

Working with the Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds

Thank you for contacting the Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO). This page provides important information about the office. OEO's staff includes 5 Education Ombuds who work with families and schools across the state to resolve problems that impact student learning. We facilitate communication and collaborative problem-solving, but are not an enforcement agency.

Education Ombuds Do:

- Listen to understand your questions and concerns relating to students;
- Provide information about public school processes and the rights and responsibilities of students and parents, and make referrals to appropriate resources;
- Ask questions to help you identify, understand and evaluate possible options for resolving concerns;
- Act as a neutral sounding board;
- Offer support and coaching on working through conflict and building effective communication;
- Consult with families, educators and others to clarify issues and facilitate direct communication between families and schools; and
- Share best practices for increasing family engagement in schools.

Communications with OEO are confidential, and OEO will not disclose information about a caller or student without first receiving **prior written consent** from a parent or legal guardian or adult student. If OEO receives prior written consent, the Ombuds may try to help clarify and resolve issues by communicating directly with school or district staff. Ombuds will rarely attend meetings either in person, by video, or by telephone, but will consider doing so in limited cases and for one meeting, to help facilitate understanding and effective communication between families and schools.

Education Ombuds Do Not/Cannot:

- Provide legal advice or representation;
- Advocate on behalf of any individual or organization, including an individual student or parent;
- Enforce laws or regulations;
- Conduct formal investigations or make findings; or
- Have authority to require schools or districts to take or not take any particular action.

OEO cannot guarantee outcomes, but we will work to understand your concerns, share relevant and accurate information, and identify options for collaborative problem-solving to support students. As a small state agency, we attempt to operate fairly within our resources. Ombuds cannot provide indefinite or long-term assistance in individual matters. We are only able to work with a student/family once per year, with a maximum of 120 days for issues that fall within our strategic plan.

OEO is an **independent state agency.**

Our services are:

- ✓ **FREE**
- ✓ **CONFIDENTIAL**
- ✓ **IMPARTIAL**
- ✓ **COLLABORATIVE**
and
- ✓ Available to **families, educators and others** with questions or concerns impacting **ANY CHILD** who attends or is eligible to attend **Washington State K-12 public schools.**



Toll-free: 1-866-297-2597

Fax: 1-844-886-5196

[Facebook/WaEducationOmbuds](#)

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 40004

Web: oeo.wa.gov/en

Email: oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov

[Twitter/EdOmbuds](#)

Olympia, WA 98504

Permission to Contact the School and District

OEO respects your privacy and your student’s privacy. Our conversations with you are confidential. Unless required to do so by law, we do not share your information or your student’s information without your written permission.

After talking with an Education Ombuds, if you both agree it is appropriate for the Education Ombuds to contact the school and/or district regarding your child, the Ombuds will first need your written permission.

- **If you want the Ombuds to be able to contact your child’s school and/or district, please read, sign and return this form.**
- Digitally sign via DocuSign, or send a signed copy to OEO by mail at the address above, or by email at OEOinfo@gov.wa.gov, or by fax at 1-844-886-5196.

Today’s date _____

I am the parent or legal guardian of the student listed below. OR

I am the student and my age is 18 years or older.

I understand that the Office of Education Ombuds is working with me as an independent, impartial third party to try to resolve concerns relating to my student’s education, and that Education Ombuds do not provide legal representation or advice. The Ombuds works collaboratively and not as an enforcement agency or fact-finder.

I hereby give the Office of the Education Ombuds and school/district staff, permission to discuss my situation and use my/my student’s name and other relevant information which may be contained in educational records to help resolve my concerns/problems.

School District name

School name

Student name

Student’s date of birth

Parent/Legal guardian name

Signature