



# University Policy

<b>Volume G1:</b> Governance	<b>G1.13</b> <b>University Ombuds</b>	<b>Responsible Office:</b> Office of the President
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## POLICY STATEMENT

Northeastern Illinois University (the “University”) supports the open and respectful expression of ideas and differences in thoughts, experiences, and opinions, as well as the community value of providing a place that is characterized by civility, fostering humanity and engagement, and creating a sense of community through inclusion, mutual respect, and empowerment. To that end, the University established the Ombuds Office as a confidential, informal, impartial, and independent resource for students, faculty, and staff who have a workplace concern, issue, or conflict.

## PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to define the standards of practice, privileges, responsibilities, and limitations on the authority of the Ombuds and the Ombuds Office.

## WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

Northeastern Illinois University students, faculty, and staff.

## DEFINITIONS

**Confidential:** not disclosed to others within or outside of the University, except when there is imminent risk of serious harm to a person or property or is compelled by a court.

**Confidential Information:** detailed information related to the situation about which a visitor wishes to speak to the Ombuds office.

**Formal Process:** a process established by the University, and state and federal law to address a variety of issues. Examples include (but are not limited to) compliance, complaint and grievance, discipline, equal opportunity (including complaints of harassment or discrimination), and reporting of fraud, waste, and abuse.

**Independent:** not subject to another’s authority or jurisdiction; autonomous; separate and apart from academic and administrative units, and outside any formal process.

**Informal:** outside any formal process.

**Neutral/Impartial:** not aligned with or supporting any side in a controversy.

**Ombuds:** a designated impartial person who informally and confidentially assists people in dealing with workplace concerns or issues.

**Visitor:** anyone who contacts the Ombuds seeking assistance with a workplace concern.

The Ombuds Office is a confidential, informal, impartial, and independent resource for Northeastern students, faculty, and staff who want to discuss and/or address a concern, issue, or conflict. The Ombuds can help individuals and groups address workplace issues, conflict, academic concerns, policy questions,



and more. The Ombuds Office can be used as a first step, last resort, or at any point along the way. As a designated impartial party, the Ombuds is not an advocate for any individual or for the University, but rather acts as an advocate for fairness and healthy campus conflict resolution. In order to encourage healthy conflict resolution, the Ombuds may conduct trainings related to conflict management for the University and work with University stakeholders to identify, raise, and help address ongoing or widespread institutional concerns that may produce or exacerbate conflict, and may threaten institutional values, health, and functioning.

### **Principles of Practice**

The Ombuds Office follows the standards of practice and ethical principles set forth by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) as articulated in the IOA Standards of Practice and the IOA Code of Ethics. These tenets require that the Ombuds function independently of their organization, be confidential and neutral, and limit the scope of their services to informal means of dispute resolution. The Ombuds will be a member of IOA and will keep up-to-date with professional developments by participating in Ombuds continuing education and conferences. The Ombuds will establish consistent policies and practices for the Ombuds Office that will be made available upon request. The Ombuds will also publicize the confidential, informal, neutral, and independent nature of the Ombuds services, and explain these ethical standards to each visitor.

The Ombuds Office adheres to the four standards of Confidentiality, Informality, Neutrality/Impartiality, and Independence.

#### **1. Confidentiality**

The Ombuds asserts that the Ombuds holds a privilege of confidentiality with respect to the identity of visitors and their issues. The Ombuds will not confirm or deny communicating with any party, the identity of any visitor, or the substance of confidential communications without both the visitor's express permission and the Ombuds' agreement that such disclosure is an appropriate option.

Moreover, even with permission of the visitor, the Ombuds will not willingly disclose documentsCID 1057(I)-4(, 0 0 1 492.2





The Ombuds and the Ombuds Office are not authorized to accept notice of discrimination or report of crimes, including allegations that may be perceived to be violations of laws, regulations, or policies, including but not limited to sexual harassment, discrimination, issues covered by whistleblower policies or laws, or incidents subject to reporting under the Clery Act. The Ombuds and the Ombuds Office have no authority to take action to redress prohibited discrimination, or any



Meetings with the Ombuds are by appointment only and can take place in the Ombuds Office, at any of the University's locations