



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

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INDEPENDENT

NEUTRAL

INFORMAL

CONFIDENTIAL



RESOLVING WORKPLACE COMPLAINTS

PROGRAM SUMMARY

ETHICAL STANDARDS

FUNCTIONS

SCOPE OF ISSUES

BENEFITS

RESOLVING WORKPLACE COMPLAINTS



ETHICS RESOURCE CENTER*

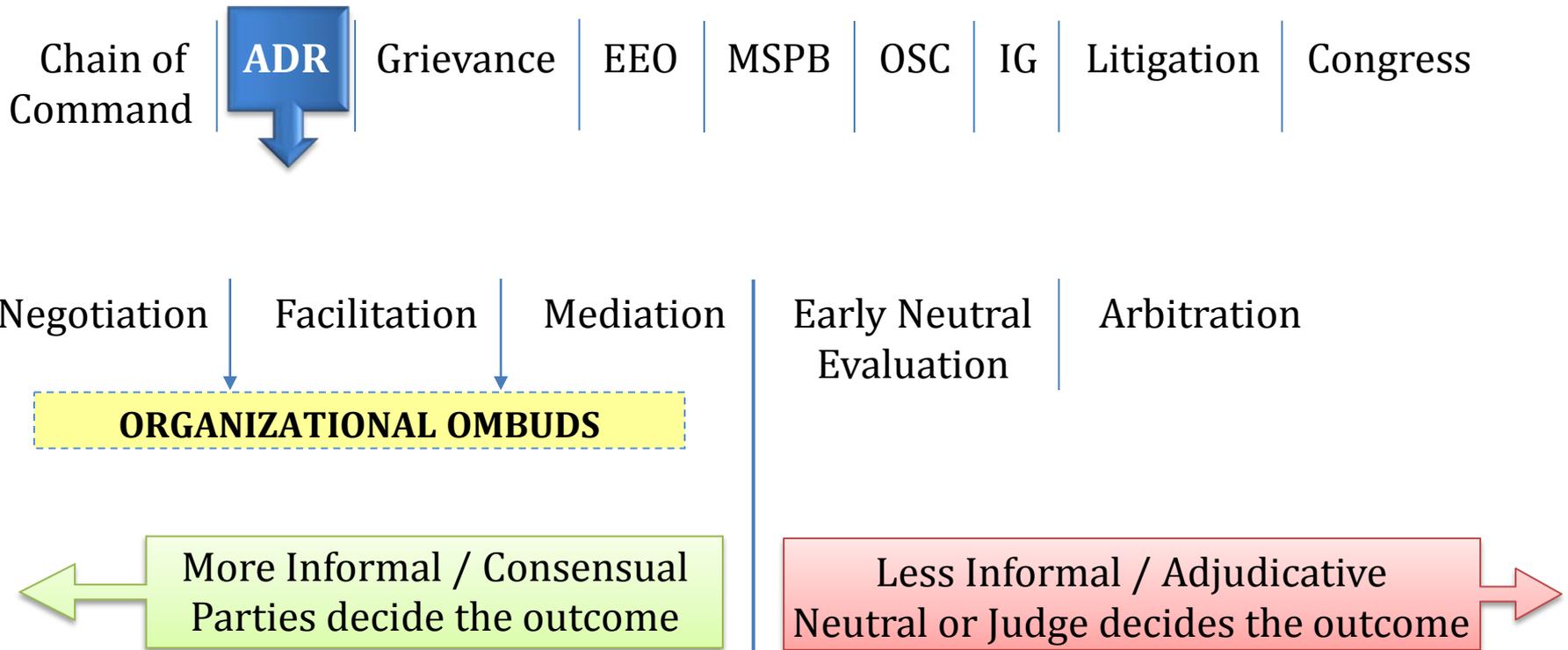
- 50% of employees observed workplace misconduct
- 63% reported it
 - 75% reported to management
 - Only 3% reported misconduct to a hotline
 - Only half of those reporting felt protected from retaliation
 - Fewer felt reporting would help
- Having only one mechanism to report wrongdoing is insufficient
- Having multiple avenues can help foster an ethical culture

