

**Coast Guard Ombudsman Program
Communications Strategic Plan
After Action Report
April 2012**



CG-111
CG-1112
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Executive Summary
Coast Guard Ombudsman Program
Communication Strategic Plan

The Coast Guard via the Office of Work-Life has led the effort to proactively increase public awareness and marketing of the ombudsman program, educate Coast Guard leadership and commanding officers on assigning command ombudsmen and the standardization of all ombudsman basic training related materials.

Historically the Ombudsman Program Manager was a collateral duty of another Individual and Family Support Division program manager. Although few and unorganized historical documents exist, they do indicate that whenever a new program manager was identified he/she would attempt to initiate significant changes to the ombudsman program in the areas of training, cadre spouse involvement and policy. A variety of reasons exist for previous program managers not fulfilling their goals. Key reasons would be the lack of a dedicated full-time program manager, no dedicated line of program funding and no dedicated field support staff. Admiral Papp, realizing the significant value an ombudsman provides commands, service members and their families funded for three full-time dedicated positions for the Ombudsman Program, a program manager, and Regional Ombudsman Coordinators for Atlantic and Pacific Area.

Initially, familiarization visits and information gathering was required to understand the current status of the ombudsman program and identify the needs. Numerous program needs were identified and are categorized:

- Policy
- Training
- Marketing
- Information Technology
- Program Management

There was no system or process in place for direct communication with Coast Guard ombudsmen from the program manager. All HQ communication correspondence would filter through the Work-Life ombudsman coordinators which often resulted in significant delays.

Additionally, the program manager could not answer simple ombudsman program questions:

- How many commands have appointed ombudsmen?
- What are the top three issues/concerns ombudsmen receive from families?
- How many hours per week does an ombudsman volunteer?

A Plan of Action and Milestones was developed, identifying program issues, actions to complete and status (attached). The majority of issues were completed and a new POA&M will be developed with the Regional Ombudsman Coordinators.

CG Ombudsman Annual Report

Currently there is no formal means of capturing metrics related to the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program. Current policy states ombudsmen will compile demographic information by unit for:

- Number of families served,
- Number of deployment or informational briefings,
- Number of service hours contributed,
- Total amount of reimbursement,
- Number of requests for program support,
- Dates and locations of training provided, and
- Number of personnel trained.

Additionally, current policy states HSWL Regional Managers will establish a system to collect information on AOR ombudsman services provided on an annual basis, to include: Number of ombudsmen appointed for each unit,

- Number of deployments or other informational group briefings,
- Total number of hours of volunteer service,
- Total amount of reimbursement and program related expenses,
- Total number of requests for Ombudsman Program support,
- Number of training sessions conducted for COs/OICs and their ombudsmen, and
- A list of family concerns reported by the COs/OICs throughout their AOR.

The report is forwarded to program manager by Oct 30 annually; however, no past reports are available.

In September 2011, HSWL SC RP Ombudsman Coordinators and commanding officers/officers-in-charge were asked to complete an annual report for the Ombudsman program. This report requested:

- Ombudsman names,
- Contact information,
- Dates of appointment, and training, and
- The top three family issues and/or concerns.

Analysis from this report indicates there are 236 commands that have appointed an ombudsman, and a total of 250 CG Ombudsmen¹. 52% of current ombudsmen have received ombudsman training.² The Coast Guard Portal lists 814 commands/units³. Overall 29% of the units in the Coast Guard have at least one appointed ombudsman. The percentage of commands with appointed ombudsmen per District:

- | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| • D1 – 13% | D8 – 14% | D13 – 49% |
| • D5 – 22% | D9 – 19% | D14 – 58% |
| • D7 – 51% | D11 – 47% | D17 – 44% |

