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Parent Ombudsman for Special Education **(Virginia Department of Education)**

What is an Ombudsman?

An Ombudsman is a person who serves as a designated neutral party who advocates for a fair process and provides confidential, informal assistance and support to parents, guardians, advocates, educators, and students with disabilities. The Parent Ombudsman for Special Education serves as a resource to parents in non-legal special education matters.

Contact Information

Parent Ombudsman

Toll Free: 800-422-2083

Email: SpecialEducationOmbudsman@doe.virginia.gov

Key Functions of the Ombudsman for Special Education

Independence

The Ombudsman is independent of the formal dispute resolution options of mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings and serves a key function of reporting to leadership at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) regarding the issues experienced by parties served.

Confidentiality

The Ombudsman does not disclose personal information, discussions, and interactions.

Neutrality

The Ombudsman does not take a side on the issues and serves as an advocate for a fair process.

Informality

There is no formal complaint form or documentation required to access the services of the Ombudsman.

Specific Duties of the Ombudsman for Special Education

- Serve as a source of information and referral regarding state and federal laws and regulations governing special education.
- Provide information and support to parents of students with disabilities to help them understand and navigate the special education process.
- Provide communication strategies to parents and school divisions for resolving disagreements and special education issues.
- Assist parents in developing strategies and informal options to address issues and concerns.
- Promote collaboration and positive communication between parents and school division personnel in addressing special education issues.
- Provide information and resources on available options for dispute resolution, such as mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings when collaboration efforts fail.
- Serve as a resource for disability related information and referrals to available programs and services for individuals with disabilities.
- Identify, track, monitor, and report to the VDOE leadership on suspected systemic patterns of concerns that emerge from constituent contacts regarding special education services in local school divisions to aid in addressing noncompliance

Resources for Parents

Ombudsman Flyer Cover Page

Ombudsman for Special

Education

Learn what an Ombudsman is, their key functions, and specific duties.

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Ombudsman flyer in Spanish Cover Page de Padres para la Educación Especial

Defensor

Conozca qué es un Defensor del Pueblo, sus funciones principales y deberes específicos.

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Ombudsman Strategies Cover Page Education Ombudsman Strategies

Special

Learn when to contact the Ombudsman, how they facilitate resolution, and how else they can assist.

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Ombudsman Addressing Issues Cover Page

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<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/special-education>

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