume. Another way to recognize the Ombudsman is by nominating him or her for the Swivel Shot Award. See the awards manual for more information.

Commands may also recognize Ombudsmen during the annual Coast Guard 26 March Ombudsman Appreciation Day. Other ways to commend the Ombudsman include saying "thank you" occasionally in writing, letting the person know that he or she has done a good job, placing an appreciation ad in the base newspaper, or preparing a letter of appreciation. Check with the civilian personnel office for other award information.

Role of the Command. It is important for the CO/OinC to be supportive of the efforts and enthusiasm of the Ombudsman. It is also important that the CO/OinC let the Ombudsman know that miracles are not expected. The CO/OinC should express the importance of self-care. The Ombudsmen and their own families come first in order to be better able to help meet the needs of the families of the command. There may be some issues the command may want to be personally informed on. The command needs to clarify those things in the beginning which they need to know. The boundary of confidentiality is the key to a successful Ombudsman Program.

Command Support

The commanding officer can greatly enhance effectiveness of the Ombudsman by providing recognition and administrative support as appropriate to the situation. The CO/OinC may do any of the following:

- Meet with the Ombudsman soon after the appointment to define the expected role at the unit and regularly throughout the appointment. Discuss in detail the priorities and expectations concerning this program and the Ombudsman's performance.
- Provide a copy of Commandant Instruction 1750.4B, Ombudsman - The Command Family Representative.
- Make introductions to the Executive Officer and other key personnel.
- Send a letter of introduction to the families.
- Authorize direct access to the FAR to obtain a directory of military and community resources available to dependents, including medical and legal services, and to serve as point of contact for family advocacy issues.
- Assign a point of contact to assist the Ombudsman with routine and administrative issues.
- Provide the unit roster, with spouses' names, addresses, and home telephone numbers, to the Ombudsman, under the CO/OinC's discretion.

Financial Support

Ombudsmen are not expected to incur personal expenses in the course of performing their duties. The command should ensure that the responsibilities assumed by the Ombudsman are clearly agreed upon, especially those which will require financial expenditure.

Commands are authorized to provide funding in support of the Ombudsman Program. Commands will explain in advance the type of expenses considered reimbursable and documentation which must be provided by the Ombudsman to receive reimbursement. Appropriated funds may include the following:

- Invitational travel orders may be issued through the Commandant (G-P) under the provisions of Commandant Instruction 12570.3A.
- Office space, paper and supplies, and an answering machine may be provided for the Ombudsman. Access to a typewriter, terminal, copy machine, telephone, and fax machine may be available.
- A command telephone credit card may be issued to the Ombudsman for official duty-related calls.

- Materials may be mailed to members' homes using franked (postage-paid) mail envelopes with the command return address.

- Transportation in government vehicles as a passenger may be provided.

Non-appropriated or appropriated funds may be used to reimburse incidental expenses incurred while carrying out the responsibilities of Ombudsman. These may include:

- Reimbursement of local travel on local travel forms

- Child care, not to exceed child development center local rates

- Parking and tolls upon presentation of receipts

- Telephone toll calls upon presentation of bill

Expense logs shall be maintained as follows:

- Private autos - document purpose, trip mileage, tolls, parking fees, and other costs

- Long distance telephone calls - document name, purpose, time, and date of calls

Chapter Two
Attitude, Role, and Responsibilities of the Ombudsman

Attitude

The attitude of an Ombudsman is critical. Ideally the Ombudsman should possess an "I am willing to assist" attitude, a willingness to help others, and should be accessible. The Ombudsman should be a confident, "can do" kind of person with a positive feeling about life as well as the Coast Guard. However, a good Ombudsman must be pragmatic and comfortable with his or her limitations. One important point to remember, however, is that the Ombudsman's family comes first. The Ombudsman will not be able to effectively help others until he or she has taken care of their own.

One impact Ombudsmen have follows from the positive example of their own successful coping as a military spouse. The command's Ombudsman shares all the same stresses as other families in the command.

In every group there is usually a "clinger," or a "drainer," the type that requires a great deal of attention and who places the helping person under great stress. The Ombudsman must be careful not to become overly involved with a difficult situation. The Ombudsman is a liaison to professional assistance and is not expected to be a counselor nor to take on responsibility for everyone's problems. In the process, the Ombudsman will encourage others to follow the same path of self-sufficiency.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality is one of the most critical elements in the Ombudsman Program. It is very important that maintaining confidentiality stand out as one of the hallmarks of the Ombudsman. The protection of another person's image and the honoring of that person's trust is a quality required of every Ombudsman. This ethic is essential to the high standards of the program, and a breach of confidentiality is cause for removal from the position. Confidentiality means that a person may talk to the Ombudsman about a problem or a family situation and be sure that the conversation will remain a private matter between the Ombudsman and the member. No one will utilize an Ombudsman who is untrustworthy.

The general rule is that absolute confidentiality is required concerning personal, sensitive information. The Ombudsman can never pass on that information, even to facilitate assistance or support, without permission to do so from the individual concerned.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. There are specific instances when a situation must be reported to the unit commanding officer, relevant Family Program Administration (FPA), or if unable to reach the CO/OinC or FPA contact, the Family Advocacy Representative (FAR). These specific instances include suspected or substantiated cases of family violence. The FPA is the professional who will case manage those incidents and keep the command apprised.

Burnout. All volunteers, unless they have unusual amounts of energy, find that overextension of their personal resources can quickly lead to frustration and burnout. This is particularly true of Ombudsmen for units which deploy. Often a major function related to a deployed unit is to respond encouragingly and empathetically to routine calls and to provide reassurance through suggesting appropriate resources. If the Ombudsman finds that he or she can no longer see it from the other person's point of view, then he or she has lost the primary value of being an Ombudsman and needs to be relieved of the role, or at least given a break. During deployments, when this kind of situation most frequently occurs, there should be several advisors for

the Ombudsman. The CO/OinC's spouse or the XO's spouse might be among those who can keep an eye on the Ombudsman and make sure that he or she is managing comfortably. Sometimes Ombudsmen perform this function for each other, so regular meetings with the other command Ombudsmen are recommended. Provision for this type of mutual support needs to be made especially during deployment by the commands. Before deployment, commands need to clearly define the Ombudsman's support system and the chain of reporting in the unit's absence and make introductions to key personnel at support units with whom the Ombudsman may be dealing in the unit's absence. This will alleviate feelings of burnout and of being isolated during the deployment. It will also assist the Ombudsman in dealing with crises in a professional, command-approved manner.

Turnover. Specific guidance should be given to the Ombudsman regarding the keeping of turnover files for successors. These files would include resource materials which have proved helpful. The resources and the roster file should be arranged to be easily transferred when necessary. Sometimes a notebook of worksheets to monitor telephone calls is kept. This type of information should not be passed along. A verbal alert about problem areas will do. Part of the credibility of Ombudsmen is their confidential treatment of all materials pertaining to the personal lives of the unit families. The command should routinely remind the Ombudsman of their expectations related to discretion and confidentiality. The Ombudsman is part of the command team and is usually the only official volunteer of the command. The Ombudsman Program "belongs" to each command and reports to and represents the CO/OinC. As the Ombudsman, he or she must reflect the CO/OinC's policies and must work within the guidelines the CO/OinC sets. The CO/OinC is the boss.

Ombudsman Role and Responsibilities

Each command is different; there is no single job description that would fit all Ombudsmen. Although there are certain general functions that every Ombudsman will perform, the exact nature of the program will differ from command to command. The size and type of command, the commanding officer's priorities, and other factors affect the role of the Ombudsman and the way in which the program will be structured. An excellent place for the Ombudsman to start getting familiar with available Coast Guard resources is with the "Beneficiary Guide" COMDTPUB P5200.15. Ombudsman activities will usually include the following:

- The functions the CO/OinC assigns the Ombudsman.
- Identification and squashing of rumors.
- Regular contact to let families know that the command cares about their well-being.

Communications. The Ombudsman serves as a communications link between the command and the families. This can be done with a regular newsletter. In addition to keeping the command informed about the concerns of the families, the Ombudsman transmits information from the command and provides information about current programs of interest available in the community and at the unit. Communication may be by newsletter, responding to telephone requests, and transmitting news to families during deployment.

Attitude, Role, and Responsibilities of the Ombudsman

Resources. Serving as a source of accurate information about helping resources and pointing a family member in the right direction to obtain needed services or resolution to a problem is an important part of the Ombudsman's job. Ombudsmen are knowledgeable about Coast Guard life and can assist families new to the area in finding resources needed. There are many programs and services available to our families, but the problem may be how to get the dependents to take advantage of the services. It may take someone personally telling people where to go and how to get there. Only a few dependents need hand-holding, but some, it seems, need it continuously. A good Ombudsman will work with these people to get the resources to meet their needs, while guiding them toward self-sufficiency and responsibility.