¹ Some commands have multiple ombudsmen assigned

² Percentage may be higher as accurate records are not currently being kept

³ This number does not include units in DCMS, DCO or FORCOM

Top three referrals, issues, and/or concerns families contacted an ombudsman: ⁴

District	Referral 1	Referral 2	Referral 3
District 1	Tricare	School info	EAP
District 5	Tricare	Childcare	EAP
District 7	Tricare	Childcare	Special Needs
District 8	Tricare	Childcare	Relocation
District 9	Tricare	Childcare	Marriage Counseling
District 11	Relocation	Spouse Employment	Childcare
District 13	Tricare	Childcare	
District 14	Relocation	Childcare	School Info
District 17	Childcare	Tricare	School Info

The Health, Safety and Work-Life Service Center Regional Practice

Each HSWL SC RP has designated a staff member as the ombudsman coordinator. The ombudsman coordinator is the primary point of contact for all ombudsmen in their area of responsibility. Currently ombudsman coordinators ensure ombudsmen receive CORE training, is knowledgeable on the services the WL office provides, disseminates Coast Guard and community information to ombudsmen and assists commands/units with advertising and appointing an ombudsman.

Currently there is no formal HSWL Service Center Regional Practice Ombudsman Coordinator data collection format. The HSWL SC is developing an Outreach Prevention Activity Log and we have requested to capture the following data:

- Number of contacts with ombudsmen
- Number of ombudsman trainings held and number of attendees
- Number of ombudsman (other) trainings held and number of attendees
- Number of ombudsman community of practices held and number of attendees
- Number of commands briefed on the ombudsman program
- Number of information and referral ombudsman customer contacts

Each HSWL RP operates differently in regards to the ombudsman program. There is no consistency in the staff member that is appointed as ombudsman coordinator, there is no desk guide or standard operating procedures that details what support the ombudsman coordinator will provide to commands and ombudsmen and there is no standardized basic ombudsman training or standardized adjunct trainings. Recently a survey was sent to all ombudsman coordinators to capture the duties and responsibilities each currently provides. A HSWL RP Ombudsman Coordinator Standard Operating Procedure desk Guide will be developed to standardize the basic support and services each HSWL RP will provide.

⁴ 57 of the 250 Coast Guard ombudsmen responded to the referral question

Coast Guard Ombudsmen Registry

The Coast Guard Ombudsman Registry will provide the opportunity for the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program Manager to send real time information directly to command ombudsmen, commanding officers/designees and HSWL RP Ombudsman Coordinators. Information to be disseminated will include disaster related information and assistance documents, news articles and appreciation messages to ombudsmen for spouse appreciation, ombudsman appreciation and family appreciation. The program manager will have to ability to track the number of e-blasts sent and the delivery success rate.

The monthly worksheet will allow Coast Guard leadership to track the number, time spent and types of contacts ombudsmen provide in support of the coast Guard program.

The assignment and registration of ombudsmen to all Coast Guard commands/units is an ongoing process. Within the Ombudsman registry the program manager will be able to identify the commands that do not have assigned ombudsmen, thereby allowing the HSWL SC to identify those commands/units that require educational materials regarding the ombudsman program and the requirement for all Coast Guard families to have access to an ombudsman. (Expected completion June 2012)

Coast Guard Ombudsman Training

The existing training for an Ombudsman is approximately 6 hours long. This training is inconsistent and does not provide the necessary details to enable ombudsmen to perform their duties. This training is undergoing significant revision. Revised training will be 15 – 18 hours and will include exercises and scenarios related to specific ombudsman duties. Three partially revised training modules were provided to approximately 28 attendees in January 2012 to test the effectiveness of proposed scenarios and exercises. Development of the new training is expected to be completed in the next 3-5 months and beta testing will likely occur in July 2012. (Expected completion September 2012)

