

## THE OMBUDS CAN

- ★ Listen to and clarify concerns to understand them thoroughly
- ★ Help community members identify and explore options for solutions
- ★ Provide information to help resolve concerns by researching Board of Education policies and FCPS regulations
- ★ Coach and empower individuals on how to prepare for conversations that lead to collaborative resolutions
- ★ Navigate individuals to the correct resources and people to address concerns
- ★ Foster effective communication
- ★ Track trends to help the Board of Education identify areas that could be improved

## THE OMBUDS CANNOT

- ★ Receive formal complaints
- ★ Conduct investigations of potential wrongdoing
- ★ Impose discipline or overturn student disciplinary decisions
- ★ Make, set or change Board of Education policies or FCPS regulations
- ★ Advocate on any particular position
- ★ Participate in litigation
- ★ Provide legal advice
- ★ Intervene when parties are involved in legal or administrative proceedings

## CONTACT THE OMBUDS WHEN YOU:

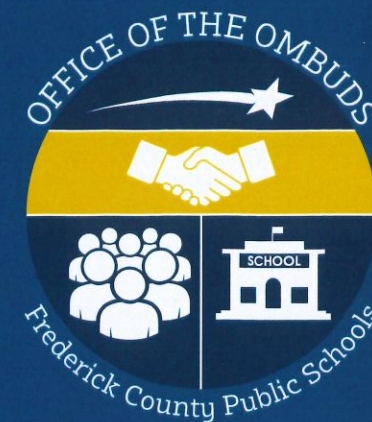
- Don't know where to go for help
- Have trouble finding the information or process that you need
- Would appreciate a confidential sounding board
- Need an impartial perspective
- Are uncertain about taking a problem through other established channels
- Want help thinking through how to deal directly with a challenging situation
- Want to discuss strategies or possible options and resources to resolve a concern
- Feel that communication with FCPS may have broken down



## HOW TO CONTACT

Phone: 301-696-6852  
Email: [ombuds@fcps.org](mailto:ombuds@fcps.org)  
[www.fcps.org/ombuds](http://www.fcps.org/ombuds)

191 S. East Street  
Frederick, MD 21701



**Navigate. Collaborate. Options.**



**Office of the Ombuds**  
Frederick County Public Schools

[www.fcps.org/ombuds](http://www.fcps.org/ombuds)  
Phone: 301-696-6852  
Email: [ombuds@fcps.org](mailto:ombuds@fcps.org)

191 S. East Street  
Frederick, MD 21701



# What is the Ombuds?

The **Ombuds** helps navigate FCPS concerns or issues and provide options for collaborative, fair resolutions.

The Ombuds (pronounced "om-budz") is a neutral person designated by the Board of Education to informally help and provide options for resolution of an FCPS concern or issue.

The Ombuds:

- Empowers individuals to overcome disputes, conflicts, and barriers to find options for best possible resolutions
- Builds and strengthens productive and effective relationships between FCPS organizational departments, staff, and the public
- Provides information and resources related to FCPS processes and helps to navigate processes
- Fosters collaboration and effective communication
- Identifies ways to contribute to systemic improvements by monitoring trends, addressing concerns or issues, and promoting fair processes



The Ombuds does not replace other FCPS tools to resolve problems and conflicts, but rather supplements those tools, provides resources, and fosters collaboration

# Guiding Principles

The Ombuds is a member of the **International Ombudsman Association (IOA)** and follows the IOA's guiding principles:

## INDEPENDENCE

The Office of the Ombuds reports directly to the Board and is not part of another department. The Ombuds position is outside of all regular chains of authority and reporting responsibility. An Ombuds emphasizes fairness in seeking solutions to problems.

## NEUTRAL/IMPARTIAL

The Office of the Ombuds will not take sides or advocate any particular position. Instead, we collaborate to find options with the best possible outcome for all involved.

## CONFIDENTIAL

The Office of the Ombuds is firmly committed to maintaining the confidentiality of those who use its services and keeps all information confidential to the extent allowed by law and provided no risk of injury is of concern. The identity of those who contact the Ombuds and information presented to the Ombuds will NOT be passed on to other parties without the express permission of the visitor.

## INFORMAL

The Office of the Ombuds is a place to explore informal options and work for collaborative resolutions. Communication with the Ombuds does not put the county "on notice" of a problem. The Ombuds advises about the process and options of resolution consistent with Board policies, FCPS regulations or negotiated agreements. Use of the service is free, voluntary, and not a required step in any procedure.

# The Ombuds Process

## LISTEN

Understand and identify issues. Connect community members with appropriate resources or staff to resolve issues or provide options for problem-solving steps.

Explain Board policies, FCPS regulations, or negotiated agreements. Provide an impartial perspective and discuss next steps. Evaluate to provide options and discuss future strategies to resolve concerns.

## DEVELOP OPTIONS

## GUIDE

Facilitate communication. Help community members to advocate for themselves to resolve concerns. Coach and help prepare them for conversations. Assist, with permission, to work collaboratively with all parties involved.