Point of Contact. One of the most important roles of the Ombudsman is to act as an advocate for the Coast Guard Work-Life Staffs by providing information and assistance to families, especially during deployment. As the initial point of contact for command families, the Ombudsman will receive and place a variety of calls, including:

- Information - Requests for routine information, to pass information along to other families, and to advise the commanding officer of common concerns of family members.

- Reassurance - Loneliness, uncertainty, or feeling overwhelmed can prompt a call from a spouse, especially during deployment, at an isolated duty station, or when adjusting to a new duty station.

- Complaint - Dissatisfaction with services from various resources and facilities.

- Crisis - When a person feels he or she can no longer cope effectively, for any reason.

- Emergency - When an event is happening and threatening the well-being of the family.

Advocate for Command Families. When a spouse has a grievance or complaint and has already attempted to resolve it through other channels, he or she can contact the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman does not try to solve the problem alone. The Ombudsman listens and may recommend appropriate resources for a member to call.

Participate in Special Programs/Outreach. The commanding officer may choose to involve the Ombudsman in the following programs:

- Welcome Aboard - By welcoming new Coast Guard families in the command when they arrive and providing helpful information about the local area, the Ombudsman can affect the attitude and morale of both the service member and the family.

- Pre-deployment Briefings - For deploying commands, Ombudsmen have an important role to play in working with the command in the planning and presentation of pre-deployment briefings to family members so they are better prepared to cope with the absence of the spouse.

- Command Representative - The command may ask the Ombudsman to represent him or her on various boards or committees that affect Coast Guard family welfare.

Representative of Families to the Command. As discussed earlier, the Ombudsman has a relationship with the commanding officer that is uniquely designed to allow for the rapid flow of

communications between the command and the families without the need for protocol. While emphasis is generally placed on the flow of information from the command, the flow to the command is equally critical. A CO/OinC who is not aware of the needs and problems of the unit and its families will not be as effective in maximizing unit productivity and is not being well served by the Ombudsman. Accordingly, as Ombudsman, he or she should interact through regular meetings with the command and inform the CO/OinC of the general mood along with specific problems or situations. The Ombudsman may even serve as an advocate of the families he or she represents. This could include presenting, interpreting, and explaining situations for the unit family members. It is important to note that the Ombudsman should not take a position in such matters, unless the CO/OinC wants a subjective opinion.

Roster. The Ombudsman cannot operate in the command without a roster. Currently, the Ombudsman is entitled to a roster because the Ombudsman Program was added to the Federal Register list of government programs. The Ombudsman needs to have the names of spouses, their addresses, and telephone numbers on the roster. Ideally, for emergency purposes, information about the number of children in the family, their names and ages, and the member's division or place of work should also be available.

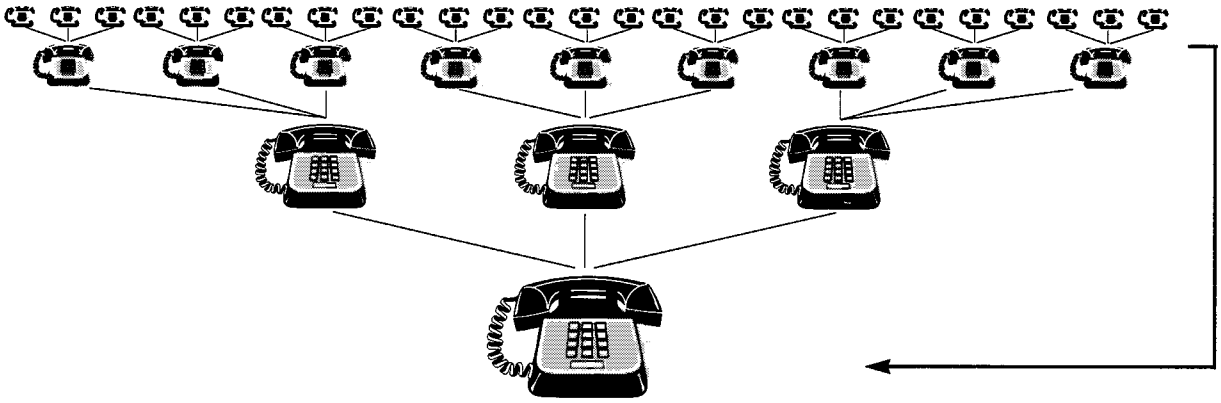
Access to complete roster information is the basic tool that the Ombudsman has to work with. It is of primary importance that up-to-date information about the families in the command be maintained at all times. However, in the initial discussions with the Ombudsman about methods for getting roster information, the issue of confidentiality should be thoroughly reviewed. The roster is privileged information, and handling of this information requires complete discretion. The Ombudsman should never release any information on the roster unless specific permission has been granted either from the command or by the party in question. Those who do not wish to have their names included on the roster may elect out of the program. This can be done by writing to the command.

Some commands have new personnel complete information cards during the indoctrination process. These cards are automatically sent to the Ombudsman; similarly, deleted cards are sent when service members are detached from the unit. Some members may request not to have Ombudsman newsletters sent home. Every member has the right to not be involved in the Program. The Ombudsman should not anguish over one family's request not to receive Ombudsman information; he or she should just respect the family's choice and move on.

One of the most valuable efforts that an Ombudsman can make is a roster call-through. Upon receipt of a roster, the Ombudsman should personally and systematically phone everyone on the roster to introduce himself or herself and verify that the roster information is correct. However, in a large command, this may not be feasible.

The establishment of a "telephone tree" is a critical means of communications between the Ombudsman and the other unit families. The introductory phone call is also a good time to ensure that the families have the Ombudsman's name, phone number, and address and know the hours to call with routine matters.

Attitude, Role, and Responsibilities of the Ombudsman



The tree should be arranged by exchanges or regions. The last person in the tree should be instructed to call the Ombudsman so he or she will know the chain was successful.

Outreach. Outreach is an important part of the Ombudsman's job. The Ombudsman should not just wait for the phone to ring; no one will call if they don't know who is the Ombudsman. Outreach means to advertise what is available through the Ombudsman or other sources. Anything that the unit would benefit from could be advertised. The Ombudsman is, in effect, reaching out to the command families with programs, services, information, or social opportunities which might meet their needs. Some methods of outreach publicity include:

- Posters and flyers in welcome aboard packets that the Ombudsman can leave at churches, hospitals, laundromats, exchanges, commissaries, medical facilities, child care centers, recreational facilities, garages, bus stops.
- Letters mailed to individuals and/or families.
- Telephone contact.
- Personal contact.
- Word of mouth.
- Piggybacking with another event.
- Being a speaker at meetings.

The Ombudsman might wish to create a welcome aboard packet to add to the relocation package for all newcomers. Some examples of outreach activities might include pot lucks, swap meets, tours and field trips, visitation to a service member's workplace, dance lessons, cooking class, community council meeting, bake sales, raffles, deployment seminars, crafts, exercise groups, library visits, or CPR or first aid classes.

Assisting in Welcoming Newcomers. The relocation assistance manager can assist with a series of programs to facilitate travel, transportation of household goods, and other necessary

arrangements to complete a move. The Ombudsman should check with the Work-Life Staff to find out who to contact for relocation assistance.

The Sponsor Program entails the assignment of a unit member to assist a newly assigned Coast Guard member and family to become familiar with the area, housing, schools, facilities, etc. The Ombudsman will have positive impact on the program by sharing this information with newly assigned sponsors.

The relocation assistance manager may welcome assistance from the Ombudsman in periodically updating a welcome aboard packet of information mailed to incoming personnel. In the welcome letter from the command, a CO/OinC may want to list the Ombudsman's name, address, and phone number as a contact point for the incoming family. The command may also include a welcome letter from the Ombudsman in the welcome aboard packet. Information on any aspect of the Relocation Assistance Program is available from the District Work-Life Staff.

Contact Point. Beyond the initiating effort by the Ombudsman (newsletter and welcoming functions), another responsibility to be discussed is the continuing availability as a contact for help or information. The Ombudsman's primary ongoing duty will be to take calls from unit members covering a wide range of needs, from requests for specific information to just giving a little reassurance and encouragement to a lonely spouse during deployment. The Ombudsman may receive three calls or less a week to twenty-five or thirty a day depending on the circumstances of the command.

Family members on a small shore-based facility may call on the services of an Ombudsman only occasionally, while those of a large deployed command may call constantly. The Ombudsman's availability for such calls should be discussed, including the advisability of calling hours (for all but emergency calls).

Part of the Ombudsmen's responsibility as a continuing source of referral information is to regularly familiarize themselves with the latest Coast Guard and community resource information. The command might make available publications like the **Commandant's Bulletin**, **The Greensheet,** and the **Navy Times** as well as other pertinent information sources to help keep the Ombudsman informed.

Deployment Responsibilities. Deploying units have special requirements to place upon their Ombudsmen. If the Ombudsman is to maintain credibility as the ashore spokesperson for the command, including having the latest information on arrivals and rumor control, some special communications arrangements will need to be made. Arrangements will have to be made so that the Ombudsman is officially notified about unclassified changes in the ship's movements. It is critical that the Ombudsman receive current and accurate information in order to maintain credibility.