Timeline of Significant Accomplishments

- Coast Guard Ombudsman Program Manager hired (Feb 2011)
- ADM Papp declares 2011 the Year of the Coast Guard Family
- Ombudsmen begin involvement with Yellow Ribbon Events
- Ombudsman coordinator training held (April 2011)
- LANTAREA ROC hired (Aug 2011)
- Coast Guard Ombudsman Training Manual revisions started
 - Partially revised training developed
 - Delivered in Kodiak and Alameda
- Ombudsman Registry contract accepted (Sep 2011)
- Work-Life Mobile App contract accepted (Sep 2011)
- Online Ombudsman Core Training developed (Oct 2011)
- QA/QI ombudsman coordinator standards rewritten (Dec 2011)
- COMDTINST 1750.4E drafted (Jan 2012)
- First listing of Coast Guard ombudsmen developed
 - Ability for PM to email information
 - Baseline Ombudsman Program Analysis
- Ombudsman Tool Kit CD Rom (Feb 2012)
- Program Manager has ability to email all ombudsmen (Feb 2012)
- Ombudsman Appreciation (March 2012)
 - ALCOAST
 - Website revisions and certificate templates for CO/OICs
 - Appreciation certificates signed by COMDT and MCPOCG
- Quick Series Guide drafted (March 2012)

Planning and Implementation of Communication Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Coast Guard-wide Public Awareness and Marketing of the Ombudsman Program

Goal was to increase awareness of the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program for commands, Coast Guardsmen and family members by showing the value and benefits of a command ombudsman. This was accomplished by articles posted on COAST GUARD Compass, District Public Affairs pages, ALCOASTs, and other DoD services publications. Outcome was to increase the Coast Guard community's awareness and ensure appropriate recognition by command leadership of all ombudsmen. In 2012, several districts held Ombudsman Appreciation events and all Coast Guard ombudsmen received appreciation certificates signed by the Commandant and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard.

Goal 2: Revision of Coast Guard Ombudsman Program Instruction and all related Training Materials

COMDTINST 1750.4E prescribes the guidelines to provide policy and assign responsibilities for the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program. The instruction has been completely revised to provide clarity and stronger language to establish policies and procedures. Draft is currently undergoing internal and concurrent reviews. Some major changes include:

- Requires ombudsmen will be the spouse of a member of the unit
- Requires CO/OICs to ensure that all family members will have access to an ombudsman
- Clarifies the allowable and required reimbursements for ombudsmen
- Establishes new requirements for Ombudsman Program Manager
- Establishes HSWL Regional Ombudsman Coordinator requirements
- Adds the ability for commands to share ombudsman services with another command
- Establishes the requirement for District commanders to implement an Ombudsman Community of Practice and assign a chairperson
- Requires ombudsmen to be trained within 3 months of appointment
- Adds sexual assault as a reportable to command and HSWL RP employee assistance program coordinator/sexual assault response coordinator
- Adds the requirement of ombudsmen to participate in District Ombudsman Community of Practices
- Establishes waiver request procedures and selection criteria for commands requesting to name persons other than active duty spouses as ombudsmen
- Stipulates specific responsibilities for HSWL Regional Practices in support of the Ombudsman Program

Goal 3: Use of information technology to strengthen the Ombudsman Program

Goal was to develop an online data base to identify ombudsmen. The Ombudsman Registry is currently being developed and is expected to be soft-launched in late May. From the Ombudsman annual report the program manager was able create an excel spreadsheet with ombudsmen contact information, thereby allowing the program manager to quickly identify command ombudsmen and providing direct communication via email to ombudsmen.

MARKETING

The following Ombudsman Program related articles have been posted on COAST GUARD Compass - Official Blog of the U.S. Coast Guard.

