

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

Business Plan

April 2007

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

Executive Summary

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will provide district residents with professional assistance in problem resolution and accurate, timely communication regarding public education issues – services that have proven in other jurisdictions to increase the public’s access to and satisfaction with their public education institutions. The Office will also identify trends and potential problems, making frequent reports to the Mayor and other appropriate officials to contribute to policy reviews and changes that are needed to improve the delivery of educational services.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education is a critical element in the Fenty Administration’s public education reform legislation because it will increase the public’s engagement with public education by ensuring serious, fair treatment of their concerns regarding education.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will provide:

- the services of an ombudsman, who will, through a confidential, informal process, receive and investigate the complaints and concerns of parents, students, teachers and administrators and other district residents and assist them in problem resolution;
- a single point in District government through which residents communicate their questions and concerns regarding public education;
- a database to enable the tracking of complaints and issues so that systemic problems can be identified and addressed; and
- frequent reports to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Education, Chancellor, State Board of Education, and other appropriate officials about the nature and trends of complaints and proposed solutions.

The director of the Office will be appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Council. The director will be under the administrative authority of the Deputy Mayor for Education and will make independent reports to the Mayor and other officials. The Office’s staff will consist of the director, who will serve as the lead ombudsman, an associate ombudsman and an administrator who will serve as liaison between the Office and the District’s public education institutions. The Office will contract for the services of contact representatives from the District’s central Call Center, which will enable the Office to utilize additional, temporary contact representatives as needed. The budget for the Office’s first year is \$440,000.

The Office will evaluate its performance continuously in order to monitor client satisfaction with the problem-resolution process of the Ombudsman and the accuracy of the information and timeliness of the call center.

High communication standards with District residents concerning public education

- competency, efficiency, and equity in the provision of District services
- respectful assistance in problem-resolution
- identifying trends and proposing solution to systemic problems

Office of the Ombudsman for Education



- office main phone always staffed during hours of business
- after hours message
- performance goal of no more than one transfer per caller
- efficient management of response time and “call” closure

Communication Center



- return calls in 24 hours
- acknowledge correspondence in two business days
- track all calls, correspondence, emails and walk-ins so that they can be analyzed by nature, volume, and status

Ombudsman Services



- independent
- neutral and impartial
- confidential
- informal
- full access to schools
- empowered to assist problem resolution

Trend Analysis and problem-solving



- report on elements that impact delivery of quality education
- monitor consumer satisfaction
- identify emerging problems

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I. Introduction

The District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

The District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will build trust and encourage public engagement to achieve the school reform envisioned in the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act. The Office of the Ombudsman will provide effective communication and respectful response to parents, students, school communities, and the general public regarding issues of public education. Equally critical will be the specialized service from which the Office of the Ombudsman takes its name: the provision of independent, impartial, and confidential assistance in resolving the problems and concerns of schools, parents, school communities, and the general public.

The Office of the Ombudsman will also play a vital part in proactively addressing systemic problems across the continuum of education. The Office will analyze the information received from the public to identify and propose solutions to systemic problems and will provide frequent reports to the Mayor, Council, and appropriate administrators. In many cases, the work of the Ombudsman will lead to correction of a problem; in all cases, information gathered by the Ombudsman will contribute to policy changes that are needed to improve the delivery of educational services.

The mission of the Office of the Ombudsman is to remove barriers to full participation in public education by providing early, informal assistance before a small problem becomes seemingly insurmountable and the parent, student, or teacher gives up on our public schools. The Office of the Ombudsman will respond to concerns and problems, provide critical information, improve communication, and assist in resolving problems between administrators, parents, and other members of the school community.

The Ombudsman role

“... a neutral resource in helping to equitably and reasonably resolve concerns and complaints from schools, parents, and communities as well as to assist schools and the general public in accessing information and resources.” **Baltimore County Public Schools**

The ombudsman, as a designated neutral, has the responsibility of maintaining strict confidentiality concerning matters that are brought to his/her attention unless given permission to do otherwise. The only exceptions, at the sole discretion of the ombudsman, are where there appears to be imminent threat of serious harm. **Code of Ethics of the Ombudsman Association**

... protects “the legitimate interests and rights of individuals with respect to each other; individual rights against the excesses of public and private bureaucracies; and those who are affected by and those who work within these organizations.” **American Bar Association**

... Provides a safe place to share confidences; listens without criticizing; helps analyze complex and difficult situations; answers questions; helps access NIH policies and procedures; helps construct non-adversarial approaches to issues; facilitates a just resolution of problems and disputes; refers individuals to appropriate NIH resources.” **National Institutes of Health**

What is an Ombudsman?