Deploying units should activate their telephone tree for emergency information. It is the Ombudsman's responsibility to manage the telephone tree. The telephone tree can also be used as a regular contact method while the unit is deployed. It can facilitate periodic get-togethers and continuing concern for each other. The Ombudsman can keep in close touch with the entire family community through the key caller in each group.

During deployment, the Ombudsman's value as a verifier of emergencies and as a rumor squelcher comes into full play. There must be some form of communication between the

CO/OinC and the Ombudsman arranged for the deployment period. The CO/OinC may call periodically, or in case of an emergency, work through another command or through whoever is receiving emergency messages from the ship. Sometimes the CO/OinC's spouse may send a message to the Ombudsman. While deployed, a CO/OinC may only have time to make one call, and it may be a natural choice to call one's own spouse.

Another responsibility for the Ombudsman might be to sponsor the organization of a deployment program of activities or events that will help the command families. An example of possibilities for this program would be a series of coffees (including babysitting arrangements) with speakers discussing such topics as budget planning, home management, and emergency procedures. The Regional Work-Life Staff may be able to provide referrals to guest speakers. Spouse groups could be encouraged by the Ombudsman to sponsor projects like a dinner with skits to be taped and sent to the ship. A series of tapings around special holidays and events might be planned. Plans for the ship's homecoming should begin the day the ship leaves. Preparations for welcome home projects should be set up, i.e., making signs, a banner for the ship, etc. However, the Ombudsman should not try to serve as spouse club president while also serving as Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's role should be kept distinct in the command.

If appropriate, the Ombudsman could prepare a projected activity calendar prior to deployment and distribute it to the dependents along with information about emergency procedures. This gives dependents a handy reference for needed information, events planned for them, and a way of focusing on small blocks of time, making the deployment seem to go faster.

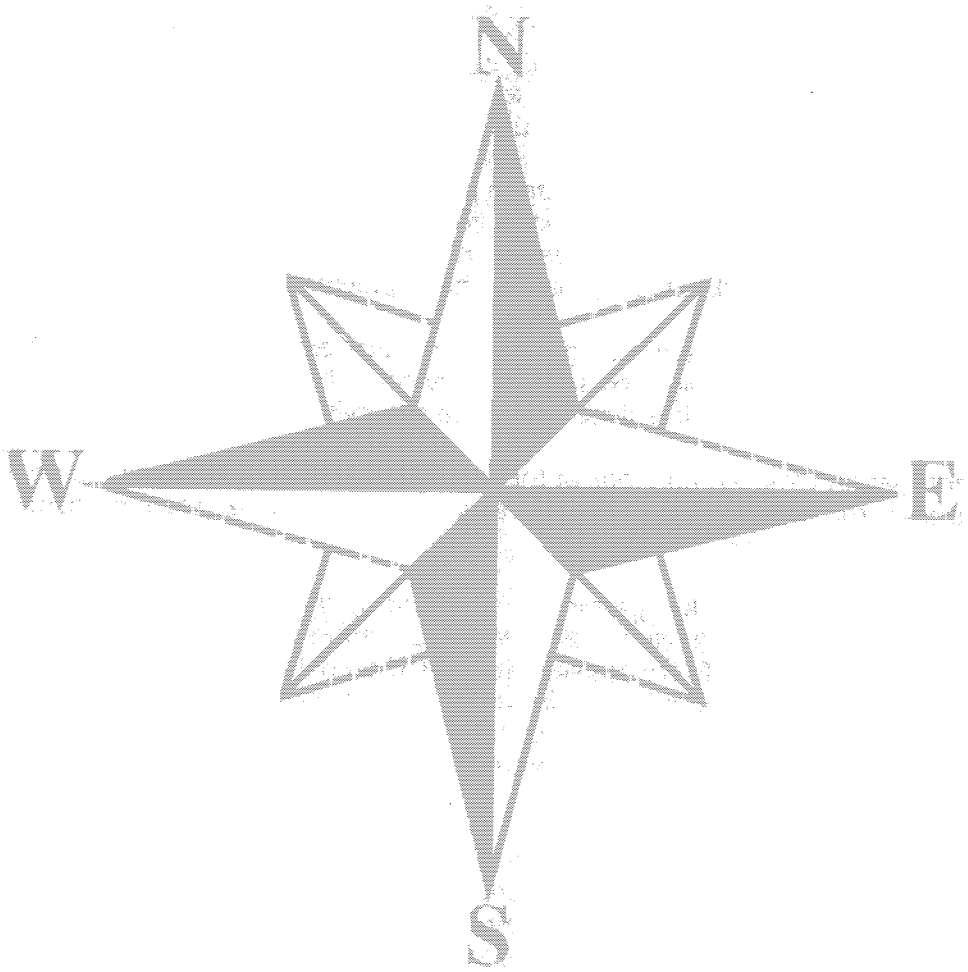
A special group of helpers who are willing to drive, provide emergency child care, visit someone who is isolated or lonely, etc., might be set up. They could be geographically distributed and have certain areas to cover. Their activities could be supervised by the Ombudsman.

It is important that an Ombudsman look at the deployment as an opportunity to organize, educate, and support the families in a proactive way in order to minimize the emergency situations that may arise.

Ombudsmen should take an active part in the pre-deployment briefings and in assembling the families' resource booklet. Even with well-written information in hand, people will often call for advice rather than look it up. Every opportunity should be utilized to familiarize the family members with the Beneficiary Guide. For instance, stickers could be prepared for the phone and also attached to the front of the resource booklet. These stickers could contain local fire and police department numbers where applicable, or the command could have Ombudsman information cards printed and distributed.

Programs. The command may wish the Ombudsman to oversee special programs for family members with coordination with Regional Work-Life Staffs. For instance, preparing resource briefings, exploring community educational resources, making regular information about them available, or planning for a series of talks on specific topics such as home management or budget planning could be part of an Ombudsman's responsibilities. The Ombudsman might be directed to work with experts through civilian agencies to coordinate activities. The Ombudsman might organize helping groups within the command living in a specified geographic area to provide transportation in emergency, provide interim care for children, just listen to someone feeling lonely, or talk to a newcomer.

Command Representative. The commanding officer may designate the Ombudsman as a representative on various boards and committees that affect Coast Guard family welfare, e.g., an exchange advisory or human relations board. In addition, the Ombudsman may serve as the unit's representative at meetings sponsored by local community agencies.



Chapter Three
The Ombudsman's Network

Supporters

Commanding Officers. A good relationship between the Ombudsman and the CO/OinC is fundamental to the program. The Ombudsman would not be offered an appointment, nor should he or she accept it, if the commanding officer does not feel that the person is someone who can be talked to and trusted. Implicit in the establishment of an Ombudsman Program is the kind of relationship which permits the Ombudsman to have access to the command when necessary. This requires a relationship in which the CO/OinC can make clear when and under what circumstances the command should be contacted. The CO/OinC will trust the Ombudsman to make contact when the situation merits it. At the same time, provisions should be made for routine meetings, when possible, to discuss methods of handling problems and dealing with policy.

CO/OinCs are busy, but time given to the Ombudsman on a regular basis is a good investment toward the ultimate well-being of the command families. The hallmark of the most successful programs has always been an easy, frank, and trusting relationship between the CO/OinC and the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman may be uncomfortable at first about talking to the commanding officer. A friendly but businesslike meeting fits the nature of the relationship. The Ombudsman should be given the treatment appropriate to an official volunteer representative of the command. A social relationship with the CO/OinC, however, should not be expected as it may be uncomfortable, even detrimental, to the role and image of the Ombudsman. When an Ombudsman tells the CO/OinC about a problem, the Ombudsman should try to offer a possible solution. Also, the Ombudsman should remember to tell the CO/OinC about some of the positive unit activities.

For routine concerns, the commanding officer will probably designate some member of the unit staff to serve as the point of contact for the Ombudsman. There will need to be a clear definition of the types of issues about which the Ombudsman will speak directly to the CO/OinC and which issues the Ombudsman will work with the designated representative to resolve.

Executive Officer. For most routine concerns, the Ombudsman may work effectively through the Executive Officer. (Remember, however, that the Ombudsman and the CO/OinC will work out who the points of contact will be for the different issues.) It makes sense for the XO to determine situations where the Ombudsman can be of service since he or she is the one that screens most administrative matters and oversees the personnel inflow and departure. Also, the XO is the one that can ensure that the Ombudsman receives all information that will be useful in his or her role. The XO can ensure that the roster is updated and that the Ombudsman has the supplies and office support needed.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard. The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard is the senior enlisted member in the Coast Guard. As such, this person serves as the senior enlisted representative of the Coast Guard and acts as the primary enlisted advisor to the Commandant of the Coast Guard in all matters pertaining to both active duty and retired members and their families.