- [Shipmate of the Week – Amanda Satter](#)
Friday, March 30, 2012
- [Ombudsman Appreciation Day](#)
Monday, March 26, 2012
- [Auxiliary training meeting advances mission readiness](#)
Tuesday, January 31, 2012
- [Adm. Papp: One year and on track](#)
Thursday, May 26, 2011
- [Shipmate of the Week – Laura Vanderwerf](#)
Friday, May 6, 2011
- [Ombudsmen bridge units and families](#)
Thursday, March 31, 2011

The following articles have been posted at the District Public Affairs level:

- February 18, 2011 (D11 Los Angeles)
[Homeland Security team based in Los Angeles receives national award](#)
- August 15, 2011 (D8)
[Coast Guard reservists undergo post-deployment training](#)
- February 17, 2012 (D7)
[Coast Guard Reserve unit receives DOD family readiness award](#)
- July 29, 2011 (HQ)
[2011: Year of the Coast Guard Family](#)
- March 27, 2012 (HQ)
[Daily Newsclips and Blogsum](#)
- April 2, 2012 (HQ)
[Daily Newsclips & Blogsum](#)

Other Coast Guard Ombudsman Media releases:

- Radio Show in Kodiak (Sept 2011)
- Ombudsmen Key to Wounded Warrior Support (Navy.mil and Fleet and Family Support Program's Face Book page)
- Story Number NNS110503-07 Release Date 5/3/2011 9:36:00AM

Ombudsman related Coast Guard ALCOAST messages:

- 106/11 547/11 121/12
- 069/11 552/11
- 073/11 093/12

COAST GUARD OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM **FACT SHEET**

What is an Ombudsman?

The morale, health, welfare and efficiency of command personnel are the responsibility of the Commanding Officer/Officer-in-Charge. The Command Ombudsman assists the commanding officer in carrying out this responsibility.

A Coast Guard Ombudsman is an official volunteer of the command who is trained to assist command families with information, referral resources, facilitate communication between Command and families and provide readiness support during deployments, emergencies or crisis.

What does the program offer?

The Coast Guard Ombudsman Program is a Coast Guard-wide program established to enhance mission readiness through improved family readiness and preparedness.

A strong command ombudsman program will help ensure that families have the information necessary to meet the unique challenges of a military lifestyle and Commanding Officers/Officers-in-Charge will have a better understanding of the welfare of the command's families.

The Office of Health, Safety and Work-Life (HSWL) will promulgate policy and guidance regarding the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program.

- The Office of Work-Life is responsible for developing program policy and promoting program management efforts with the active duty, reserve and auxiliary force.
- The HSWL Service Center (HSWL SC) develops and updates standard processes and procedures for implementing the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program and its policy.

The HSWL SC ensures that the ombudsman program is adequately resourced at the regional and district levels. Resources include:

- Training – HSWL SC certifies and decertifies all Certified Ombudsman Trainers (COTs). COTs must attend training classes which are taught by the Regional Ombudsman Coordinators (ROC) and the Ombudsman Program Manager.
- All COT applications are reviewed by the ROCs and final approval is determined by the Ombudsman Program Manager.

How are services delivered?

The Coast Guard Ombudsman Program is the Commanding Officer's Program. Command Ombudsmen report to the CO/OIC or his/her designated point of contact.

Ombudsman-at-Large (OAL) – The Commandant appoints one or more OALs. The OAL is responsible for advising the Commandant and/or Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard on matters affecting Coast Guardsmen and their families.

Ombudsman Community of Practice – The Ombudsman Community of Practice is a forum for sharing and exchanging successful ombudsman practices.

Advanced Training – Currently advanced training topics are determined locally and often include: American Red Cross, domestic abuse, deployment readiness, newsletter, and sexual assault prevention. Advanced training may be held in conjunction with Ombudsman Community of Practice meetings or offered at the district-wide Ombudsman meeting.

The HSWL SC Regional Practices provide a variety of services to support and enhance the effectiveness of local command Coast Guard Ombudsman Program as required by COMDTINST 1750.4 (series). Specific functions of the HSWL SC include:

- Coordinate and offer the standardized Coast Guard Ombudsman Training course. This includes advertising, providing classroom space, and arranging for certified training instructors.
- Report non-completion of coast Guard Ombudsman Training to the sponsoring command.
- Assist with arranging for speakers and trainers for advanced training.
- Coordinate for topical speakers for Ombudsman Community of Practice meetings.
- Designate a member of the HSWL RP as Ombudsman Coordinator. The Ombudsman Coordinator serves as an advisor/consultant to local ombudsmen, Ombudsman Community of Practices and to the commands.

