

# **Parent Ombudsman for Special Education** **(Virginia Department of Education)**

## **What is an Ombudsman?**

An Ombudsman is a person who serves as a designated neutral party who advocates for a fair process and provides confidential, informal assistance and support to parents, guardians, advocates, educators, and students with disabilities. The Parent Ombudsman for Special Education serves as a resource to parents in non-legal special education matters.

## **Contact Information**

Parent Ombudsman

Toll Free: 800-422-2083

Email: [SpecialEducationOmbudsman@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:SpecialEducationOmbudsman@doe.virginia.gov)

## **Key Functions of the Ombudsman for Special Education**

### **Independence**

The Ombudsman is independent of the formal dispute resolution options of mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings and serves a key function of reporting to leadership at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) regarding the issues experienced by parties served.

### **Confidentiality**

The Ombudsman does not disclose personal information, discussions, and interactions.

### **Neutrality**

The Ombudsman does not take a side on the issues and serves as an advocate for a fair process.

## **Informality**

There is no formal complaint form or documentation required to access the services of the Ombudsman.

## **Specific Duties of the Ombudsman for Special Education**

- Serve as a source of information and referral regarding state and federal laws and regulations governing special education.
- Provide information and support to parents of students with disabilities to help them understand and navigate the special education process.
- Provide communication strategies to parents and school divisions for resolving disagreements and special education issues.
- Assist parents in developing strategies and informal options to address issues and concerns.
- Promote collaboration and positive communication between parents and school division personnel in addressing special education issues.
- Provide information and resources on available options for dispute resolution, such as mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings when collaboration efforts fail.
- Serve as a resource for disability related information and referrals to available programs and services for individuals with disabilities.
- Identify, track, monitor, and report to the VDOE leadership on suspected systemic patterns of concerns that emerge from constituent contacts regarding special education services in local school divisions to aid in addressing noncompliance

## **Resources for Parents**

### **Ombudsman Flyer Cover Page**

### **Ombudsman for Special**

### **Education**

Learn what an Ombudsman is, their key functions, and specific duties.

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## **Ombudsman flyer in Spanish Cover Page de Padres para la Educación Especial**

**Defensor**

Conozca qué es un Defensor del Pueblo, sus funciones principales y deberes específicos.

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## **Ombudsman Strategies Cover Page Education Ombudsman Strategies**

**Special**

Learn when to contact the Ombudsman, how they facilitate resolution, and how else they can assist.

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## **Ombudsman Addressing Issues Cover Page**

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