



COALITION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date and Time: June 10, 2020, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm (EDT)

Location: Teleconference

Agenda:

1. Checking in and Ombuds Supporting Ombuds (OSO)
2. COFO Annual Conference update
3. IOA Government Sector discussion – July 29th at Noon EST
4. COFO Mentoring Program update
5. Ombuds Day reminder – Ombuds Day is October 8th
6. Discussion Topics:
 - a. How offices with more than one member assure cohesiveness/being on the same page
 - b. Supervision and the ombuds profession – Discussion of Wright/Miller January 2020 article for the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, An Initial Enquiry Towards a Model of Supervision and Support for Organizational Ombudsmen
7. Announcements – Training opportunities, job postings, or really any office and ombudsman happenings you'd like to tell announce.

Highlights:

- 1. Checking in and OSO**
 - a. Space for discussion and supporting ombuds dealing with challenges of the continuing COVID-19 epidemic, the planned phased reopening of government, and the global events relating to race and racism.
 - b. Next Ombuds Supporting Ombuds (OSO) call on Wednesday, June 24, 2020 from 2 – 3 pm EDT.
- 2. COFO Annual Conference Update**
 - a. The COFO Annual Conference is scheduled for Friday, October 16, 2020 and will be 100% virtual.
 - b. Additional volunteers are needed for the conference committee to serve as monitors and moderators for the planned discussions.

- c. Volunteers are also needed to help select and engage speakers or presenters who are available to present within the virtual environment.
- d. Strategies to determine the best virtual environment that is compliant with government servers will be discussed soon.
- e. Another email seeking volunteers for the conference committee will be sent next week.

3. IOA Government Sector discussion

- a. The IOA government sector discussion is scheduled for Wednesday, July 29, 2020 at 12 pm EDT/ 9am PDT.
- b. The virtual discussion will be led by COFO members, Tracey McNeil, Laurel Gordon, David Michael, and Jennifer Mahoney
- c. A potential topic for this meeting is “Addressing Injustice”. This topic will explore the larger societal context of racial injustice and how that affects our role as ombudsmen in our different agencies/organizations.
- d. Other topics are in process and to be determined.

4. COFO Mentoring Program update

- a. The COFO mentoring committee reviewed survey results from the first cohort and is considering potential changes to the program.
- b. Any feedback on recommended changes to the program can be emailed to anyone on the mentoring committee.
- c. A COFO conference session is being planned to share the survey results and changes to the program.
- d. COFO members are encouraged to participate in the next round of mentoring as a mentor or mentee.

5. Ombuds Day reminder

- a. Thursday, October 8, 2020 is Ombuds Day.
- b. The website with additional information and the toolkit can be found at <https://abaombudsdays.wordpress.com/2018/09/07/ombuds-day-tool-kit/>
- c. All activities will be virtual and outreach events will be coordinated with state proclamations to be obtained.
- d. Ken Skodacek is a COFO member and the chair for the ABA Ombuds Day committee.

6. Discussion Topics

- a. Discussion of ensuring cohesiveness (being on the same page) of an ombudsman office with more than one member.
 - i. This topic is timely based on the current situation where remote work has been required for many organizations.
 - ii. Reflective practice or case review is one key to creating a cohesive work environment.