The role of the ombudsman began to gain acceptance in the United States in the 1970s.¹ Though late in acknowledging the value of a neutral, independent, and confidential problem-resolution process, school systems, business organizations, professional institutions, local governments, and federal agencies throughout the United States now use ombudsman services to resolve problems informally and have found that they are frequently able to reduce costly formal complaints, while satisfying their clients.

How does an Ombudsman work?

An Ombudsman accepts complaints and investigates the problem or concern. The ombudsman does not take sides, instead seeking fairness and equality by discussing all elements of the issue impartially and confidentially. The case is closed “successfully” when both parties agree on a resolution. A case may also be closed when one of the parties chooses to follow a more formal complaint process.² An Ombudsman is politically independent; that is, the Ombudsman cannot be fired by his or her superior for exposing weaknesses in a system under the authority of the superior.

Does the Ombudsman accept every complaint or is there a screening process?

District residents contacting the Office of the Ombudsman often will be seeking information or asking for a referral. The Office’s communication center staff will handle these contacts. Residents with more complex problems or concerns will be asked what actions they have taken to resolve their concerns, and if they have not communicated their concerns to their classroom teacher, professor, principal, or building administrator, they will be encouraged to do so.

Ultimately, the Ombudsman will determine if the complaint is in the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman role

The principal ombudsman functions:

- Assisting any stakeholders in bringing their problems, complaints, information, or suggestions to the attention of the school system official at the most appropriate administrative level.
- Periodically reviewing, with the Board and the superintendent, all cases for inferences and suggestions with respect to opportunities for policy and administration improvements.
- In order for ombudsman functions to be performed, it is essential that information furnished in confidence remain confidential.
- The ombudsman shall receive the cooperation of all employees of the system in the performance of these duties.

Montgomery County Public Schools

“As Ombudswoman, or go-between, the Public Advocate answers complaints about people’s problems with city government, investigates ineffective agencies and programs, proposes solutions that make government more efficient, and helps communities gain better access to government.” **New York City Public Advocate**

“The Ombudsman has the authority to access all files (with the permission of the Ombudsman’s client). All employees of the school system are directed to cooperate with the Ombudsman.” **Montgomery County Public Schools**

“ . . . listen, investigate, clarify, and resolve questions, concerns, and complaints” **St. Paul Public Schools**

. . . “periodically reviewing, with the Board and the superintendent, all cases for inferences and suggestions with respect to opportunities for policy and administration improvements.” **Montgomery County Public Schools**

¹ Hawai’i established the first US-based office in 1967.

² Formal complaint processes include the teachers’ union-negotiated grievance process, special education mediation, and Title IX and EEO discrimination processes.

How will the District's Ombudsman assist in problem resolution?

The Ombudsman will objectively investigate problems and concerns of District residents regarding public education. The Ombudsman will have access to school records and may communicate freely and confidentially with school personnel.

Using the information gathered, the Ombudsman will suggest an informal resolution to the involved parties. However, the Ombudsman cannot force the parties to accept the resolution.

Are there complaints the Ombudsman will not accept?

The Ombudsman will not accept any complaint that is in a formal grievance or complaint process. Further, the Ombudsman may decide to advise the parties of what formal processes are available to them.

How does the role of the Ombudsman interact with formal complaint processes?

All parties benefit when the Ombudsman's impartial assistance enables a satisfactory resolution of a problem, without the time and expense of a formal complaint process. However, the Ombudsman must be knowledgeable about formal complaint processes and be able to explain these options to the involved parties. Furthermore, the Ombudsman will conduct follow-up interviews with clients who have filed formal complaints and report on the quality of their experience.

What happens to the information gathered?

The Ombudsman will report frequently to the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor for Education, the Council, the Chancellor, the State Board of Education, and other administrators of public education. The reports will summarize the nature of problems and concerns, trends observed, and potential problem areas. Strict confidentiality will be maintained and no names or other identifying details will be included.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will contribute to making the District government more responsible, credible, fair, and responsive to students, parents, school communities, and residents in general. Ideally, every problem that can will be resolved at the local school, educational agency, or institution, with the help of the local administrator or appropriate assistant superintendent. In many cases, miscommunication rather than malevolence is the source of the discord. However, the Ombudsman will be available for those who need more assistance with an individual problem and, through respectful attention to that concern, will help that parent, student, or resident stay effectively engaged with our public education institutions.

II. Fulfilling the Fenty Administration Education Mission

Quality public education is the first priority of the Fenty Administration. Specifically, the Administration's mission is to provide universal and equal access to quality public education in the District from early childhood into adulthood.

The Administration recognizes the critical role of parental and public engagement in high-quality education. Underscoring the need for improved public engagement, the D.C. Public Education Reform Amendment legislation creates the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education to ensure effective communication between residents and their government regarding public education.