How many individuals use these services?

Currently there are no formal statistical data gathered regarding the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program or process that identifies the total number of command ombudsmen within the Coast Guard. Initiatives are underway to address these issues.

- Ombudsman Registry – will be a web site that lists each command and the name and contact information of their command ombudsman (completion expected June 2012).
- Monthly Worksheet -- a monthly worksheet will be available on the Ombudsman Registry web site for command ombudsmen to complete. This worksheet will collect information on the types of information and referral services and number of hours an ombudsman volunteers during the month.

Why provide the services?

Without the services of command Ombudsmen, significant commitment of command resources and man-hours would be necessary and negatively impact the command mission. If we were to assume one Ombudsman per command (900), volunteering 10 hours per week, for total of 482,000 hours yearly. The Coast Guard equates the value of volunteer hours at the GS-7, Step 5 level (\$18.45/hr)⁵. 10 hours weekly = \$184.50 x 52 weeks = \$9,594.00 x 900 Ombudsmen = \$8,634,600 per annum.

An ombudsman is the command's liaison with family members and provides official command information to families.

When challenges arise at home, an Ombudsman can refer families to the best possible place for direct help or professional guidance, thereby resolving issues before they require extensive command attention.

References:

Coast Guard Ombudsman Program, COMDTINST 1750.4 (series)
Coast Guard Ombudsman Program Manual and Instructor Guide (in development)

Websites/Social Media:

Office of Work-Life Programs: <http://www.uscg.mil/ombudsman/>
Ombudsman Registry – Coming Soon!
HSWL Mobile Application – Coming Soon!

⁵ US Office of Personnel Management, 2012 General Schedule (Base) Table

Coast Guard Ombudsman Program Communication Strategic Plan

Desired Endstate:

This communication plan supports this mission by educating commands on the importance of appointing a Coast Guard Ombudsman provides acknowledgment of the value and benefits an ombudsman affords both the command and the Coast Guard family. This Strategic Communications Plan proposes a means as to how this may be accomplished.

Background:

The Coast Guard Ombudsman Program is a Coast Guard-wide program established to improve mission readiness through family readiness. A strong Ombudsman Program will help ensure that families have the information necessary to meet the unique challenges of the Coast Guard lifestyle.

Established in 1986, by Admiral James Gracey and patterned after the Navy Family Ombudsman Program, an ombudsman is typically the spouse of a unit member who assists the command by providing a direct link between the command and families. The readily available assistance of an ombudsman minimizes the disruptions of deployments and relocations and improves the quality of life for Coast Guard families.

The Ombudsman Program benefits the unit, its personnel, and the Coast Guard in general. The unit commanding officer gains a valuable advisor and someone who can liaison the needs and issues of families with commanding officers and vice versa. Coast Guard ombudsmen are highly trained and dedicated volunteers serving both the command and families.

The selection of an Ombudsman is a major decision impacting the entire unit. Enhancing the quality of life of the Coast Guard Family is directly related to the retention of experienced and productive Coast Guard members. The Ombudsman is appointed by and works for the Command. The level of support, expectations, and points of contact for the Ombudsman will be set by the Command in accordance with COMDTINST 1750.4 (series). The Ombudsman program is only as effective as the Command makes it. The time and effort put into selecting and training an Ombudsman will have great benefits for the command, Coast Guard members and family members.

Commandant Admiral Robert Papp has declared 2011 the Year of the Coast Guard Family vowing to improve the quality of life for Coast Guard members and their families. In ALCOAST 073/11 it states: "A viable ombudsman program ensures a critical communication link between the command cadre and unit family members, and provides awareness and accessibility to individual and family supports programs."

Communication is key issue with Coast Guard leadership. Command ombudsmen have the ability to quickly disseminate information to Coast Guard families from local resources to mandatory evacuation during a natural disaster.