The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard welcomes and receives many letters from

enlisted members and their dependents who are seeking advice and assistance concerning service problems. In all cases, an individual reply is prepared and forwarded to the inquirer. Inquiries should be sent to the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard via the district command enlisted advisor via the unit command enlisted advisor. This communication network provides a logical way to coordinate the flow of assistance to individuals when other channels break down. Information can be transmitted directly in person, via letter, or by telephone. The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard assists with problems at the Commandant's level. For district problems, the individual to contact is the district Master Chief Petty Officer. For local problems, the individual to contact is the unit command enlisted advisor.

The solution to most problems can be and should be resolved at the local command level. However, the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard/District Master Chief Petty Officer/unit command enlisted advisor stand ready to give assistance.

Command Enlisted Advisor (CEA). The command enlisted advisor can be an invaluable ally to the Ombudsman. The CEA is the natural person to whom the Ombudsman should turn for routine advice and information. In some commands, all responsibility for working with the Ombudsman can be turned over to the command enlisted advisor. This is often true in a large command. The CEA is usually very effective in handling most of the matters that come to the attention of the Ombudsman. It needs to, however, be stressed again that the Ombudsman may lose his or her impact as a viable assistant to the command if regular contact is not maintained with the CO/OinC.

Family Program Administrator (FPA). The Ombudsman should work in close liaison with the FPA. An Ombudsman should strive to become thoroughly familiar with the programs available through the Work-Life Staff and FPA in order to effectively direct the command families to this source of help. The FPA should be able to depend on the Ombudsman to refer those people who need help. These people are ready sources of information about specific resources and activities in the community. They should be available for advice about difficult problems. The FPA acts as the primary point of contact for family advocacy. The FPA provides support and case management for incidents of family violence.

Family Advocacy Representative (FAR). These representatives are Coast Guard active duty members who have the collateral duty of providing information and referral services to members. See Commandant Instruction 1750.7A for more information.

Career Information Specialist (CIS). The CIS provides information on reenlistment, career development, and educational opportunities.

Dependent Resource Coordinator (DRC). The DRC provides direct and referral services for child care, special needs, adoptions, scholarship programs, and elder care.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP Coordinator works with the EAP contractor and other Work-Life Staff to help in prioritizing member and family needs and matching those needs with available resources.

Health Education Specialist (HES). The HES provides unit-level training and information to members and their beneficiaries on sources of care in the local area. Other services include alcohol awareness training, information on specific health benefits, and support for the local Health Benefits Advisor.

Relocation Assistance Manager (RAM). The RAM helps active duty, recalled reservists, recently separated, and retired members and their dependents during the relocation process. This person can provide the much-needed assistance during the transition process.

Wellness Coordinator (WLC). The Wellness Coordinator develops and manages regional Wellness programs. He or she educates and encourages Coast Guard members and their families to develop and adopt healthy lifestyles.

Chaplains. The chaplain is a logical choice to assist the Ombudsman. The chaplain's responsibility is the spiritual well-being of the people of the command. As an advisor, confidant, and resource, the chaplain may be excellent. However, the chaplain cannot be substituted for direct access to the CO/OinC. The chaplain's place in the command is well-defined, and the Ombudsman can utilize him or her as a primary resource. If there is not a chaplain at the command, the Ombudsman should identify the most readily available one and in what situations one should be consulted.

Health Benefits Advisor (HBA). The Ombudsman is not expected to be a CHAMPUS expert. The HBA is the resource for CHAMPUS questions. Questions may be directly referred to 1-800-9HBA-HBA. Most units have HBAs at least as collateral duties. They provide advice on CHAMPUS entitlements and information on other health-related benefits. Some Ombudsmen report to HBAs routinely.

Housing Officers. Housing officers may have information on the following:

- Management of Coast Guard-owned housing
- Administration of leased housing
- Establishment and operation of a housing locator/referral service
- Location of reasonably priced transient accommodations to be used during house hunting
- Liaison with DOD housing
- Use of DOD housing by Coast Guard personnel when available
- Liaison with local area housing officials including realtors, VA, FHA, etc.
- Inspection of housing offered for listing to ensure adequacy

Commanding/Executive Officers' Spouses. The role of the CO/OinC/XO's spouse may vary from significant involvement with the support of unit families and the Ombudsman to very little involvement. Regardless of the involvement chosen by the CO/XO spouses, it is important that the Ombudsman's image remain separate from theirs. The Ombudsman should be identified as a separate figure with direct access to the command. If a strong relationship is to exist between the CO/OinC/XO spouses and the Ombudsman, it should be made clear to all parties just what their role will be in relationship to each other and to unit families.

Customers

Command Families. This is the group the Ombudsman position was created to serve. The majority of the Ombudsman's efforts will be on their behalf, providing them with information, support, and encouragement and arranging for practical help when needed. The Ombudsman is their access to the command and a voice for their complaints and concerns. The Ombudsman can correct wrong information, have a calming influence, and suggest alternative methods for coping.

What the Ombudsman should not do is turn into a babysitting service, a chauffeur, a lending institution for family members in trouble, or a social director. With the command's help and guidance, the Ombudsman can arrange for all these services from appropriate sources but should not undertake these responsibilities personally. This point is stressed here because too often other helping agencies, such as hospitals and chaplains, see this as an Ombudsman function and will call at all hours of the day and night. They may expect the Ombudsman to assume responsibility for picking up a dependent or children of a mother unexpectedly admitted to the hospital. The Ombudsman cannot undertake all these personal services on a regular basis and still function properly. He or she should create a list of spouses who will provide one-time emergency child care and who can be available to provide a ride somewhere in an emergency.

Single Coast Guard Personnel. The Ombudsman can be very helpful to single service members. Often, during deployments, the Ombudsman may be the only one families living in other areas can call upon for information about the ship's location or why they have not heard from their service member. The Ombudsman could offer to send, on request, copies of the command newsletter to families of single service members. The Ombudsman can also initiate programs to draw single service members into the command's family. For instance, the Ombudsman of one ship organized the "adopt an extra daddy" idea. The children of the command wrote to the single servicemen on the ship. Many of the single service members wrote back and started a lively correspondence with the children. When the ship came home, some of the children greeted two daddies. Some warm friendships were established as well as a feeling of closeness between the ship's single crew members and the members of shipmates' families. Even during periods when the unit is not deployed, the Ombudsman can help single personnel to identify activities of interest. Resources and constructive activities such as volunteer work may be of great value. If the Ombudsman explores the numerous possibilities for serving members and participation is encouraged, the usefulness of the program will be greatly expanded. Certainly, at the least, the Ombudsman should be a resource for community and Coast Guard services and a source of advice and help for singles.

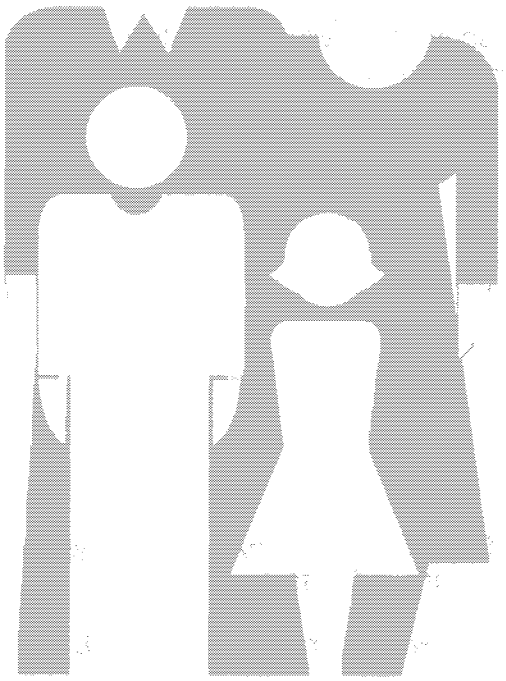
Single Parents. The demands of being a single parent are increased for a military service member. Not only is the parent in the difficult position of having no one to help with family and parenting responsibilities, but also there is the possibility of deployment. The Ombudsman can be helpful by identifying resources which can provide regular child care and also long-term child care for periods of deployment. Additionally, a single parent support group could be developed which would provide the single parent with a much-needed person to turn to in difficult times.

Dual Career/Dual Military Career Families. The primary concerns involving dual military career families and dual career families are the need for child care, the presence of "latch-key kids," and the desire to be co-located when duty assignments are made. Programs such as "family night"

could be considered which will help maintain the viability and security offered by being part of a family unit. The issue of co-locating personnel is a complicated process made by assignment officers. The Coast Guard has no requirement to co-locate family members, although every effort is made to do so. Several considerations which impact the assignment decision include:

- Willingness to be assigned to large metropolitan areas where there are more billets.
- Prior job assignments which have qualified a member for more jobs because of the broader background.
- Demands of rate, e.g., required sea duty, etc.
- Keeping married personnel from being in the same chain of command.

Special Needs Dependents. "Special needs dependents" refers to family members who are educationally, medically, physically, or psychologically disabled. These personnel may need help in locating resources, services, and programs to accommodate their needs. Commandant Instruction 1754.7 covers the CG Special Needs Program, and enrollment in this program is mandated for all members with special needs dependents. The Ombudsman's primary points of contact to learn more about the Coast Guard program and to identify local contacts and community resources are the unit Family Advocacy Representative (FAR), relevant Family Program Administrator (FPA), Dependent Resource Coordinator (DRC), or the Military Personnel Command (MPC) located at Headquarters.