Initially, the work of the Office of the Ombudsman will be complicated by the history, whether real or perceived, of the failure by educational institutions in the District to respond in a timely, satisfactory manner to parents and school communities. This lack of responsiveness has erected barriers to the public's desire and ability to participate fully in their public education system. The Office of the Ombudsman will remove these barriers through accurate, timely, high-quality communication and predictable problem resolution processes.

Milestones

Milestone #1: The Office of the Ombudsman builds relationships with DCPS, supporting joint efforts to resolve problems and concerns of students, parents, and other members of the school community.

Months 1-6

- All DCPS principals and administrators meet with the Office of the Ombudsman and are informed of the function of the communication center and the services of the Ombudsman.
- DCPS establishes designated staff within its units to monitor timeliness and accuracy of responses.
- The DCPS administration informs all its staff of their obligation to provide access to personnel and information.

Milestone #2: The Office of the Ombudsman builds relationships with all providers of public education, supporting joint efforts to resolve problems and concerns of students, parents, and other members of their school communities.

Months 6-12

- Faculty, administrators, and staff of UDC, public charter schools, early childhood, and adult education meet with the Office of the Ombudsman and are informed of the services of the Ombudsman and the function of the communication center.
- The administrations of all providers of public education inform their staff of their obligations to provide access to personnel and files to the Ombudsman.

Milestone #3: The services of the Ombudsman for Public Education are understood and used appropriately by the DCPS community.

Months 1-6

- An outreach program is implemented with the faculty, administrators and staff, parents, and others in the DCPS community to explain the functions of the communication center and the services of the Ombudsman.
- This period will be used to track how communities across the District use the Office of the Ombudsman and to improve, if necessary, the outreach design.

Milestone #4: The services of the Ombudsman for Public Education are understood and used appropriately by all public education community members.

Months 6-12

- An outreach program is implemented with the faculty, administrators and staff, parents, and others with an interest in all levels of public education in the District to explain the functions of the communication center and the services of the Ombudsman.
- This period will be used to track how communities across the District use the Office of the Ombudsman and to improve, if necessary, the outreach design.

Milestone #5: The Office of the Ombudsman generates regularly scheduled reports on the problems and concerns that are impacting delivery of quality education.

Months 2-3

- The first 60-90 days will be a pilot period during which the reporting templates will be designed in consultation with:
 - District government data systems;
 - The CapStat office to analyze emerging problems and discuss potential solutions; and
 - The users of the reports—the Mayor, Council, State Board of Education, and appropriate officials.

III. The Office of the Ombudsman

Background

The Need:

District residents frequently struggle to use the District's public education programs because of a lack of accurate information and poor responsiveness of the providers to questions, concerns, and problems. Each public education provider has its own communication standards and a varying commitment to be responsive to its constituents. The end result is that too often those standards are low and residents are discouraged from entering a program or attempting to make those programs better.

A report written in February 2001 provides a history of two decades of DCPS' ad hoc approach to problem resolution: ". . . the Ombudsman's Office, now named the Satisfaction Service Center . . . has been charged with varying functions, depending on the system's organization of the moment. The system has also had special trouble-shooting assistants to the Superintendent on an ad hoc basis, a hot-line (which soon turned into a seldom-answered answering machine), and a still extant special education mediation operation."³

Similar ad hoc approaches to problem resolution have been the norm within DCPS in the more recent past. Today, DCPS parents are directed to call the Information and Referral Line with their problems and concerns. A single employee staffs this line five days a week. Her self-reported responsibilities include serving as the point of contact for DCPS with the Mayor's Call Center; she responds to these contacts and direct calls to the Information and Referral Line primarily by referring callers to their school principal or deputy superintendent. There is not an ombudsman to ensure that parents' concerns are addressed and resolved.⁴

DCPS is not alone in the need to improve responsiveness. District residents frequently complain about the poor standard of communication of other public education providers, such as the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and charter schools. Residents report that poor responsiveness has caused them to search out other options rather than enroll in publicly-funded programs.

The Response: Ensuring that District residents are treated as valued clients and partners in public education

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will create a line of accountability between the providers of public education and parents and community members, thereby supporting primary goals of the Office: to remove barriers to participation in public education and support the engagement of the public in public education.

³ Tyson, Harriet; Levy, Mary & Pokempner, Sarah. "The Development of an Effective Citizen Complaint Process for D.C. Public Schools."

⁴ Telephone conversation with the individual operating the Information and Referral Line, January 31, 2007.