Objectives:

- Coast Guard-wide Public Awareness and Marketing of the Ombudsman Program by increasing awareness on the benefits of commands having an ombudsman educate Coast Guard commands on

the importance of the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program and increase family awareness of the Ombudsman Program.

- Create informational brochures and flyers on the CG Ombudsman Program
 - The Ombudsman Program Manager (OPM) and Regional Ombudsman Coordinators (ROCs) will coordinate with key workers to spread ombudsman messages through briefings, initiatives and trainings with commands and family members.
- Revision of the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program instruction. The revision will standardize and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Ombudsman Program.
 - Use information technology to strengthen the Ombudsman Program.
 - Develop an online data base to identify ombudsmen or create excel worksheet with ombudsman contact information.
 - In conjunction with the OSD, determine an existing website (e.g. HOMEFRONTConnections) as the primary template that links all key Internet communication components together. (*Reference: IPT Family Strategic Communication Plan*)

Audiences:

- Coast Guard Members – Active, Reserve and civilian
 - Area and District Commanders
 - Commanders of maintenance and logistics commands
 - Commanding officers of headquarter units
 - Unit commanding officers and Officers-in-Charge
 - Ombudsmen
 - Health, Safety, Work-Life Ombudsmen Staff (OPM, ROCs and Ombudsman Coordinators)
- Coast Guard families – Active and Reserve
 - Spouses
 - Parents
 - Extended families
 - Caregivers

Strategy & Process:

- The Ombudsman Program Manager (OPM) and Regional Ombudsman Coordinators (ROCs) will coordinate with key workers to spread ombudsman messages through briefings, initiatives and trainings with commands and family members.
- The OPM and ROCs will post and update information regarding the Coast Guard Family Ombudsman Program on the HSWL Work-Life web site.
- Create informational brochures and flyers on the CG Ombudsman Program.
- Identify and review leadership courses and work to include updated information on the Coast Guard Ombudsman Program.
- ALCOAST messages.
- Regional Ombudsman Coordinators to provide outreach marketing to units within their area of responsibility on the importance and value of having an ombudsman.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What is the Ombudsman Program?

A1. The Ombudsman Program is a command program, intended to improve communication between the command and the Coast Guard family members. Coast Guard Ombudsmen are communication links, information and referral resources, and advocates for family members.

Q2. What are the functions of an Ombudsman?

A2. An Ombudsman communicates regularly with CG families, provides information and outreach to CG families, provides appropriate referral resources and acts as an advocate for CG families.

Q3. How does someone become an Ombudsman?

A3. Appointed by the commanding officer/officer-in-charge, ombudsmen are volunteers, typically spouses of CG members within the command. Someone can apply for this position when the command advertises for the position. Volunteers are screened, selected, and appointed by the commanding officer/officer-in-charge.

Q4. What training is provided to the Ombudsman?

A4. The ombudsman, with command support, receives Ombudsman Basic Training (OBT). OBT is a standardized course that provides the required knowledge and develops the skills necessary to perform effectively as the command ombudsman. Ombudsmen continue their education by attending ongoing training. These trainings provide in-depth information on a variety of topics such as public speaking, organizing resources, newsletter training and more!

Q5. Is financial support available for an Ombudsman?

A5. The command, based on an authorized budget, can provide reimbursement of personal expenses incurred during performance of ombudsman duties. Reimbursable items can include childcare, mileage, communication equipment (such as a computer, cell phone, and pager), Internet service, telephone lines and travel expenses.

Q6. Who is the Ombudsman's point of contact at the command?

A6. Ombudsmen work for the commanding officer (CO)/officer-in-charge (OIC) at a command. Sometimes, the CO/OIC appoints the command master chief (CMC) or another command designee to be the point of contact (POC) for the ombudsman. Most Cos/OICs will meet with their ombudsman periodically, even if the CMC/designee is the POC.

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