Chapter Four
Resources

Types of Resources

Definition: A resource is anything that can be turned to for support and aid.

- Tangible
  - Financial assistance (Mutual Assistance, financial counseling)
  - Provision of food (WIC Program, food pantries)
  - Loan of furniture, equipment
- Intangible
  - Emotional support (counselor, chaplain, family, friends)
  - Crisis intervention (Hotlines, Family Program Administrator, FAR)
- Personal
  - The Ombudsman's own family and friends
- Community
  - Public agencies, private agencies, or support groups

Utilization of Resources

Civilian and Military. Identify resources in civilian and military communities that can be utilized in assisting families in the following areas:

- Child care
- Parenting
- Finances
- Housing
- Transportation

Resource File

Contact Community Agencies. Find out which services each agency offers, hours of operation, contact persons' names, fee or service, addresses.

Gather Information. Record the above information on file cards or in a loose-leaf notebook

where it is readily available. A very important aspect of the Ombudsman's job is to gather information on local resources of all kinds. Get in contact with the local chamber of commerce for information on the surrounding community. This would include information on schools, colleges, vocational schools, shopping, medical facilities, special events, etc. The Ombudsman should get on their mailing lists.

Mailing List. Contact the nearest Army/Navy/Air Force/Marine Corps facility and get on the Family Service Center's mailing list.

Support Organizations and Activities

Local American Red Cross. The Red Cross has an international network for relaying messages and assistance to military families and can assist with:

- Verifying the need for emergency leave.
- Helping with emergency financial aid.
- Providing budget and family counseling.
- Sending emergency and birth messages between Coast Guard personnel and their families.
- Training volunteers for military hospitals.

Armed Forces Hostess Association. The Armed Forces Hostess Association in Washington, D.C., is run by volunteers. Their mission is to provide the Ombudsman with information about the local area or the area to which a member is moving. Their creed is "If we don't know the answer, we'll find it!" They keep a folder on every service installation with information on housing, medical facilities, available recreation, nearby tourist sites, and even restaurants. People requesting general information will get a welcoming kit. If specific information is desired, the hostesses will do the research to get the answer. Some additional topics they provide information on include animal care, camps for children and families, discount buying, and educational offerings (including public, private, and parochial schools, and provisions for handicapped students). The organization is open Monday through Friday from 0930 to 1530. Mail may be addressed to: Armed Forces Hostess Association, Room 1A-736, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20310.

State Cooperative Extension Services (4H). The local 4H club may provide free or low-cost classes in parenting, nutrition, communication skills, etc. It is often a good source of pamphlets and local information.

Armed Forces YMCA. The services vary but may include rooms and central kitchen for family use, child care, transportation, gymnasium, or a restaurant.

Chapel/Churches/Chaplains. These may include religious services, counseling, center for social activity, child care, or programs for young adults. The Ombudsman should develop a list with name/religious affiliation, address, phone/name of contact, and hours of religious services.

Child Care Centers. The Ombudsman should keep information such as, names, addresses, age of children accepted, services provided, hours of operation, and charges.

Commissary and Exchanges. The Ombudsman should develop a list of commissary/exchanges by location, to include phone number and hours of operation.

Decedent Affairs Office. The Ombudsman should know the contact point and general procedure to be followed by a family in the event of the death of an active duty member.

Educational Opportunities. The Ombudsman should determine the facilities, programs, etc. which provide opportunities to finish high school, attend vocational school, local and state colleges and universities as well as sources of financial aid for education, adult education, review courses for entrance examinations, etc.

Employment Opportunities. Job opportunities for spouses and dependent children over the age of eighteen can include employment with the federal government, department of defense, military retail stores, military recreational departments, and other military and civilian community agencies and businesses.

Identification Cards. In order to use commissaries, exchanges, and medical facilities, every Coast Guard dependent over ten years of age must have an identification card. To get an ID card, the spouse needs Defense Department (DD) Form 1172 completed and signed by the service member and certified by his/her personnel officer.

If either a service member or his or her children should lose an ID card, report it at once to the personnel office. The ID card is a must for all dependents. It also may be used as personal identification in the civilian community.

The card must be returned to the Coast Guard in the following situations:

- When it expires
- When a new card is issued
- When the card holder is no longer an eligible dependent
- When the sponsor is discharged, retires, is released from active duty, or dies. In the event of the sponsor's death or retirement, dependents will be issued new cards to reflect the change.

Navy League ADAPT Program. ADAPT is an organized program of the Navy League designed to give counsel and assistance to active duty Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel, both reserve and regular, and their dependents. It is particularly helpful to family members residing in a civilian community while the service member is assigned elsewhere for duty. If family members lack the facilities of a military installation, they can at least look to ADAPT for guidance in a moment of need. For information, write to Navy League National Headquarters, 818 Eighteenth Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20006

Navy Wifeline Association. This volunteer organization is run entirely by Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard spouses. They respond to letters seeking information. New spouses, retirees,

and all those in between have found their personal replies to be a reassuring link to our overall service family. In addition to their one-on-one assistance, these wives have also written a number of fine publications which the Ombudsman may request free of charge:

- Sealeg
- Overseamanship
- Welcome Aboard
- Social Customs and Traditions of the Navy
- Launching an Enlisted Wives Club
- Guidelines for the Wives of Officers and Executive Officers
- Personal and Financial Planning

For new spouses, they will send a portfolio of some of the above booklets, plus other helpful information. The Ombudsman may contact them at: The Navy Wifeline Association, Building 172, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. 20374.

Schools. The Ombudsman should identify the names, grades, addresses, and phone numbers of all local public and private schools in the area and be familiar with registration procedures, dates, and paperwork required.

Required inoculations may vary from state to state. The Ombudsman should find out what types of documentation are required to prove they have been received.

Special Services (Recreation). Besides using the special services facilities at Coast Guard facilities, Coast Guard members may take advantage of DOD recreation facilities and hobby shops.

Additionally, the Coast Guard special services officer may have tickets to sporting or cultural events at a sizeable discount.

The Ombudsman should prepare a list of all local special service officers, their phone numbers, and the types of facilities and other offerings which are available.

Family Service Centers of Other Services in the Area. These may offer employment assistance, counseling, classes, and other services. Coast Guard family members are usually eligible for services.

United Services Organizations (USO). The mission of the USO is to serve the religious, spiritual, social, welfare, educational, and entertainment needs of the armed forces. The primary responsibility of the USO is to serve members of the armed forces and their families outside military installations when off-duty or on leave.

One of the primary functions of the USO is to provide information and referral services pertaining to the local military installation, base services, local civilian community services, travel and ticket discounts, restaurants, area entertainment, recreation, and other miscellaneous information. The USO is always there when you need a friend!

Volunteer Opportunities. Many spouses may be looking for an outlet for their energies. They may want to help people, but they may not want to have an 8 to 5 job, 5 days a week. They may prefer not to be tied down by even a part-time job. Being a volunteer is what some spouses may be looking for.

There are various service-affiliated organizations that are in need of volunteers to help them accomplish their missions. Some of these groups include the American Red Cross, Family Service Centers, National Military Family Association (NMFA), USO, and numerous civilian organizations.

In some cases, the organizations will provide volunteers with free child care and transportation. Volunteers are eligible to deduct various expenses from their income taxes. These expenses can include personal expenses for transportation, child care, and uniforms. By specializing in a particular subject or area and volunteering time to teach a class, spouse volunteers may be able to deduct the amount they could have been paid from their income taxes. If a spouse is considering a career change, volunteer work may enable him or her to develop new professional interests. Volunteering also may open some doors to spouses because of the personal contacts that are made.

The most important requirements needed to become a volunteer are sacrificing some personal time and a sincere desire to assist service personnel and their families.

Spouse Clubs and Activities. There are clubs for spouses of enlisted members, chief petty officers, and commissioned officers. There are organizations for specific groups such as Coast Guard spouses, ship's spouses, etc. There are also clubs for any Coast Guard spouse. Activities of such clubs vary from meetings to taking on a variety of worthwhile projects. The clubs have two things in common: open membership to any spouse in the group, and the primary purpose of promoting friendship. The Coast Guard spouse will find a ready-made group of friends waiting for him or her. The Ombudsman's role should be kept distinct from that of a social director.

Other Local, Community, and Coast Guard Resources. Awareness of various additional Coast Guard and community resources will go far to increase the Ombudsman's effectiveness as an information resource. Other local resources include Community Health, Welfare, Medical Care, Housing, Social Services, Environmental Resources, and recreation. These are just a few examples of the selection of resources available.

Some local Coast Guard Reserve Units may be able to provide medical or legal services during active duty or drill periods.

A number of state and federal programs are specifically aimed at young families. Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a federal program for which some Coast Guard families may qualify. Additionally, states offer free "shots for tots," vision screening, assistance for various handicapping conditions, etc.

