

Ombuds overseeing is changing

Starting on Friday July 1, the Department of Commerce will take over overseeing of the Ombuds program. The Department of Commerce will contract with Peer Washington who will act as the Statewide office for Behavioral Health Advocacy. The transition will be completed by October 1, 2022.

What is the ombuds program?

Ombuds are people with lived experience in behavioral health who know services well and can help people navigate and resolve concerns. Behavioral Health Ombuds services are available throughout the state.

What do Ombuds do?

Ombuds can assist with:

- Complaints and grievances — any dissatisfaction with services, written or verbal.
- Appeals — a reconsideration of denials, reduction or termination of services.
- Administrative (Fair) Hearings — a formal court procedure when all other avenues have been unsuccessful.

Ombuds services are voluntary. If a person chooses to file a grievance or complaint themselves, the Ombuds can direct them to the right process.

An Ombuds can help a person understand how to advocate for themselves effectively, or advocate on their behalf. They can advocate for adequate resolution and assist in setting up meetings and negotiations. The goal is always to resolve concerns at the lowest level possible.

In addition to assisting with complaints and grievances, Ombuds are also sources for community resource information and referrals for additional services. In 2021, the Health Care Authority was directed by legislation to transfer the Behavioral Health Ombuds to the Department of Commerce.

How will this change effect ombuds services?

- Ombuds services will still be provided during the transition period with no foreseeable disruption.
- **Your local ombuds contact information** will stay the same until the change is completed.

How can I learn more?

Visit [HCA's Office of Recovery Partnerships](#) to learn more.