MEET THE OMBUDSMAN
JOYANNA SMITH

Joyanna Smith was appointed as the Ombudsman for Public Education in February 2014. The oldest of eight children, she grew up with a deep appreciation for the importance of education. She previously worked in the education sector as a school leader at a DC public charter school and as an attorney fellow with the Educational Opportunities Project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. She also worked as a Labor Relations Advisor at the DC Department of Public Works, a policy analyst at the DC Department of Disability Services, and a real estate attorney at a law firm in Maryland. She received a B.A from Brown University and a J.D. from The George Washington University Law School.

What is an Ombudsman?

The word Ombudsman comes from a Swedish word that means "trusted representative." The word has come to mean someone who assists consumers or citizens who are experiencing problems with corporations or government organizations.

Our office is a member of the US Ombudsman Association and the International Ombudsman Association.

WHEN TO CONTACT US

You're facing a problem you have not been able to resolve by speaking to the school principal.

Communication between parent and school has broken down.

You don't know where to go for help.

You're having trouble finding the information that you need.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Intake Hotline: 202-741-0886
Staffed 9:00 am to 5:30 pm
Monday – Friday

Online complaint form:
http://www.sboe.dc.gov/ombudsman

In-person meetings available
by appointment
(call 202-741-0886 to schedule)

@DCOmbuds

DC Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education
DC State Board of Education

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OUR ROLE

We help parents and students who have questions, concerns, and complaints about the DC public schools and DC public charter schools.

We are independent and impartial in our approach to solving problems. We listen to all parties involved and make recommendations based on the student's best interests.

WHO WE SERVE

All current and prospective DC public school and DC public charter school families.

ISSUES WE HANDLE

Bullying
Harassment
Safety
Transportation
Attendance
Special Education
Suspensions
Expulsions
Truancy
Academic Progress

...and other issues that affect student learning

WHAT OUR OFFICE DOES NOT DO

» Take personnel action against school staff.

» Provide legal advice.

» Intervene when the parties are involved in legal or administrative proceedings.

HOW WE WORK

» We respond to all complaints within 48 hours.

» We listen carefully to your concerns and seek to understand them thoroughly.

» We keep what you tell us confidential unless we have serious concerns about student safety.

» Depending on the situation, we may:

- Coach parents and school staff on best practices for communication.
- Seek additional information and records from the school.
- Participate in meetings to support effective communication and problem-solving.
- Facilitate or mediate conversations.
- Make recommendations for a school to take a particular action, or for school system-wide improvements.

"THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR MY FAMILY."

L.W., mother of a DCPS Kindergarten student

OUR GOALS

RESPOND
to concerns in a timely, caring, and productive manner.

ENCOURAGE
effective communication between parents and schools.

ACT
as a source of early detection for emerging school system-wide issues.

CONTRIBUTE
creative policy solutions by identifying and sharing trends we observe.

PREVENT
recurring problems and improve existing processes by contributing suggestions for systemic change.

REDUCE
the need for administrative hearings and litigation by facilitating informal resolution of education-related conflicts.

DC Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education