A phone directory of emergency and quick reference phone numbers should be readily accessible to the Ombudsman.

Miscellaneous. The Commanding Officer/Officer In Charge of medical, exchange, commissary, personnel services, special services, and such support facilities should be contacted and told that the Ombudsman has regular communication with Coast Guard families and would appreciate being on their information distribution list. Not only will it benefit the dependents, it will also help support the facilities disseminating information for them. Read the Navy Times, local newspapers, club bulletins, etc. Keep all information obtained at services and benefits council meetings.

Referral. The Ombudsman is not a trained professional counselor. Because of the very sensitive and confidential nature of situations involving family violence, spouse and child abuse should be immediately reported to the CO/OinC, FPA, and FAR. The point at which a problem is beyond the abilities of a friendly listener and calls for specialists and professionals is a fine line to which the Ombudsman must be very sensitive.

Family Support Programs

Family Advocacy Program. One important feature of the family support program is the prevention and referral service provided by the Family Program Administrators and the Family Advocacy Representative to assist Coast Guard dependents, particularly those who are victims of family violence. Reported cases of physical and/or mental abuse of spouse and children are referred to Uniform Services Medical Treatment Facilities or to an appropriate community agency for evaluation and treatment.

Special Needs. The Family Support Program offers services to family members who are medically, physically, emotionally, or educationally disabled and who are unable to perform adequately or live in society without special assistance. The military personnel command at Headquarters reviews all special needs cases.

Humanitarian Assignments (HUMS). Personnel assignments made for humanitarian reasons are done to alleviate a family-related hardship that cannot be resolved by emergency leave. Assignments are for a limited period without reimbursement for travel or transportation of household goods. A HUMS assignment, in itself, is not necessarily a basis for discharge. There are numerous families with ongoing needs for special facilities who are able to draw upon their resourcefulness and flexibility, thereby allowing the service member of the family to continue in a rewarding career in the Coast Guard. Requests for humanitarian assignments are made via the chain of command to Commandant MPC-EPM or MPC-OPM.

Child Care. The Coast Guard operates eight child care centers in areas of highest need to assist single parents and families in which both parents are employed. The care provided focuses on a developmental rather than custodial approach. The directors of these centers are trained by child development experts, and the operation of each center is closely monitored by the Headquarters child development Program Specialists. In addition, the Coast Guard is developing standards for the operation of in-home child care by dependents in Coast Guard-controlled housing.

Chapter Five
Family Issues

Assisting the Family

While the Ombudsman is primarily a communications link between the commanding officer and the families within the unit, this unique role generally translates into a question, problem, and complaint clearinghouse. While this may appear to go beyond the concept of an intermediary with the command, most of the communications coming from the family members start out as problems and complaints. To the extent to which the Ombudsman is prepared to provide information or refer the family to someone who can help, both the family and the unit are best served. In view of this, the Ombudsman should give thought to the types of matters that may come up and how to handle them.

Urgent Calls. This may be the most taxing aspect of the Ombudsman's job. While there will hopefully be few crisis situations, the individual contacting the Ombudsman is calling for help and may be afraid and irrational. While the Ombudsman's role in many cases will be to point them in the right direction to get help, usually from someone in the Work-Life Staff, how the Ombudsman handles that will be very important to resolving the problem.

Basic Rules.

- Listen - The Ombudsman should be sure to let the people involved speak and truly listen to those involved. It is very important to hear how they see the problem and what they expect from the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should verbalize what he or she hears and what is happening descriptively, not critically. Remember, if it is a crisis to them, treat it as one. Try not to judge.

- Remember that the person who has sought the Ombudsman's help is important even though he or she may be talking about someone else who may be involved with the problem. Work with the person who has asked for help.

- The Ombudsman is a listener, a referral agent, and perhaps a friend. He or she can help people by listening but should not give advice or assume responsibility for the person's problems.

- The Ombudsman should take care to avoid being overactive. The natural tendency is to talk a lot and offer a good deal of help in the form of advice or solutions. Let the person take the lead. Often, the individual needs and wants to talk the problem out.

- The Ombudsman should always be empathetic.

- It is important that the Ombudsman not become absorbed with historical excuses or reasons for present problems. The focus should be on what is currently happening in order to maintain control of the situation.

- When referring, the Ombudsman should take care to be specific. The member should be told where to go, when to be there, and who to see. If possible, give the member the name and phone number of the person in the agency who will be giving assistance and services. When making referrals, the Ombudsman should try to give a follow-up call to the person who requested the referral. This will show that the Ombudsman cares enough to see that they got the help they requested. This will also help the Ombudsman in knowing his or her resources. The member may say "Yes, I received the help I needed, but what a long wait!" The

Ombudsman should make a note of the resource and the comments. This may save the next person some frustration in using the same resource.

- It is important for the Ombudsman to provide reassurance that the person will be able to resolve the problem.

- Trust in the Ombudsman must be developed and maintained. This trust is earned by acting responsibly and protecting confidentiality.

The Ombudsman should employ "active listening" skills and consider the following steps in any intervention situation:

- What is the problem?

- How serious is the problem?

- What does the person want and what does the person need?

- What resources and/or referrals are available?

- What is the caller feeling?

- What basic needs are being deprived?

- What are the expectations of the Ombudsman?

- How can the Ombudsman help the caller to help himself or herself?

Referral Skills. The Ombudsman should exercise caution in referral. If he or she is not experienced and sure of the available resources, the Ombudsman should call the local FAR, FPA, or chaplain, etc. The Ombudsman will want to talk with his or her commanding officer to determine who to report to within the chain of command in crisis situations.

When making a referral, it is comforting and professional to offer a short explanation of the service/agency to be contacted by the individual, the kinds of information that will be needed to secure services, and a brief explanation of what will happen to the individual.

After developing the referral plan with the individual, the Ombudsman should summarize the above questions and ask the member if he or she has any questions or comments. If the Ombudsman is unsure of correct answers to questions, he or she should not guess and should tell the member that he or she does not know the answer. Specific promises should not be made regarding the agency or services being offered.

Financial Problems

The cause of many financial problems generally stems from the absence of or faulty budgeting of family income and expenses. The Ombudsman can arrange training sessions in financial management for members and spouses to assist them in learning about good budgeting and credit practices.

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance. This is an organization established to provide financial aid in time of certain emergency, housing, or educational needs. It can assist active duty military personnel of the Coast Guard and their families; active duty military personnel of other armed forces serving with the Coast Guard and their families; commissioned personnel of the Public Health Service serving with the Coast Guard and their families; and the families of those members of the Coast Guard who died while on active duty or in a retired status. It can also assist Coast Guard civilian employees, reservists, and auxiliarists through a sponsorship program. Through counsel, financial grants, and loans, Coast Guard Mutual Assistance aspires to promote the general well-being of the people it serves. Members are encouraged to contact their local CGMA Representative or District Director to request financial counseling. When necessary they may then be referred to other sources for professional financial planning and counseling. CGMA funds may be used to pay for this professional financial counseling. Payment will be made directly to the counselor.

NOTE: Members do not have to request a CGMA loan or grant to be entitled to this service.

Details of applying for and receiving Mutual Assistance loans can be obtained from the unit mutual assistance representative.

Indebtedness. All members of the Coast Guard are expected to pay their acknowledged debts and financial obligations. Members of the service are still citizens and have an obligation to obey civil laws and comply with any court orders. The Coast Guard has no authority to direct or control the pay of any member for the purpose of satisfying any private debt. Despite this, there are certain situations, such as court-ordered garnishment for the payment of child support or alimony, when the Coast Guard will direct a portion of a member's pay to make that payment. Most issues involved in resolving indebtedness are legal issues, and the member should be directed to a legal officer. The following points should be emphasized in financial planning.

Thrift is not only a virtue but, for most people, a necessity. Prior to acceptance of any credit plan, members should evaluate their financial capabilities and establish a budget which will preclude hopeless entrapment in overburdening and ever-increasing debt.

Consultation with a legal assistance officer when contemplating large purchases on credit will help members avoid commitments which may be difficult to carry out.

Coast Guard members should be wary of the "high pressure" salesman. They should be encouraged to think carefully and seek advice before signing any agreement or contract. No one should ever sign a blank contract, and one should always multiply the number of payments by the monthly payment to determine the total price. It is also important to note any penalty clauses.

Failure to pay debts or repeatedly incurring debts beyond a member's ability to pay is evidence of irresponsibility and may jeopardize the member's security clearance status, advancement status, duty assignment, qualification for reenlistment, and in aggravated circumstances, may become grounds for disciplinary action or administrative discharge.

Savings may be realized by setting funds aside to provide for cash purchases. The savings, counseling, and lending services provided by credit unions organized by and for Coast Guard personnel may offer substantial advantage over those of the standard financial institution. Members should be encouraged to consult a legal assistance officer. Bankruptcy is not an easy way out of indebtedness.