- iii. Using reflective practice in real time, keeping a high level of communication helps a team learn each member's work style and how best to work together. It can also be a good learning/training tool.
 - iv. As the team matures you may do less of real time reflective practice and more of a set meeting scheduled according to the team's preference.
 - v. Reflective practice also helps the team build resources and tackle emerging issues that allow the team to have a greater reach within the organization.
 - vi. Allow shared calendars that are only open to team members and no one else.
 - vii. Shared calendars can be a tool to assist in caseload share but be careful not to use inquirer names on shared calendars. Use the private feature for your personal schedule.
 - viii. Build policies and procedures to establish consistency of best work practices and to allow for mirroring of basis work techniques with team members.
 - ix. Revisit best work practices with the team on a routine basis that could be annually, biannual, or whatever works for the team.
 - x. Be open to different work approaches from different team members and discuss differences openly within the team.
 - xi. Stay connected on a case and personal level to ensure support is given when needed.
 - xii. When choosing new team members try to get a voice in the selection and do not confuse cohesiveness with comfort. Consider diversity and inclusion to allow for all types of points view and life experiences within an organization to be included.
- b. Supervision and the ombuds profession – Discussion of Wright/Miller January 2020 article for the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, An Initial Enquiry Towards a Model of Supervision and Support for Organizational Ombudsmen.
- i. Article was sent as PDF to members to allow for an informed discussion of the article.
 - ii. Brief synopsis of article – This article recommends a formalized view of ombudsman supervision to include a contract of the ongoing supervisory process throughout an ombudsman's career.
 - iii. Initially this article appears to helpful to new ombudsman but how to implement this type of function in a government environment is not clear.
 - iv. The word supervision appears to have a different meaning in the article than how it is widely viewed in the US.
 - v. Supervision in the US is thought of as direct oversight and overseeing discussion making. In the article it appears to describe something like a partnership or mentoring role for the supervisor.

- vi. The word supervisor could also be viewed as compromising the independence of the role of an ombudsman and the presumed neutrality of the position.
- vii. Creation of a supervisory role may not be a good substitute for establishing a level of experience, training, basic standards of practice, and basic qualifications for the role of an ombudsman.
- viii. Confidentiality could also be an issue relating to this supervisor model within a federal agency as an outside person/supervisor may be a person outside of organization.
- ix. Standards of practice within IOA state an ombudsman should have sole discretion over decisions which may be undermined by the supervisory model.
- x. Certification and mentoring may be a better way to establish creditably within the ombudsman profession if that is the reason for the model of supervision.

7. Announcements

- a. Ombuds Supporting Ombuds (OSO) call on Wednesday, June 24, 2020 from 2 – 3 pm EDT.

Attendance 06/10/2020

Last	First	Agency	Call-In
Barrar	Riley	CFPB	1
Berg	Mollie	DOD / National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)	1
Bookstein	Monique	FBI	1
Bowles	Kelly	DOJ / USMS	1
Carmouche	Colette	TSA	1
Chlosta	Tina	FBI	1
Coleman	Jean	SBA	1
Doyle	Bill	US Secret Service	1
Enriquez	Elisa	Los Alamos Laboratory (DOE)	1
Garmon	Felisa	CFPB	1
Gordon	Laurel	US Marshals Service	1
Hartman	Jessie	NARA/ Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)	1
Huff	Kevin	FDIC	1
Katherine	Erica	FDA	1
Kelly	John	SBA	1
Kinnavy	Noreen	Broadcasting Board of Governors	1
Levine	Lisa	DOJ / Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR)	1
Malone	Marcus	DOJ / USMS	1
Maurer	Bill	Census	1
McGuire	Carrie	NARA / Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)	1
McNeil	Tracey	SEC	1
Michael	David	NIH	1
Milner	Heather	CFPB	1
Patel	Bina	FEMA	1
Patno	Arielle	FDA / Center for Tobacco Products	1
Perez	Neida	Organization of American States (OAS)	1
Piziali	Jamie	EPA	1

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Last	First	Agency	Call-In
Porch	Susanne	Commerce / National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)	1
Rowe	Mary	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	1
Semo	Alina	NARA / OGIS	1
Sotoudeh	Paul	USPTO	1
Stergio	Marcus	Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs / DOL	1
Todd	Julie	US Court of Appeals-Philadelphia	1
Vermillion	Chris	TSA	1
Weber	Guy	DOD / NGA	1
Wehagen	Stefanie	SBA	1
Yuille Banford	Deanna	DOD / Defense Human Resources Activity	1
Zajmi	Arben	CIS Ombudsman Office	1
		Total	38