One centralized center for communication, professional execution of the ombudsman role, and identification of systemic problems

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will work relentlessly to earn and maintain the reputation of being a “gold standard” communication and problem-solving center. The Office will address the public’s frequently articulated need for 1) effective communication concerning public education, 2) the informal problem-resolution process of an ombudsman, and 3) public officials to be alerted to trends and problems that need correction.

The Communication Center – High Standard Communication for Education

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will provide a single point within District government through which residents communicate their questions and concerns regarding public education (from early childhood education through university and adult education). The Lead Ombudsman will supervise all the activities of the center. The communication center will utilize contact representatives contracted through the Mayor’s call and correspondence center. These representatives will maintain the District’s high communication standards for accuracy and timely response to residents. The Office’s Administrator will serve as liaison to the District’s public schools and will ensure that the contact representatives have the most up-to-date information about the District’s public schools. The purposes of the Office are:

- To provide outreach to parents, students, teachers and administrators and other district residents and to further this purpose, have the cooperation of all individuals within the public school system;
- To encourage communication between residents and the Mayor regarding all levels of public education;
- To serve as a mechanism by which citizens can communicate their questions and concerns regarding public education through a single office; and
- To respond to complaints and concerns in a timely fashion with accurate and helpful information.⁵

Professional ombudsman services – Informal, Impartial, and Confidential

The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education will provide the services of an ombudsman, who will, through a confidential, informal process, receive and investigate the complaints and concerns of families and school community members and assist them in problem resolution. As a critical component of the Office of Ombudsman, the Ombudsman will have prominence and visibility, but also independence. As residents interact with the communication center, they will become familiar with the services an ombudsman provides and be able to access these services easily.

⁵ See Bill 17-001, section 604.

The Ombudsman staff will accept, investigate, and assist in the resolution of problems and concerns of residents regarding education issues and will do so conforming to the ethical standards of conduct in the performance of the Ombudsman role.⁶

Identification of systemic problems

The ombudsman staff and communication center will jointly maintain data that will enable the Office of the Ombudsman to analyze the nature of problems received from residents about their public schools and public education programs. Calls, emails, letters, and drop-in visits will be recorded and tracked to monitor response times and to identify trends and problems areas. No personally identifiable data will be distributed to or be accessible by any individual or organization outside the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman will report regularly to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Education, Chancellor, and State Board of Education on the findings of the Office, including trends and clusters throughout the District. The Ombudsman will analyze data by school, by ward, by issue, and any other method that appears significant. Statistical significance will not be a prerequisite for identifying a trend or cluster.

Operating Principles of the Office

To be effective, the Office of the Ombudsman must operate with independence, have the authority necessary to fulfill its investigative responsibilities, and effectively publicize its services. Additionally, it must:

- meet high standards for accurate and timely customer service,
- coordinate with other District service centers and agencies,
- have knowledge of District agencies and their ability to respond to complaints,
- collect and analyze data from all individuals who contact the Office, and
- report directly to the Mayor and other education officials to alert them to emerging trends and problems and to offer solutions.

