What is the Employee Ombud Office?
The Office of the Employee Ombud provides a safe space for you to report workplace issues, discuss concerns, and explore options. Our goal is to help you develop constructive strategies for dealing with conflict and find answers to questions about available programs and resources. We use a trauma-informed approach to provide support, validation, and de-escalation to City employees.

Who can use the Ombud Office?
The Office of the Employee Ombud is offered as a no-charge service to the entire City of Seattle Employee community.

What is an ombudsperson?
An ombudsperson is a neutral person who can assist in resolving concerns in an informal, confidential, impartial, and non-escalating manner. The ombudsperson provides services designed to support individuals and groups, optimize the effectiveness of programs and services, and enhance the overall learning and workplace environments. The ombudsperson does not provide legal advice or psychological counseling.

What procedures or approaches does the ombudsperson use to provide help?
To assist a visitor, the ombudsperson employs a wide variety of informal approaches, including but not limited to:

- Listening
- Coaching
- Informal consulting
- Facilitated dialogue
- Informal mediation
- Shuttle diplomacy
- Suggesting referrals to existing services

How is the Ombud Office different from other Employee services?
The Office of the Employee Ombud is a designated confidential resource for all employees. Additionally, the services provided by the Ombud Office are designed to complement rather than replace other services such as formal investigative processes. We are an informal and confidential resource here to help amicably manage conflict with an intention to de-escalate, or to identify other available options.

The Ombud Office offers a good alternative if you:

- Would appreciate a confidential sounding board
- Want help thinking through how to deal directly with a concern
- Are uncertain about taking a problem through other established channels
- Are unsure who to talk to about a problem or concern
- Want to strategize how to avoid a small problem becoming a big problem
- Want an informal non-escalating approach where the next steps remain within your control
- Need a fresh, impartial perspective
- Want to discuss strategies or possible options and resources for resolving a concern
- Want to maintain the greatest flexibility in addressing a concern
- Would like help communicating with another person or group (e.g., supervisor, co-workers, etc.)

Note: The OEO will not conduct investigations.
Can I remain anonymous?
Confidentiality is an essential characteristic of ombud work. An ombud will not voluntarily disclose outside the ombud office information provided by visitors (including the visitor’s identity) if the complainant actually requests his or her identity or any identifying information not be disclosed. According to State of Washington Legislation HB 2020, without this explicit request, the information provided is disclosable. At OEO, our standard of practice will be to offer every complainant a chance to decide if they wish to keep their identifying information private. If you wish to remain anonymous, the best way to communicate with OEO is in-person or via phone. Please note that if you send an email, ensure that you do not include confidential information.

Is the ombudsperson a “mandatory reporter” for Title IX or prohibited discrimination?
No. The ombudsperson is a designated confidential resource at the City of Seattle and is therefore not obligated to report situations that may implicate Title IX or prohibited discrimination. Additionally, the ombudsperson is not a “security authority,” and thus does not pass along information about crimes that may have been committed. The only exceptions to confidentiality of the Ombud are child abuse or neglect; imminent risk of serious harm to the visitor or another person; or the order of a court with appropriate authority.

What happens in a visit?
The Ombud will open the visit with a description of what the office does, and the principles of confidentiality, independence, informality, and impartiality to ensure that you are aware of what the office can and cannot do. We will then ask you to describe the issue you wish to discuss. You are free to disclose as much or as little as you want, although we find that the more information one can provide the better. We are here to support you in finding a solution.

What should I bring with me to visit?
There is nothing that you are required to bring. However, you are welcome to bring documentation that helps explain the issue you wish to discuss. The Ombud will not keep any of the documents you bring with you.

How long is a visit? How many will there be?
Visits are scheduled for 30 minutes. There is no limit to how many visits you can schedule and you may see the Ombuds until the matter is resolved. We generally schedule a 30 minute consult; mediation and other processes take longer and will be scheduled as needed on a case-by-case basis.

See the full OEO FAQs on our InWeb for more information!
seattlegov.sharepoint.com/Ombuds/