* Ethics Resource Center. 2009. National Business Ethics Survey. Available online at www.ethics.org

RESOLVING WORKPLACE COMPLAINTS



DISPUTE RESOLUTION SPECTRUM



RESOLVING WORKPLACE COMPLAINTS



AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION*

- A significant segment of the employee population are not comfortable using hotlines, whistleblower mechanisms and compliance efforts
- Ombuds programs can fill gaps unmet by the other mechanisms as a confidential and anonymous way for employees to seek guidance and help them report their concerns
- The Ombuds office should be a place where someone can ask questions or explore conflict resolution options (to include formal reporting) without running the risk of initiating formal investigations or notifying their bosses and/or colleagues

* American Bar Association. 2010. The Organizational Ombudsman - A Legal Guide / Howard, Charles L.

DoD IG OMBUDS PROGRAM SUMMARY



- **Overview.** On March 1, 2009, the U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) administratively established an organizational Ombuds.
- **Mission.** The Ombuds is an **independent, impartial** resource that provides DoD IG employees worldwide with a safe harbor for **informal** and **confidential** dispute resolution.
- **Vision.** Through employee engagement, the Ombuds strives to promote better communication; foster constructive dialogue; increase collaboration; improve transparency; identify systemic issues; and facilitate equitable outcomes.
- **Metrics.** From March 2009 to March 2011, the DoD IG Ombuds met with **650** staff, who presented **2,300** issues related to the DoD IG mission, organization, strategic matters, policies, and procedures.



Confidentiality

- Communications held in strict confidence
- Identities are not disclosed without explicit permission
- Do not keep records containing identifying information

Independence

- Not officially part of management
- Report directly to the Inspector General
- Access to employees & information needed to perform duties

Neutrality

- Free from bias, conflicts of interest or position
- Do not advocate for employees or management
- Advocate for fairness, equity & positive change



The DoD IG Ombudsman **DOES NOT:**

- Serve as part of any formal grievance or complaint process
- Conduct formal investigations or issue investigative reports
- Serve as a witness or testify in formal proceedings
- Advocate for any individual within the agency
- Accept or provide official notice of an alleged violation
- Arbitrate or make binding decisions
- Make or change policy or administrative decisions
- Compel anyone to act



The DoD IG Ombudsman **DOES:**

- Receive concerns about alleged improprieties and systemic problems
- Help analyze complex and difficult problems
- Explore non-adversarial approaches for resolving concerns
- Serve as a feedback mechanism for organizational climate issues
- Assist customers seek explanation on policies and procedures
- Identify complaint patterns and trends
- Educate
- Issue periodic reports
- Advocate for fairness, equity and positive change



The DoD IG Ombuds provides more than just mediation. It is a comprehensive and flexible resolution option that can provide customized mechanisms with agency-wide impact.

ADDRESS UNDERLYING QUESTIONS

What conditions are causing the conflict?

What conditions are necessary to resolve?

METHODS USED

- Shuttle Diplomacy
- Informal Inquiries
- Upward Feedback
- Conflict Coaching
- Climate Assessments
- Mediation
- Group Facilitation
- Negotiation
- Training



Employees may discuss the full spectrum of workplace concerns without attribution. Some examples include:

- Mission, Strategic, & Organizational Concerns
- Supervisory Relationships
- Career Progression & Development
- Administrative & Customer Service
- Colleague Relationships
- Safety, Health, & Physical Environment
- Values, Ethics, & Standards
- Pay & Benefits
- Policy, Legal, Regulatory, & Financial Compliance



POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL OMBUDS

- Create a secure venue to raise concerns anonymously with “no fear”
- Serve as an “early warning system” for managers and leaders
- Identify imbedded, systemic problems
- Receive and provide real-time feedback
- Propose valuable, Agency-wide enhancements
- Promote efficiency by supporting effective change management
- Provide leadership with a unique enterprise-wide perspective
- Generate practicable, targeted solutions
- Save resources by eliminating unfair processes and improve inefficient business/administrative processes
- Provide a means of internal control – vulnerable areas can be identified anonymously and corrected before material weakness arise
- Enhance transparency and accountability

Questions?

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