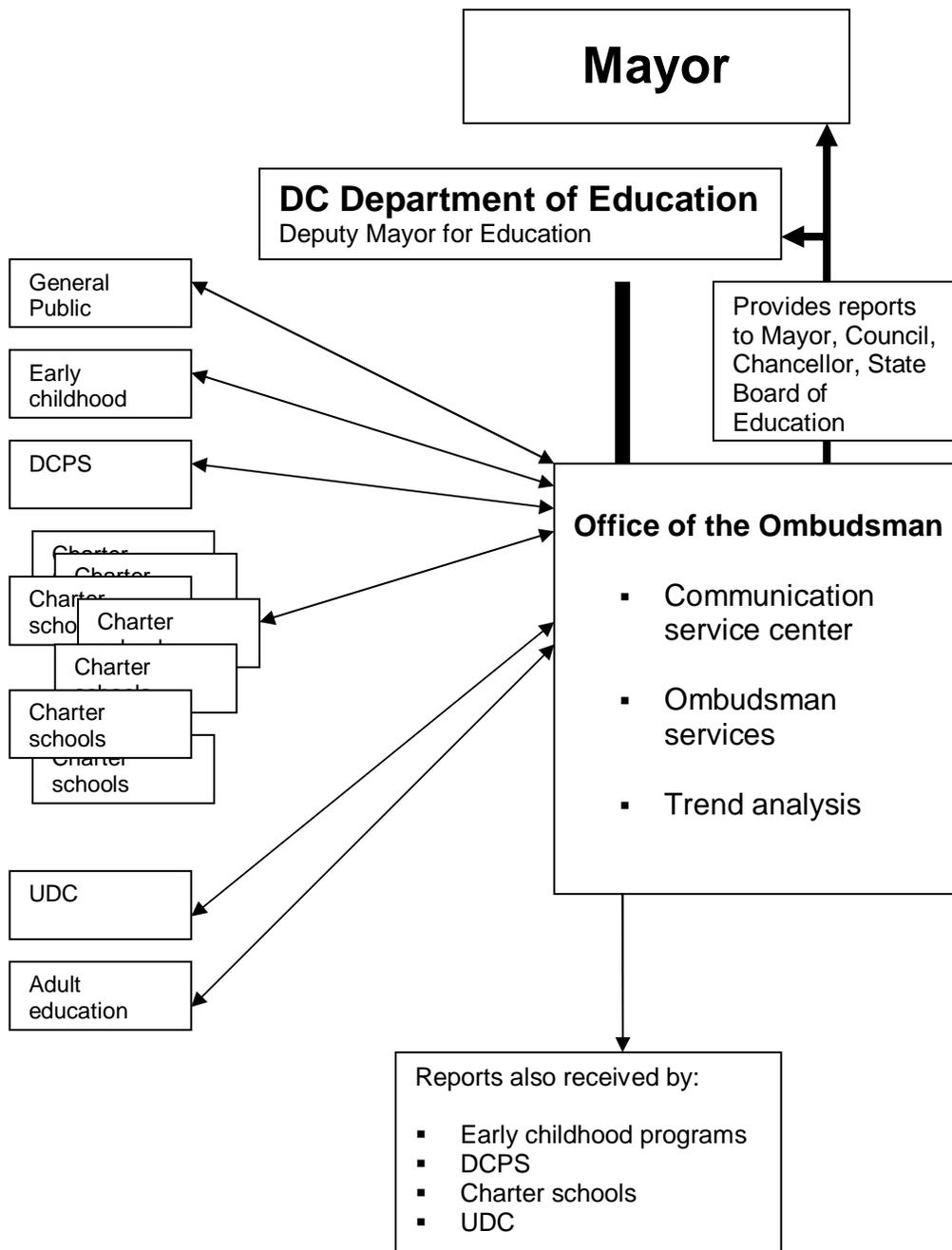
The communication center will meet the communication standards required of all DC government agencies. Specifically, the Office of the Ombudsman will ensure that:

- the office main phones are always staffed during hours of business;
- an up-to-date after hours message will greet callers;
- staff will strive to meet the performance goal of no more than one transfer per caller;
- there is efficient management of response time and “call” closure;
- all providers of public education are notified through their designated Point of Contact (POC) of all communications requiring their attention;
- all calls are returned within 24 hours and all written correspondence is acknowledged within two business days; and
- all calls, correspondence, emails, and walk-ins are tracked so that they can be analyzed by nature, volume, and status.

⁶ Independence, neutrality and impartiality, confidentiality, and informality. The Office will undertake no work that is not in furtherance of the goal of improving public education in the District.

The Location and Structure of the Office of the Ombudsman in the District Government

Office of the Ombudsman under the Administrative Authority of the Deputy Mayor for Education: The school reform legislation directs the placement of the Office of the Ombudsman within the Department of Education and under the administrative authority of the Deputy Mayor for Education. This placement within the city's organizational structure creates high-level authority for the Office, including centralized resources and agency coordination, directly through the Deputy Mayor of Education. Additionally, this structure allows the Office to respond to concerns about all public education providers, not simply DCPS.



The Director of the Office of the Ombudsman. The chart below depicts the managerial responsibilities of the director of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Structure of the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

Office of the Ombudsman

Director of the Office

- Ensures quality response from contracted center staff
- Develops responsive behavior from public education providers

Communication Center

- Responds to calls, emails, letters and walk-ins
- Collects data to enable trend analysis
- Assists residents to understand the services of the ombudsman

- Arranges training and coordination
- Ensures conditions support the professional role of the ombudsman

Ombudsman services

- Accepts and works with residents with education related problems and concerns
- Collects data for trend analysis in way that preserves client confidentiality
- Reports frequently to Mayor

- Works with service center and Ombudsman staff to analyze problems and concerns uncovered

Trend analysis/ problem solving

- Develops trend analysis working with Government IT systems
- Prepares reports for mayor, deputy mayor, and chancellor

IV. Outreach and Marketing

A District-level Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education is a new concept that will require community outreach and marketing to educate the public about the Office and how to use its services. The task requires 1) building the confidence of the public that they consistently will be treated respectfully and that the center will provide accurate information in a timely manner; 2) explaining the complex services of the Ombudsman and the problem resolution process; and 3) ensuring that all areas of the District receive information about the Office through appropriate channels.

A broadcast strategy to announce the opening of the Office of the Ombudsman, followed by public service announcements will be developed. In reality, though, a well-functioning communication center will be its own best advertisement.

