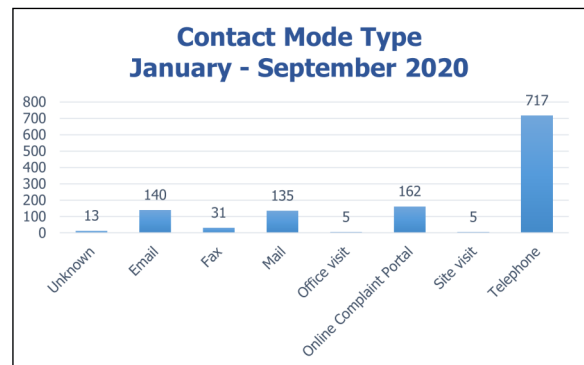
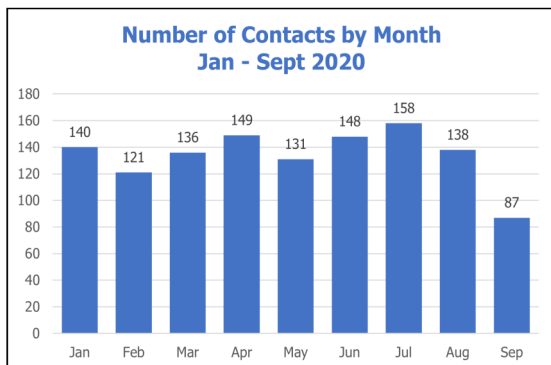


In this issue:

COVID Operations Update ♦ New Staff ♦ Ombuds Day 2020

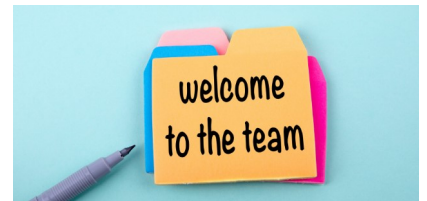
COVID Operations Update

We activated our Continuity of Operations Plan on March 15, 2020, so that we could maintain operations while preserving the health and safety of staff, partners, and the public. Ombudsman offices in Juneau and Anchorage have been closed to visitors. Staff are working from home and/or socially distanced in the office. People continue to contact the Ombudsman by telephone, email, mail, fax, and the confidential online complaint portal. The number of people seeking assistance has remained steady in 2020, compared to the months leading up to the COVID pandemic. (Data current as of September 27, 2020.)



Alaska Ombudsman Welcomes New Staff!

Shannon Deike joined the Alaska State Ombudsman staff in January 2020 as Research Analyst. Shannon brings many years of analytic and research experience. He received a B.S. in Mathematics in 2000, and is completing a Master of Public Health (2021), both at the University of Alaska. Shannon has extensive experience with data-driven policy, research, evaluation, education, and social sciences from his work with the UAA Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies and Departments of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Environmental Conservation, and Health and Social Services.



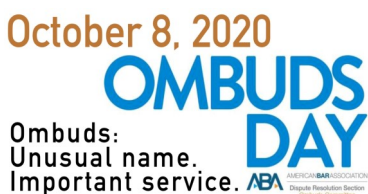
In April, Aaron Acuna joined the Intake Team. Aaron is also a UAA graduate. He majored in English Composition, and interned for UAA's English Department. Aaron also worked at the UAA Learning Commons, Writing Center, and Consortium Library. Aaron worked with the Alaska Occupational Safety and Health Administration, where he processed reports and complaints regarding injuries and violations of workplace safety and health regulations.

Jacob Carbaugh joined our investigative team in May. Jacob was born, raised, and has lived in Alaska his entire life. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Justice from UAA. He brings a great deal of experience and excellent research and writing skills, after 12 years in the legal field, including work with the Alaska Court System and the Office of Public Advocacy.

This month, we rounded out the team with the arrival of Elizabeth Jenkins. She joins our investigative team after several years in public radio reporting. She has been a regular voice on the Alaska airwaves for the last five years, producing two award winning podcasts and contributing to This American Life and Reveal.

Outreach, Annual Ombudsman Day

The Ombudsman was invited to Zoom with over 70 ASEA members in September. This was our first virtual outreach event. We shared information about the role and operations of the Ombudsman with folks from several agencies and communities statewide. Based on this success, we hope to offer more virtual outreach in the coming months.



The American Bar Association has designated the second Thursday of every October as **Ombuds Day**. This year's theme is "**Ombuds: Unusual name. Important Service.**" In years past, the Alaska State Ombudsman, in partnership with the Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman and the Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman, has hosted a free event to celebrate and educate the public about all the different roles and services different ombuds provide. Challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic makes a live event impossible.

This year, we will be creating and sharing a video providing information about Ombuds Day, the ombuds profession, and how the Alaska State Ombudsman serves Alaskans. The video will be posted on October 8 and can be viewed at www.ombud.alaska.gov or at www.facebook.com/AKOmbuds.

Coming in November . . .

One of Ombudsman Burkhart's priorities is ensuring that ombudsman services are available and accessible to everyone. To support this goal, we are developing an initiative to educate our staff about institutional bias and racism, so that we can evaluate our own operations and better respond to complaints of systemic bias. Stay tuned for more information about how we are working to better serve Alaskans.