Medical and Dental Care. Medical care for service family members is one of the major benefits of the Coast Guard. Care is provided to families on a space-available basis at any uniformed services (Army, Navy, Air Force, or Coast Guard) facility. Spouses and children may also get care in civilian facilities under certain circumstances. A comprehensive program of medical benefits called CHAMPUS (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services) pays for certain care in civilian facilities.

CHAMPUS. Spouses and children eligible for CHAMPUS benefits may elect freely to use either uniformed services facilities or civilian facilities for outpatient care, but for inpatient care, they are required to use uniformed services facilities if reasonably available in their area. If there is no uniformed services facility available or if the one available cannot provide the type of medical care needed, they can then receive inpatient care from a civilian source. In such instances, they must submit a non-availability statement issued by a uniformed services facility along with their bills for payment. Ordinarily, CHAMPUS will not pay bills without this statement. Contact the Health Benefits Advisor for more information.

- Requirements. As evidence of eligibility for medical care from uniformed services sources and for CHAMPUS benefits, a beneficiary must have a valid uniformed services Identification Card. In filing a CHAMPUS claim covering the care of a child under the age of 10, the data from the appropriate adult's ID card should be entered on the claim form.

- Cost. CHAMPUS is not free. The member must pay part of his or her medical costs. Furthermore, the member or the provider must file claims before CHAMPUS can pay its share of the bills. For the member's sake, it's important to fill out the claim form correctly and to include any necessary paperwork. Military hospitals and clinics should be used whenever possible. They save money for the member and the government. By using health benefits wisely, members help make sure the funds will be there when truly needed.

Questions about CHAMPUS should be discussed with the unit health benefit advisor.

Dental. Dental services are provided to all active duty personnel. There is an active duty dependents dental insurance plan through Delta Dental.

The Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). DEERS is a system to ensure that only authorized persons receive military health benefits. Under the program, each eligible individual receives a DEERS number which can be verified by computer by the military health facility at which the member is requesting health care. Anyone who is not registered on the system will not be provided non-emergency care. In addition, CHAMPUS claims are now checked

against DEERS for all uniformed services benefits. Active duty service members and retirees who draw retirement pay are automatically enrolled in DEERS. Family members are not automatically enrolled. It takes 6-8 weeks after requesting enrollment before one's name shows up on the DEERS database. For questions on DEERS enrollment procedures or to check one's status, the member should contact the personnel office at his or her command.

Housing

Eligibility and Availability. Eligibility and availability of Coast Guard family housing will vary by district and from unit to unit. The Ombudsman will have to find out the particular situation at his or her unit from the unit housing officer. The following list is provided to make the Ombudsman aware of the types of issues that arise involving housing:

- Eligibility
- Designation of certain housing for specific pay grades or job titles
- Making applications
- Check-in
- Termination
- Inspection
- Maintenance services
- Regulations
- Vehicles and parking
- Impact of occupying family housing on pay
- Variable Housing Allowance (VHA)
- Leased housing

Legal Issues

Authority. Legal assistance is a benefit which is provided by many districts and commands to unit personnel. The Ombudsman's best legal advice is a referral to the closest legal office. In order to help with the referral, it is helpful to know the types of situations in which legal aid may be provided and also when it will not be provided.

Situations Requiring Legal Advice. Legal advice may be provided in situations related to the following:

- Motor vehicle registration/licensing/insurance
- Powers of attorney
- Landlord/tenant relations
- Wills
- Legal separation and divorce
- Legal residence - domicile
- Insurance
- Income taxes
- Consumer protection
- Using the small claims courts
- Adoption

Situations Where Legal Assistance May Not be Provided. It is particularly important to note that Coast Guard legal assistance may not be provided in the following situations:

- Military administrative matters (including personnel matters). In the area of military administrative matters, the legal assistance officer shall refer the individual to the appropriate staff element or command without entering into an attorney-client relationship.
- Military criminal matters, whether preliminary, judicial, or non-judicial.
- Private income-producing matters, including drawing up partnership agreements and articles of incorporation. However, a member may be provided assistance in leasing a personal residence upon being transferred out of the area in which the residence is located.
- Claims against the United States.
- Complex estate planning matters, e.g., complicated trust provisions and wills.
- Fee generation cases. "Fee generating case" means any case or matter which, if undertaken on behalf of an eligible client by an attorney in private practice, may be expected to result in a fee for legal services from an award to a client, public funds, or the opposing party.

The Ombudsman should be prepared to provide a listing of Coast Guard legal offices, those from the other military services, and local private civilian lawyers, in the event their services are required.

Absentee Voting

Persons eligible to use absentee voting include members of the Coast Guard and other armed forces serving with the Coast Guard who are in the active service and are serving away from their place of voting residence. Such members' spouses and dependents may also vote by absentee ballot. This applies to any general election for President and Vice President and any election of state Senator and Representative.

Retirement

One of the most attractive incentives of a military career has been the excellent retirement system which provides not only monthly retirement income and security for those who serve a minimum of twenty years, but entitles the retiree to retain many of the benefits of the services such as exchange and commissary privileges, medical care in uniformed services facilities or through CHAMPUS or CHAMPVA, and many other desirable benefits, including provision to provide income for survivors, if desired.

Characteristics. The retirement system has the following two significant characteristics:

- Non-contributor. This means that the member makes no direct contribution from monthly pay toward retirement benefits.

- There is no "vested" retirement interest. Thus, a member separated from active duty prior to completing 20 years of active service forfeits all credit towards retirement with two exceptions:

  - If the member enters the federal civil service or remains in the reserve forces, credit for the period of active duty may be used in computing the retirement annuity under either the Reserve Retirement System or the Civil Service Retirement System.

  - Retirement for Disability: A member with at least 8 years of service who is unfit to perform the duties of his or her office or grade because of physical or mental disability may be retired if the disability is not the result of intentional misconduct or willful neglect and was not incurred during a period of unauthorized absence; and, if the disability is rated at 30% or more or the member has at least 20 years of service. A disability rating must be determined by applying the standard schedule of rating disabilities in use by the Veterans Administration (VA) at the time of determination. A member with less than 8 years of service is eligible only if the disability was the result of performing active duty or was incurred in the line of duty. If it was not, the member is separated.

Retirement is addressed in Chapter 12, Section C of the Personnel Manual (COMDTINST 1000.6A). Additionally, retirement information is available in two very readable publications which the Ombudsman may find to be very handy reference guides. The titles are:

- COMDTINST M1800.4A (Your Guide in Retirement)

- Retired Military Almanac

In some cases, military benefits or a share of retirement pay may be obtained from the spouse in the case of divorce. Additionally, children of divorce may keep their ID cards and accompanying privileges as long as they are minors.

Benefits for Veterans and Dependents

Benefits are provided to veterans and their dependents by the Coast Guard, Veterans Administration, and Social Security Administration. While the Coast Guard tries to advise members and their families of the benefits available to them, all matters relating to the many benefits provided by the Veterans Administration and the Social Security Administration are entirely within the jurisdiction of these agencies. Their decisions are not subject to review by the Coast Guard. Any question regarding eligibility should be handled directly between the member or a family member and the agency.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR)

The Ombudsman should establish contact with the unit Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) officer. Most unit MWR programs offer a variety of social and recreational activities designed for participation by the member and his or her family. The MWR program also offers small short-term loans (not to exceed $100) which may be especially needed by newly reporting personnel. The MWR officer may also be a source of information concerning local social services and community events.

Miscellaneous Special Local Problems

The Ombudsman may want to research other areas and possible assistance with problems such as the following:

- Transportation to and from a remote duty station to other more populated areas for shopping, etc.
- Emergency leave procedures
- Language problems (the Red Cross sometimes offers a language bank)
- Local customs
- Public transportation

Newsletter/Resource Information

A specific function related to the Ombudsman's role as a communicator may be the publication of an Ombudsman newsletter. Newsletters contain helpful resource information as well as news about the command. They can be an excellent means by which the family community is reminded of the Ombudsman's existence and potential helpfulness, as well as a means for receiving specific information. It is particularly important in the case of deploying commands. Sometimes it is the only way in which the families of the command are reached regularly, especially if the command does not have time to send more than periodic Familygrams. Sometimes an Ombudsman column is printed in the command's Familygram or in the base newspaper. The value in having the Ombudsman publish a separate newsletter is that it permits personal warmth and informality, as well as allowing the Ombudsman's functions to remain separate in the family members' minds. The goal is for the Ombudsman to be seen as an approachable person representing the family's point of view, and as one who can provide a liaison with the command in times of difficulty.

Purpose of Ombudsman Newsletter

- Transmitting messages that the command has for the families.
- Informing families about community and Coast Guard services and resources helpful to their morale and welfare.
- Helping the families feel in contact with the command and conveying to them the command's concern for their well-being.
- Uplifting, encouraging, and inspiring families whenever possible and keeping them informed about news of common interest.

Format

The letterhead should clearly state the complete title of the command, the date including the year, and the fact that it is the Ombudsman newsletter. In addition, there might be a popular title (e.g., THE BUCHANAN BLAST, THE TAHOMA TALES, etc.).