Marketing Ombudsman services poses challenges. These services are a complex product not easily packaged for broadcast media; rather, ombudsmen across the country have found that they need to frequently explain to small groups – PTA, advocacy groups, union meetings – about how informal, impartial, and confidential assistance in problem resolution works to ensure that their school communities will understand and use the services of the ombudsman.

Marketing strategies will be developed that utilize a variety of media, including email and internet, radio, television, and print, in order to accommodate the differences in media use in the various areas of the District. Strategies will include use of multilingual staff and materials where appropriate.

A clear concise message:

Outreach efforts must clearly convey the following:

- The Office of the Ombudsman will answer all calls and emails about public education.
- The Office will make every attempt to provide residents with accurate information or an appropriate, direct referral.
- The Office of the Ombudsman will help resolve problems and concerns involving public education. The Office's services are impartial, informal, and confidential.
- The Office of the Ombudsman will gather information from every person who contacts the Office in order to identify and address individual and systemic problems.

A High Standard Product: Ensuring Capacity

The Office of the Ombudsman promises a gold standard in communication – respectful, accurate, and timely response to all clients. The Office therefore must constantly evaluate staffing levels needed to respond to contacts. As the outreach strategies are implemented, the Office will be able to gauge, over a six-month “ramp up” period, the number of contracted call center workers needed to deliver a high quality “product.”

Relationship Building, Engagement of Community Leaders, and Broadcast Strategy

A critical element of the Ombudsman's success will be the development of positive relationships with public education providers. Outreach will start with principals and administrators in order to create a "safe space" to promote communication, to explain the nature of Ombudsman services, and to establish a central point of contact within each school. The Ombudsman will ask the school to maintain an accessible supply of publicity materials in an area of the school frequently visited by parents. Although time-intensive, these face-to-face meetings will be the most effective means of developing a positive working relationship with school officials.

Once relationships are established with school administrators, the Ombudsman can begin outreach in earnest to its primary constituency – parents, students, and public school personnel. Within its first month, the Office will test materials with parents, through DCPS Parent and Teacher Associations, Home and School Associations, and Local School Restructuring Teams. The Office of Parent and Community Involvement, also under the Deputy Mayor for Education, will be asked to coordinate efforts in this area. All outreach material, including the website, will be available in multiple languages and will be accessible to users with disabilities.

