



COALITION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time: August 14, 2019 1:30pm – 3:00pm (EST)

Location: Phone Only

Agenda:

1. COFO Annual Conference Update
2. COFO Mentoring Committee Update
3. Ombuds Day Reminder
4. Leave Donation
5. Discussion Topics:
 - a. Evaluating your services – How do you evaluate the services you are providing your stakeholders? How do you do distribute the evaluation tool (whether a survey or another tool), what do you ask, and what kind of responsiveness do you receive?
 - b. Standardized language – Do any of you use standardized language or form paragraphs in the course of your work? Why or why not? If so, would you be willing to share examples of this language?
 - c. Your topic here!
6. Announcements

Highlights:

1. **COFO Annual Conference Update**
 - a. Conference date: 18 October 2019 @ USPTO. The conference committee continues to meet every other Wednesday @ 3PM EST. Currently the team is discussing potential topics and speakers. The next meeting will be August 21. If you are interested in participating as a volunteer, please email Paul Sotoudeh: Paul.Sotoudeh@USPTO.gov
2. **COFO Mentoring Committee Update**
 - a. No further updates at this time. If you have any questions, please contact COFOMentoring@nih.gov
3. **Ombuds Day Reminder**
 - a. Ombuds day is coming up in October. Registration information with access to links is available on the ABA website. For more information, please contact Ken Skodacek: Ken.Skodacek@fda.hhs.gov
 - b. Ombuds Day is a great opportunity to connect with ombudsman in the federal government and network with colleagues to share best practices. This year, the committee will host three events, including the first one with Chuck Howard, Executive

Director, IOA, as the key note speaker. Additional events will be held in Chicago, IL and Boulder, CO.

4. Leave Donation

- a. COFO members who are interested in donating or receiving leave donations can reach out to the COFO Executive committee to help facilitate such considerations. Leave donors will be anonymous to avoid bias and conflict of interest. COFO is extending this opportunity to spread awareness, while connecting ombuds in the federal government. For more information, please email Paul Sotoudeh: Paul.Sotoudeh@USPTO.gov

5. Discussion Topics

- a. Evaluating your services – How do you evaluate the services you are providing your stakeholders? How do you distribute the evaluation tool (whether a survey or another tool), what do you ask, and what kind of responsiveness do you receive?
 - i. Participants engaged in a hearty conversation to share best practices of how to obtain feedback on ombuds services from visitors. Participants mentioned distributing a post-visit survey via an auto-generated email, email, or hard copy. Email surveys worked best for visitors who sought consultations either by phone or online.
 - ii. Participants also shared best practices on software tools used to obtain quality data. Qualtrix is a technical software tool that sends surveys via email and collects data that is sent to a different department, which redacts any personal information prior to sending weekly reports to the ombuds office. Additionally, members discussed using Survey Monkey or establishing an ombuds shared email account to send surveys. Most ombuds agreed that only 50% of visitors responded to the surveys. Surveys are intended to measure the quality of service, which extends to collecting data that focuses on the perception of the quality of service and actual quality of service.
- b. Standardized language – Do any of you use standardized language or form paragraphs in the course of your work? Why or why not? If so, would you be willing to share examples of this language?
 - i. Participants discussed the importance of quality control to standardize some language and/or establish control questions.
 - ii. Ombuds discussed the need to use specific types of inquiries that require standardized language when duty requires such as referrals, legal notes, or citing policy and regulations. External ombuds added the need to use standardized or “template” language when interfacing with the public or consumers.
- c. Your topic here!
 - i. An idea was mentioned to mentor an individual who is not an ombuds for six months to a year for non-soft skills training. The topic will be carried forward to next month’s call.

6. Announcements

- a. **Conference:** U.S. Ombuds Association Conference will take place in Honolulu, Hawaii from 18-20 September 2019. Registration is now open. Early Bird registration deadline is 15 August.

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- b. **NIH Event:** NIH will be hosting an event that is open to the public on 24 September at the NIH Campus. Point of Contact @ NIH is Ms. Sarah Kith for further information. The event will welcome Dr. Rita Sharon as the Gadlin Lecturer on narrative medicine. The speaking engagement address the doctor-patient relationship with a focus on listening skills to hear the narrative vs engage in problem solving. Paul Sotoudeh will distribute the flyer and registration information to COFO members. Interested participants must register to attend.
- c. **Job Announcements – none**

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Attendees

Dial in	
Howard Balick	FDA
Riley Barrar	CFPB
Wanda Battle	MEDCOM
Virginia Behr	FDA
Mollie Berg	NGA
Mary Chavez Rudolph	Dept of Interior
Elisa Enriquez	LANL
Angela Fox	USDA
Millisa Gary	GSA
Andrea Gilliam	Unwanted LLC
Sheldon Gnatt	NSA
Laurel Gordon	US Marshals
Gary Hill	NGA
Sarah Kith	NIH
Noreen Kinnavy	US Agency for Global Media, VOA, and Office of Cuba Broadcasting
Christa Lemelin	NARA OGIS
Laurie Lenkel	FDA
Lisa Levine	DOJ
Bill Maurer	DOE
Christine Megee	DODEA
Celeste Merrix	FLETC
Rozmyn Miller	FMCS
Martha Wagner Murphy	OGIS
Bina Patel	NGIC
Arielle Patno	FDA Ctr for Tobacco Products
Xaivian Raymond	NASA
Janay Reed	DIA
Kevin Reilly	NASA
Ken Skodacek	FDA Ctr for Devices and Radiological Hth
Alena Semo	OGIS/NARA
Paul Sotoudeh	USPTO
Marcus Stergio	OFCCP
Roberta Valdez	FDIC External
Chris Vermillion	TSA
Guy Weber	NGA
Karen White	National Guard Bureau
Jean Whyte	FRB
Lexi Wolfe	TSA
Deanna Yuille	FDA