

What is the Thurston/Mason Mental Health Ombuds Service?

The State of Washington has established an independent Ombuds service to receive inquiries, comments, concerns, complaints and grievances from mental health clients whose services are paid for by Medicaid or other public funding. Contact can be initiated by clients, their family members or others.

What is the purpose of this service?

The service is designed to resolve issues quickly and in the best possible way. The Ombuds receives information concerning the quality of service and client satisfaction and assists in resolving issues quickly and confidentially. The Ombuds' primary goal is to help clients and providers work together to ensure dignified, timely and quality service and to assure that client rights are protected.

Who can use this Service?

Residents of Thurston and Mason Counties who are eligible to receive, or are receiving, publicly funded mental health services may use the Ombuds service.

What can the Ombuds do?

- **Listen** to your problem.
- **Analyze** what is involved and help you determine an appropriate solution.
- **Explain and investigate** facts, laws, policies and procedures.
- **Mediate** to resolve the problem on an informal level, if possible.
- **Assist you** in the complaint and grievance process and follow through until the complaint is resolved.
- **Assure that your concerns are heard** in the way in which you want them heard, clearly and unemotionally.
- **Advocate** for your mental health treatment choices and rights.
- **Remain in contact** with you to see that you are kept informed until the complaint is resolved.
- **Provide information** on resources and your rights.
- **Recommend changes** to correct a problem or prevent future occurrences.
- **Maintain your confidentiality.**

What can't the Ombuds Service Do?

- **Provide services** such as counseling or case management.
- **Use your name** without your consent.
- **Provide medical opinions.**
- **Give legal advice** or act as your attorney.
- **Enforce** a recommendation.
- **Ensure** any specific outcome.

What can you do to help the Ombuds help you?

- **Be prepared** to discuss your problem.
- **Know what you want** to have happen.
- **Consider** what would be fair to all.
- **Keep the Ombuds informed** of where you can be reached.
- **Keep the Ombuds informed** of changes which effect the problem and its solution.

What is an Ombuds?

An Ombuds is a helper whose job it is to assist you to solve problems you may have with your counselor, your case manager, your mental health clinic, or the agencies that help you get mental health care.

How can you contact the Mental Health Ombuds?

Office: (360) 867-2556
Cell: (360) 280-7656
Toll free: (800) 658-4105
Address: Thurston County Public
Health and Social Services
412 Lilly Road
Olympia WA 98506
E-mail: ombuds@co.thurston.wa.us

When a person applies for services from a mental health provider the person receives a Thurston Mason Regional Support Network Benefits Handbook which has a complete list of individual client rights.

This brochure was developed by the Thurston Mason Regional Support Network Consumer Council. Thurston Mason Regional Support Network is a division of the Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department.

People Using Public Mental Health Services have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect.
- Confidentiality and to have your privacy protected.
- Help develop a care plan with services which meet your needs.
- Refuse any proposed treatment.
- Receive services without discrimination and that are sensitive to gender, race, national origin, language, age, disability, and sexual orientation.
- Receive services free from any sexual exploitation or harassment.
- Review your records.
- Be informed of all prescribed medications, including expected effects and possible side effects.
- Have the provider's grievance procedure explained to you.
- Ask the Mental Health Ombuds help resolve complaints.
- File a complaint or grievance if you believe that your rights have been violated.
- Appeal any denial, termination, suspension, or reduction of services and to continue to receive services at least until your appeal is heard by a fair hearing judge.

September 2010

THURSTON MASON MENTAL HEALTH OMBUDS

**A Mental Health Ombuds
is available to assist clients of
Public Mental Health Services in
Thurston and Mason Counties
to resolve complaints & concerns**

- quickly
- confidentially
- free of charge



This brochure is available in alternate languages and formats.