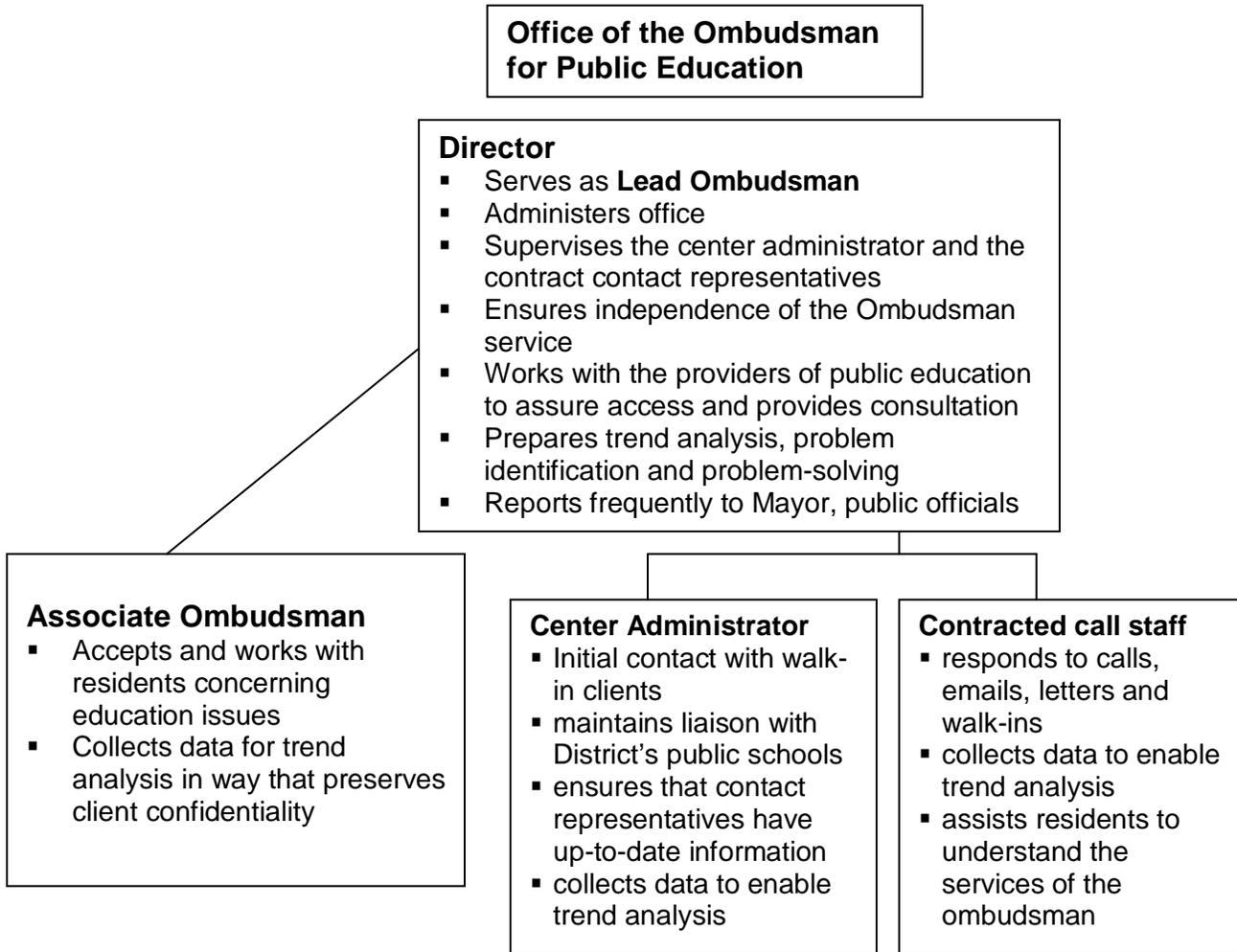
Ongoing Marketing

To provide community members a means of communicating their concerns regarding public education prior to the launch of the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Deputy Mayor has developed an online reporting mechanism available on dc.gov. The information collected through this form will provide the Ombudsman an initial set of data to identify systemic problems.

The Office will continuously advertise its services, its role, and its successes. In doing so, it will collaborate with other government offices; for example, the Office will work with the Child and Family Service Administration in order to ensure that case workers – and consequently, foster parents – are aware of the services of the Ombudsman. Additionally, the Office will develop relationships with legal services providers (especially those involved with special education) who will be able to refer appropriate callers to the Ombudsman.

V. Operations

Key Personnel



Staff Job Descriptions

Below are the job descriptions of each staff member of the Office of the Ombudsman:

The Director of the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

Job description: The Office of the Ombudsman will provide district residents with professional assistance in problem resolution and accurate, timely communication regarding public education issues and will also identify trends and potential problems, making frequent reports to the Mayor and other appropriate officials to contribute to policy reviews and changes that are needed to improve the delivery of educational services. The Director of the Office of the Ombudsman will perform the professional role of the Ombudsman: providing a confidential, informal, impartial, neutral, and non-adversarial alternative for resolution of problems and concerns of District residents, including employees of District

public education schools that arise in and around the institutions of public education. The Office will maintain a record of all calls and complaints and will provide an analysis of the nature and frequency of these communications, highlight trends and suggest solutions to emerging problems. The director will be responsible for all administrative aspects of the office, including oversight of budget and personnel.

Duties: This position is located in the Department of Education and reports directly to the Deputy Mayor for Education. There is a statutory requirement for the Director to prepare reports on a regular schedule to the Deputy Mayor, Mayor, Council and other public officials. The Director serves as the lead ombudsman and assists district residents in the resolution of complaints, problems, and concerns regarding public education through informal means: consultation, negotiation, and mediation. The director manages, supervises, directs, and evaluates customer and outreach service activities to measure the achievement of program objectives and the effectiveness of methods, techniques, and policies. The Director coordinates with District government offices directing communication with the public, as well as with the CapStat Office and evaluates performance in the program areas particularly in situations where input from the public is a significant factor. The Office works closely with residents and faculty, administrators, and other staff of schools, agencies, or organizations providing public education in the District and clarifies issues, assists residents in resolution of problems, and mediates disputes. The Director both receives and responds to complaints, offers options, provides coaching, and refers to appropriate resources and supervises staff as they perform the functions of the Office. The Director identifies institutional patterns and trends and prepares reports for public officials.

The appointee to this position is subject to confirmation by the Council of the District of Columbia. The position is a term appointment for three years.

Selective Placement Factor #1: Possess an advanced level of knowledge and demonstrated experience in mediation and negotiation on a wide range of issues. Demonstrates ability to maintain strict confidentiality of personally identifiable information.

Selective Placement Factor #2: Possess a demonstrated ability to analyze issues and matters of law, administration, and policy

Selective Placement Factor #3: Experience and demonstrated ability to work effectively with a wide variety of audiences including school leaders, parents, faculty, and school administrators.

Selective Placement Factor #4: Experience in working well in a variety of situations requiring sensitivity and skill working with gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, and cultural diversity issues.

