

Department of Surgery Ombudsperson Job Description

In 2019 and 2020, national survey results from the ACGME and SECOND trial demonstrated significant reports of mistreatment among residents in the general surgery training program at Northwestern. In response, the department identified the need to improve both awareness of and the response to reports of mistreatment in the department to supplement existing institutional resources for trainees. The DOS ombudsperson role was created to provide a neutral and confidential resource for dispute resolution for residents.

1. Goals:

- To provide a confidential resource for reporting and discussion of mistreatment
- Help residents determine next steps
- Navigate interpersonal challenges
- Assistance with conflict resolution
- Departmental culture change

2. Role Description:

Includes:

- Listening and discussing questions, concerns and complaints
- Assistance in evaluating possible options
- Expanding the number of options available
- Explanation of University and School policies and procedures
- Referral to appropriate individuals or offices
- Information gathering on an informal basis
- Coaching for individuals to resolve problems on their own
- Informal facilitation of meetings between individuals in conflict
- Mediation of conflicts
- Helping visitors to bring complaints to others with permission only
- Referrals to formal grievance when informal processes have been exhausted (such as to file a complaint or grievance)

Does **not** include:

- Adjudication or participation in formal grievance processes
- Testimony in any court initiated proceeding
- Administrative or academic decision making for others
- Determinations of guilt or wrongdoing of anyone involved
- Investigations of a formal nature
- Providing legal advice
- Psychological counseling or therapy

3. Responsibilities:

- Residents in general surgery training (including non-designated preliminary residents, designated preliminary residents and integrated specialty residents).
- Oversee education and awareness opportunities in tandem with residency and departmental leadership

- Oversee content related to reporting and mistreatment in conjunction with residency coordinator
 - Create annual report to be reviewed at annual check in (see ongoing assessment) that will include:
 - Feedback about experiences in the role
 - Summary of numbers and types of services provided
 - Recommendations to the department for change
4. **Relationship to McGaw Ombudsperson:** The departmental ombudsperson will supplement but not replace the McGaw ombudsperson role. Both ombudspersons are a resource to residents with overlapping roles. Since an ombudsperson role is traditionally filled by an individual who is not an employee or member of the organization they serve, it must be acknowledged that there may be some perceived conflict of interest in having a faculty member in the role of an ombudsperson. Therefore, while the McGaw ombudsperson may be a preferred resource to some individuals or in certain situations, the departmental role provides:
- A confidential resource that is uniquely familiar with the surgical culture and environment
 - A known individual to the trainees who may seem more accessible in some cases
 - In a position to track trends in reports and place these in the context of departmental initiatives designed to address cultural change
5. **Training:** International Ombudsman Association training program
6. **Support:**
- Compensation: \$10,000 stipend per academic year
 - Additional support resources for questions, concerns, conflict resolution, escalation or feedback:
 - Education leadership
 - Chair
 - McGaw Ombudsperson and leadership
 - Northwestern University or Northwestern Memorial (if conflict involves students, faculty or staff for example)
7. **Election**
- Term: 2-3 years with option to renew and planned check in at 6 months and 1 year
8. **Mechanism for ongoing assessment**
- Check in with DOS chair, Vice-Chair of Education, Program Director and administrative chief residents semi-annually or as needed
 - Annual report to include (see Responsibilities)
 - Workgroup assessment at 6 months and 1 year after initiation of the role