



Office of  
**Developmental  
Disabilities  
Ombuds**

# Background

- ▶ DD Ombuds - Long time in the making
- ▶ Advocates working more than 20 years for a DD Ombuds
- ▶ Opportunity during the 2016 legislative session because of tragic case of abuse of a person with a developmental disability.

# Legislative intent SB 6564

- ▶ "The legislature finds and declares that the prevalence of the abuse and neglect of individuals with developmental disabilities has become an issue that negatively affects the health and well-being of such individuals."

One way to address to problem:

- ▶ Create independent Office of the Developmental Disabilities Ombuds - Disability Rights Washington chosen as contractor in 2017.

# What is an OMBUDS?

- ▶ An Ombuds is a person who collects and investigates complaints made against an agency.
- ▶ The Ombuds also reports concerns and possible program improvements to the government.

## DD Ombuds created - RCW 43.382

- ▶ Private, non-profit contracting with the State (Department of Commerce)
- ▶ Independent of the service system
- ▶ Provide Ombuds services statewide
- ▶ Exercise independence and authority
- ▶ Protect confidentiality

# Video

- ▶ <https://ddombuds.org/videos/>

# Powers and Duties

- ▶ Provide information on rights and responsibilities
- ▶ Investigate complaints
- ▶ Address complaints and resolve issues at the lowest level possible
- ▶ Monitor service delivery
- ▶ Review state institutions, state-licensed facilities, and residences
- ▶ Report on services to people with developmental disabilities
- ▶ Publish reports on systemic issues to the legislature
- ▶ Make recommendations for changes in policy and procedures.



## DD Ombuds

- ▶ Works for the interests of people with developmental disabilities.
- ▶ Informs the legislature to ensure safe, quality services.
- ▶ Reaches people with developmental disabilities who may not have a way to contact us.

# Services DD Ombuds provides

- ▶ Information and Referral Services
  - ▶ Share information on general rights to people with disabilities, family members, guardians, staff.
  - ▶ Done in person, over the phone, in trainings, presentations, at conferences, in writing or videos, and by hosting stakeholder meetings

# Services DD Ombuds provides

- ▶ Monitoring: Monitor state institutions, state-licensed facilities and residences.
  - ▶ Going out to assess conditions where people live and spend their time
  - ▶ Determine if rights might be violated
  - ▶ Meet people where they are
  - ▶ Usually systemic focused, but can work with individuals based on what is found
  - ▶ Information collected used to set DD Ombuds service directions

# Services DD Ombuds provides

## ► Complaint Investigation and Resolution

- Resident-directed - The resident making the complaint directs the DD Ombuds on how they would like the complaint to be resolved.
- Complaint-based- A complaint is *any* expression of dissatisfaction or concern brought to or initiated by DD Ombuds regarding services for an individual with a developmental disability in Washington State.
- Person-centered- The DD Ombuds work directly with people with disabilities to have them control the process and make decisions for what they want.
- DD Ombuds does not provide legal representation, but helps people navigate complaints they have in the service system
- Majority of DD Ombuds advocacy falls under this type of service

# Services DD Ombuds provides

## ▶ Systemic Investigations

- ▶ Systemic issues identified while monitoring, trends in data, relates to others services can be investigated including fact finding, record reviews, and interviews
- ▶ Systemic investigations
  - ▶ may arise from unresolved complaint
  - ▶ may result in individual advocacy to follow up on findings;
  - ▶ may include monitoring on systemic level
  - ▶ may inform our reports

# Services DD Ombuds provides

- ▶ Report Writing: a written document that explains work of the DD Ombuds and includes recommendations for changes in procedures, practices and policy for systemic reform
  - ▶ 3 reports a year
  - ▶ To governor, legislature, state agencies and other policy makers
  - ▶ Also present to stakeholder advisory committee



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