Associate Ombudsman

Job description: The Office of the Ombudsman will provide district residents with professional assistance in problem resolution and accurate, timely communication regarding public education issues and will also identify trends and potential problems, making frequent reports to the Mayor and other appropriate officials to contribute to policy reviews and changes that are needed to improve the delivery of educational services. The Associate Ombudsman will provide a confidential, informal, impartial, neutral, and non-adversarial

alternative for resolution of problems and concerns of district residents that arise in and around the schools providing public education.

Duties: The Associate Ombudsman will assist district residents in the resolution of complaints, problems, and concerns regarding public education through informal means: consultation, negotiation, and mediation. The Associate Ombudsman will work closely with residents and faculty, administrators, and other staff of schools, agencies, or organizations providing public education in the District. The Associate Ombudsman will clarify issues, assist residents in resolution of problems, and mediate disputes. The Associate Ombudsman will receive and respond to complaints, offer options, provide coaching, and refer clients to appropriate resources and will identify institutional patterns and trends and work with lead ombudsman to prepare reports for public officials.

Selective Placement Factor #1: Experience with mediation and problem resolution processes.

Selective Placement Factor #2: Experience and demonstrated ability to work effectively with a wide variety of audiences including school leaders, parents, faculty, and school administrators.

Selective Placement Factor #3: Experience in working well in a variety of situations requiring sensitivity and skill working with gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and cultural diversity issues.

Office Administrator

Job description: The Office of the Ombudsman will provide district residents with professional assistance in problem resolution and accurate, timely communication regarding public education issues and will also identify trends and potential problems, making frequent reports to the Mayor and other appropriate officials to contribute to policy reviews and changes that are needed to improve the delivery of educational services. The Office Administrator will serve as an initial contact for District residents who “walk into” the Office and serve as a liaison between the Office and the District’s public schools.

Duties: The Office Administrator will receive and address face-to-face communications from district residents. The Office Administrator will communicate frequently with the District’s public schools in order to update information to be provided to the contracted contact representatives. The Administrator will assist the Lead Ombudsman with collection of data from the contracted contact representatives and with the analysis of the data.

Selective Placement Factor #1: Preferential consideration will be given to bilingual candidates who speak Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin), Korean, Vietnamese, or Amharic.

Budget

Below is the proposed budget needed to operate the Office of the Ombudsman. Adjustments will be made, if necessary, to meet personnel cost; however, costs will not exceed the total budgeted cost.

Personnel

Director	\$120,000
Associate ombudsman	\$85,000
Office Administrator	\$50,000
Sub-total	<u>\$255,000</u>
Fringe at 16%	\$40,800
Total Personnel	<u>\$295,800</u>

Non-personnel services

Supplies and materials	\$5,000
Communication costs	\$12,000
Equipment and equipment rental	\$2,400
Contractual services	
contact representatives	\$105,000
media consultants	\$11,800
training	\$8,000
Total non-personnel costs	<u>\$144,200</u>
TOTAL BUDGET	\$440,000

VI: Evaluation and Assessment

Quantitative Data – Who called, when, and for what?

Volume of communication (emails, phone calls, letters and walk-ins) and requests for Ombudsman assistance are quantitative data that will describe the demand for the services of the Office of the Ombudsman. Over time, by referring to this data, the Office will:

- predict periods of high demand and staff accordingly;
- determine if the staff respond in a timely manner; and
- infer the effectiveness of outreach, perhaps increasing outreach when demand is low.

Qualitative Data – How satisfied are clients? What do they understand? Are there barriers to the use of the Office?

The Office will need to know the client's level of satisfaction of in order to maintain quality services. For instance:

- did the client receive accurate information?
- did the client feel respected?
- if staff referred the client to another office, was the client served well there?
- did the client feel that he/she received impartial, confidential services from the Ombudsman?
- how satisfied was the client with the problem-resolution process?

This information will be gathered by follow-up interviews and surveys.

Monitoring management achievements

The Office of the Ombudsman must build effective relationships with DCPS and other providers of public education. The Office cannot and will not be successful if it refers individuals to contacts who are not responsive. Positive relationships between the Office of the Ombudsman and education providers will enhance the Office's ability to ensure or improve the providers' responsiveness.

The milestones proposed earlier in Section II: Fulfilling the Fenty Administration Education Mission emphasize the need for the Office to build strong intra-governmental working relations with all providers of public education in the District. The Office will monitor how effectively it is:

- Working with all providers of public education to address information and problem-resolution needs of students, parents, and other members of the school community.
- Presenting the services of the Office of the Ombudsman to all other providers of public education.
- Preparing and delivering reports on trends of problems and concerns that impact delivery of quality education.