The greeting and body of the newsletter may be in bulletin form or in letter form with a generalized greeting - "Dear Sundew Family" or within smaller commands - "Dear_____" with the individual names filled in. The first paragraph can be an informal continuation of the greeting ("Hope this finds all of you well."). The main part of the letter could be divided into clear sections, depending on the material covered. Each section can be titled with capitals and the key words underlined for fast perusal by the recipient. Sample section headings could be NEW COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, ITEMS TO NOTE, etc.

The closing might be a more personal, morale-lifting thought. A brief statement of the purpose of the Ombudsman would be helpful, along with the fact that the Ombudsman would welcome contact with all of them.

The signature should include the title (Ombudsman, Assistant Ombudsman, etc.), address, phone number, and designated phone hours for routine calls (if the Ombudsman has them). The Ombudsman can add a nice touch by signing his or her name in script over the typed name.

The newsletter should be typed. If the Ombudsman cannot type, he or she should arrange with someone else to type it. ALL NEWSLETTERS SHOULD BE PROOFREAD BY SOMEONE ELSE FOR SPELLING AND GRAMMATICAL ERRORS. Sometimes it is difficult to spot your own mistakes.

Content. The content of the letter will vary depending upon the information available to the Ombudsman, whether the command is deployed or in the shipyard, time of the year, etc. Whenever possible, it should include information from the command, information about command activities, and resources available that might be helpful to the families.

Possible items suitable for newsletters include the following:

- A message from the CO/OinC.
- Specific news relating to the command's spouses and about get-togethers, potlucks, video taping for deployed ships, new programs, and resources.
- Information about helpful community resources, e.g., a change in dispensary policies or hours, child care locations with fees, hours, and other information. Telephone numbers can be helpful.
- For deployed units - Tips on handling different kinds of problems while the ship is gone.
- Opportunities for volunteer work both in the Coast Guard and civilian communities including skills needed and a number to call for further information.
- A question and answer section on problems that come up frequently.
- Summary of the Ombudsman's job and how he or she can assist families.
- Periodic listing of commonly utilized resources indicating the services offered and how they can be contacted.
- Recognition of personal achievements of family members and examples of special helpfulness shown by others.
- A section for families to share with each other helpful tips, thoughts, or announcements, subject to the Ombudsman's screening for appropriateness.
- The Work Life Staff may have articles to place in the Ombudsman's newsletter.

Telephone Calls

Since telephone calls are the major part of any Ombudsman's job, especially at a deploying unit, preparing for the various types of calls which might be received and how to handle them is important. As part of the preparation for handling phone calls, the Ombudsman needs to have a focus on listening techniques. Ombudsmen need to understand the importance of listening carefully, not intruding their own feelings or reactions, and trying to help on a basis that is right for the person calling. Ombudsmen should be discreet in their handling of each call.

The wisdom of having calling hours for routine calls and a time limit for ordinary calls (so that others can get through) is emphasized.

Telephone calls are generally broken down into the following categories:

- Information and reassurance: Most calls will be for routine information or perhaps to pass some information along, or just to touch base. These are dealt with quickly and easily, especially if the Ombudsman is well organized.

- The complaint call: Depending on the type of complaint, this may be a little more complicated. It will require careful listening.

- Urgent calls: A crisis occurs when a person feels he or she can no longer cope effectively for whatever reason, and these calls are more difficult since they sometimes require very sensitive handling and provision of immediate help in some form.

- Nagging or dump calls: Sometimes an Ombudsman has to deal with someone who calls constantly, or complains and whines endlessly, or who regularly uses the Ombudsman as an emotional dumping ground. As the Ombudsman, he or she should be alert to identify this type of caller and handle the call firmly at the outset. Sometimes the Ombudsman will need to definitely refuse to spend inappropriate amounts of time on the phone. Having a routine five-minute limit to calls helps.

- Service demand calls: These are the ones that assume that the Ombudsman is a direct service provider, e.g., "Please pick me up in twenty minutes" or "You'll have to babysit for my kids while I go to the doctor." The Ombudsman will need to think about these kinds of calls, or the first few might catch him or her off guard. The Ombudsman must think about how to handle these demands, when and if it ever might be appropriate to perform such services, and how to draw the line. Usually the Ombudsman can tell whether it's a genuine emergency or exploitation. In a large deploying command, it is unwise for the Ombudsmen to take on direct service provision unless it is an emergency. It is helpful to have a committee of people who will help along these lines.

Organization of Files

Reference Information. The Ombudsman should think carefully about the way he or she will organize the growing amount of resource information which will accumulate. Since referral is one of the Ombudsman's primary functions, a system of some sort should be established to keep information accessible. The Ombudsman may hear of some very helpful agency that

offers free financial planning seminars, but when the moment comes and that information is needed in a hurry and it's buried somewhere in a pile of brochures, the Ombudsman may not be able to respond as quickly as one would like to. It is part of the Ombudsman's obligation to keep all information in good order in a file system, with contact names and key information written on the cover of the folder.

Problems. If the Ombudsman files by problem area, he or she will have to cross-reference where areas overlap or where the same resource handles several problems.

Method. Cross-referencing the resource file alphabetically and by subject classification is necessary. This classification scheme may include general service areas, specific service areas, and alphabetical listing of the agencies that provide these services. Whatever method is used, it must be kept up-to-date, and new items should always be dated. Dating information and entries needs to be stressed because undated material is hard for successors to evaluate. Ombudsmen should always think in terms of their successors and how helpful information will be to them.

In addition to the general reference information file discussed above, it is necessary that the Ombudsman maintain a quick reference manual for handling certain immediate needs. It is suggested that a 3-ring notebook be utilized for easy access and organization of notes. In this notebook, the Ombudsman should put the following:

- This Ombudsman Handbook
- Current copy of unit roster
- Current roster of other Ombudsmen who may be of help
- Beneficiary Guide
- Base phone book
- Emergency or quick access referral phone numbers
- Balancing Work-Life booklet

This notebook should be kept near the telephone with some sharpened pencils and blank paper available.

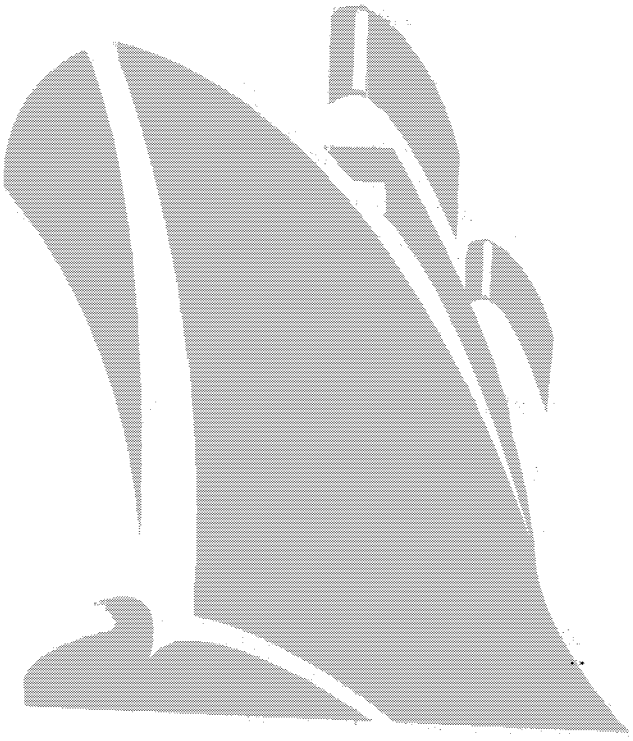
Ombudsman Assistance Worksheets. Worksheets can be used for collecting personal information on each incident or inquiry so that it can be referred to. If the Ombudsman can provide the information immediately, then he or she should do so. If the answer is not immediately available, then the Ombudsman should tell the caller that he or she will call back with an answer. The Ombudsman should call back as soon as possible even if it is to say "I am still trying to locate a certain resource." This also says "I have not forgotten about you, I care." The Ombudsman should make note of the conclusion of the inquiry on the worksheet, so that the resources will definitely get to the appropriate person. AS ALWAYS, THE OMBUDSMAN MUST REMEMBER THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THIS INFORMATION. It is for the Ombudsman's eyes only. After resources and information have been received, all notes should be destroyed.

Chapter Seven
Evaluating the Ombudsman Program

Ombudsman Self-Evaluation. Part of being a good Ombudsman is being sensitive to the needs of the command. The Ombudsman should continually ask himself or herself the following questions:

- Am I still happy and motivated enough to serve the command?
- Is meaningful and useful information being communicated from the command, to me, and to the families?
- Are the families and unit, in general, becoming aware of available resources?

Poll/Questionnaire Evaluation. Obviously, the answers to these questions are to be found with those being served by the Ombudsman. Periodically, every six months or year, a formal poll/questionnaire should be completed by both the command and unit families. The Ombudsman should ask for input and then use it. This can be done through the newsletter. The Ombudsman is in a unique position to improve the lives of many of the active duty members and their families that make up a unit.



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