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### Ombuds Day 2019



For more information, call  
907.269.5290.

#### October 10 is Ombuds Day!

We are celebrating with partners from the [Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman](#), the [Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman](#), the UAA Student Ombudsman, and our partners in problem solving. Join us for a FREE resource fair at the Anchorage Loussac Library Atrium, 1:00-4:00 p.m. on Thursday October 10, 2019.

Folks can meet and learn about the four unique ombuds programs in Alaska, along with the [Loussac Community Resource Coordinator](#), the [Child Support Services Division Complaint Resolution Office](#), the [Alaska Legal Services Pro Bono Program](#), the [Alaska Language Interpreter Center](#), the Office of Children's Services, and more.

### Rural Outreach - Kotzebue

In 2017, we adopted the [Alaska State Ombudsman Strategic Plan 2017-2022](#) to help guide and measure our organizational performance. Our first goal is that Alaskans are aware of the role, work, and value of the Alaska State Ombudsman.

Assistant Ombudsman Kate Higgins and Intake Assistant Richard Radford will be in Kotzebue October 22-23, 2019. They will be available to anyone who wants to make a complaint or needs information to help solve a problem:

They will also be meeting with state agencies and community partners to share information about ombudsman services and learn about community priorities. For more information, email Kate Higgins at [kate.higgins@akleg.gov](mailto:kate.higgins@akleg.gov).

Providing on-site outreach in a rural community each year is a key strategy for achieving this goal. This year we will be in the Northwest Arctic Region.

- ♦ October 22 at the Chukchi College from 9:30am-1:00pm
- ♦ October 23 at the [Legislative Information Office](#) from noon-3:00pm.

Special thanks to Rose Foley and Elizabeth Ferguson from Representative John Lincoln's office for helping with planning and logistics.

### Success Stories

Not all ombudsman complaint investigations result in a formal report and recommendations. In fact, the majority of complaints are resolved informally with state agencies.

We investigated the complaint and determined that the ward was only receiving hospice care, despite potentially benefiting from additional treatment options. We also found the complaint about lack of communication from the public guardian was supported by the evidence.

A specialist concluded that additional treatment (beyond palliative care) was appropriate.

Earlier this year, we received a complaint that a public guardian at the Office of Public Advocacy was not assisting a ward to access life-saving medical care, and was not responsive to communications from another organization involved in the ward's care.

Our investigator facilitated a conversation between public guardian and health care providers, which resulted in medical review of the ward's

The public guardian agreed to work with the ward's community-based care coordinator and assisted living home to arrange the treatment. As a result of the treatment, the ward was later discharged from hospice care.



### PREA Partnership with DOC, Sexual Harassment Complaints

This summer, the Department of Corrections (DOC) asked the Ombudsman to accept reports of sexual harassment and assault in Alaska's prisons as part of the agency's efforts to better comply with the federal [Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 \(PREA\)](#).



any concerns about the manner or outcome of the investigation.

[Federal regulation](#) requires correctional agencies to partner with an external organization to accept reports. This is to help address barriers to reporting such as shame/stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of confidentiality.

August 27, 2019, inmates, DOC staff, and others can make a report of sexual assault or harassment of an inmate directly to the Alaska State Ombudsman. Reports can be made confidentially. The Ombudsman will log and refer the PREA report to DOC for investigation.

In the past year, the Ombudsman has received an increased number of complaints about sexual harassment by state employees, or sexual harassment and assault perpetrated by others against people for whom the State of Alaska has legal responsibility. We are assessing how best to refer and monitor investigation of these allegations, as well as our role in directly investigating these complaints. We are convening stakeholders to determine how we can best serve these constituents. In the meantime, these complaints will be prioritized for screening, referral, and review.

Together with the DOC PREA coordinator, we developed a process for accepting and referring PREA reports for investigation. Beginning

After the DOC and any law enforcement investigation has concluded, the reporter can contact the Ombudsman with

## WE'RE HIRING!

The Alaska State Ombudsman is recruiting a Research Analyst with a STEM background to provide research, data collection and analysis, and support for ombudsman investigations and internal performance management. This is a full-time, fully exempt position in our Anchorage office.

[Read the full recruitment and apply through Workplace Alaska.](#)

Recruitment closes November 4, 2019.



#### Read the Report

We found that the Board of Fisheries violated the Open Meetings Act and recommended they cure the violation.



#### Read the Report

We investigated a change in foster care placement by the Office of Children's Services.



#### Read About It

We investigated complaints about the aquatic farm program and how materials are noticed by the Division of Mining, Land & Water.

#### File a Complaint

Our [confidential online complaint form](#) is available 24/7 at [ombud.alaska.gov](http://ombud.alaska.gov). Or call 907-269-5290 to speak with our Intake Team.

#### Community Resources

Problems with a small business, health care provider, or landlord? Check out our [Community Resources](#) or call Alaska 2-1-1.

## Alaska State Ombudsman



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