

 <p>SPOKANE COUNTY Regional Support Network Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan</p>	Policy Title: Ombuds Service		Policy # QM - 4
	Signature: Signature on file	Revised: 8/30/07	
	Christine Barada, Director Community Services, Housing and Community Development	Reviewed:	
	Signature Date: 8/30/07	Signing by authority of Res. No. 2007-0038	

Applies to: Internal External

References

[WAC 388-865-0250](#)

Scope

The Ombuds Service is provided to the SCRSN via an independent contractor per WAC requirements. SCRSN must provide unencumbered access to and maintain the independence of the Ombuds Service. The Ombuds has responsibilities to receive complaints and grievances from public mental health consumers and others to protect the consumer’s rights. The Ombuds receives, investigates, advocates and assist consumers with complaints, grievances and appeal processes and, if necessary, the administrative (“fair”) hearing process.

Policy

SCRSN/PIHP and subcontractors shall provide information regarding the Ombuds Service to consumers and allow the Ombuds Service to effectively perform its duties and responsibilities. SCRSN/PIHP and subcontractors shall not jeopardize the ability of the Ombuds Service to assist and advocate for consumers, family members or other interested persons as long as the Ombuds Service acts in a legal manner. Information on the Ombuds Service is to be posted in a public place and provided in an intake packet for consumers.

Procedures/Mechanisms

1. SCRSN/PIHP and network providers are required to comply with the relevant WAC regarding the Ombuds Services which includes the following:
 - 1.1. The Ombuds Service encourages consumers to resolve problems at the lowest possible level. Consumers are informed that they have the right to a formal grievance process and are provided assistance to do so.

- 1.2. The Ombuds Service will have the authority to initiate outreach and resolve individual complaints related to RSN contracted services, provided that reasonable time, notice and confidentiality requirements are met.
- 1.3. The SCRSN will ensure that the Ombuds Service is accessible via a toll free independent phone number.
2. The Ombuds Service shall:
 - 2.1. Collaborate and coordinate with allied systems' to improve the effectiveness of advocacy.
 - 2.2. Provide reports and formalized recommendations to the SCRSN, MHD and other advocacy boards/consumer groups.
 - 2.3. Gather information regarding consumer services. The Ombuds Service, with the consumer's written consent, may meet with family members to obtain input and assess the consumers' welfare regarding physical safety, emotional safety and service satisfaction.
 - 2.4. Receive training and adhere to confidentiality consistent with the WAC and RCW.
 - 2.5. Involve other persons, at the consumer's request.
 - 2.6. Provide information, at least biennially, on the grievance experience to the SCRSN and MHD quality processes, including but not limited to: advisory board, quality review teams, local and consumer advocacy groups and the provider network.
3. SCRSN Network Providers will collaborate with the Ombuds Service and ensure staff understand the Ombuds Service and its role. The provider shall:
 - 3.1. Identify staff who will serve as liaison for the Ombuds Service and who will be available during business hours, and who will provide access, information and support relevant to any Ombuds Service inquiry or investigation and to reach out to consumers to resolve complaints and grievances.
 - 3.2. Ensure timely access to provider staff involved in Ombuds Service inquiry or investigation, including access to private office space as requested.
 - 3.3. Ensure current Ombuds Service materials are continuously available to consumers and are posted in a conspicuous place so that consumers and family members have access at every service location without special request.
 - 3.4. Assist in problem resolution and employ best efforts to resolve concerns, complaints, and grievances at the lowest possible level.
 - 3.5. Make every effort to ensure no discriminatory, disciplinary or retaliatory actions are taken against a provider or consumer for any communications made or information given or disclosed to aid the Ombuds Service in completing his/her duties and responsibilities.
4. Ombuds Training
 - 4.1. The provider shall ensure all provider staff receive orientation training on the Ombuds Service and documented in their employee personnel file and make such documentation available to the SCRSN on request.