



Ombudsman Process

WHAT IS THE NCCBOR OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM?

The Ombudsman Program in its simplest definition is informal telephone mediation. In some cases, it can address and solve minor complaints from the public. It can also solve inter-REALTOR® conflicts before they become serious problems. Like a mediator, an ombudsman helps parties find solutions, but does not impose solutions.

The New Castle County Board of REALTORS® (NCCBOR) is charged with the responsibility of receiving and resolving ethics complaints and hearing arbitration disputes filed against its members. An Ombudsman can respond to general questions regarding real estate practices, transaction details, ethical practices, and enforcement issues. Ombudsman procedures adopted by NCCBOR are intended to provide enhanced communications and initial problem-solving for the professional standards process.

HOW WILL I KNOW TO ASK FOR AN OMBUDSMAN?

Many complaints do not expressly allege violations of specific articles of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics and may not concern conduct related to the Code. Some complaints involve transactional, technical, and procedural questions, while other complaints are due strictly to lack of communication. All of these types of issues may be appropriate for the Ombudsman program.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH AN OMBUDSMAN?

You can receive non-judgmental real-estate-related information in a timely manner and at no cost.

WHAT THE OMBUDSMEN WILL NOT DO:

- Adjudicate/make the final decision
- Give legal advice
- Determine who is right or wrong
- Disclose communications – the process is CONFIDENTIAL
- Retain any written record of discussions and/or agreements

WHO ARE THE OMBUDSMEN?

REALTORS® appointed to be Ombudsmen must:

- Meet criteria for extensive real estate experience and/or additional qualifications as determined by the NCCBOR Board of Directors
- Submit an Ombudsman Application
- Demonstrate objectivity
- Participate in a training program
- Possess extensive knowledge of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics, license law, and best practices

HOW DOES THE OMBUDSMAN PROCESS WORK?

The NCCBOR Professional Standards Administrator and/or the Chief Executive Officer will assemble information to be sent to the NCCBOR Ombudsman via e-mail. This information may include:

- Name, phone number, and role of the complainant (that is, buyer, seller, broker, etc.)
- Name, phone number, and role of the respondent (that is, broker, principal broker, managing broker, etc.)

The NCCBOR Ombudsman will make all necessary contacts, including to the Brokers related to the transaction, in an attempt to resolve the complaint. If the Ombudsman's efforts are effective, there is no further action necessary. If the efforts are not successful in resolving the complainant's issues, the Ombudsman will advise the complainant about the next step(s) in the complaint process.