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Ombudsman Updates Grievance Policy to Reflect Best Practices

When you are in the business of resolving complaints, it makes sense that your grievance policy and process should be easy to navigate and an effective way to resolve problems. Our team has spent several months reviewing and refining the Alaska State Ombudsman grievance process, so that it aligns with best practices.

Complainants and state agency staff are encouraged to try to resolve their concerns informally, directly with the investigator involved. If that doesn't result in a satisfactory outcome, there is a formal grievance process. Grievances must be in writing, so we provide an easy to understand form for people to use. The Ombudsman reviews all grievances (except those directly about her — those are assigned to a neutral investigator to review).

Grievances are reviewed objectively using the same standards that we use to investigate complaints about state agencies. The types of grievances we review are described in our regulations, and include grievances about:

- the decision to decline a complaint for investigation;
- the decision to discontinue investigation of a complaint;
- undue delay in the investigation of a complaint; a
- specific error or omission in the investigation of a complaint;
- bias or conflict of interest of an investigator; or
- discourteous behavior by a member of the staff.

DO YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT HOW WE HANDLED A COMPLAINT?

The Alaska State Ombudsman is committed to resolving citizen's complaints and grievances fairly, objectively, and respectfully. This includes grievances about our office.

The findings and recommendations made in an investigation are not grievable, nor is the Ombudsman's acceptance of the agency's actions to resolve a complaint.

The updated grievance policy, grievance form, and more information about the grievance process is available at www.ombud.alaska.gov.

Interested in updating your organization's grievance process? We can provide technical assistance to help. Contact Ombudsman Kate Burkhart at 907-465-4970 for more information.

Outreach at Alaska Library Association Conference, March 9-11

We continue our outreach efforts so that Alaskans know about the Ombudsman's services and resources. Intake Assistant Cate Remme organized our participation as an exhibitor at the [Alaska Library Association's](#) annual conference.

We connected with librarians statewide, which will help people in rural and remote communities learn about and connect with the Ombudsman when they need help. In many communities, the library is a hub for people seeking information, internet access, and assistance. Equipping Alaska's librarians with information about our services will help people connect more easily with our office.

Check out the Ombudsman's presentation to libraries through the Alaska OWL Program [here](#).

Have an outreach opportunity to share? Contact Cate at cate.remme@akleg.gov.



Intake Assistant Cate Remme at AKLA

Meet the MASST Intern in Juneau

Thanks to our partnership with [SERRC](#), we are hosting a Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) intern. Kristeen started working with us in February:

This job training program will provide me with the opportunity to improve my skills with all Microsoft Office applications. The training I would like to achieve here includes learning how to set up for meetings and presentations, preparing material for publication, and strengthening my professional communication skills with the public through the phone, email, and letter correspondence. I like working and interacting with such a diverse group of people. I appreciate this opportunity to work here, but I also want to be an asset to the Ombudsman's office. Everyone has been just great in welcoming me and showing me what is expected here.

Kristeen is a great addition to our team. If you are interested in hosting a MASST job training placement, contact Susan Bus at SERRC, 907-523-7271.

Complaints Received in First Quarter Down from 2017

In the first quarter of 2018, we have received 383 jurisdictional complaints and 121 non-jurisdictional complaints or requests for information. This is an 18% decrease in jurisdictional complaints from 2017, when we received 466 complaints in the first quarter. The number of requests for information and referrals in 2018 is 40% lower than in 2017. More detailed complaint data will be provided directly to affected departments in April.