

## WHEN SHOULD YOU CONTACT THE SPECIAL EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN?

- You are facing a problem you have been unable to resolve by speaking to your child's teacher, case manager, school principal, and/or the Director of Special Education in your local school division.
- Your requests for information, assistance, or resources have gone unanswered.
- Collaborative communication between you and school personnel has broken down.
- You do not know where else to go for help.
- You are having trouble finding the information that you need.

## THE SPECIAL EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN WILL:

- Respond to concerns in a timely manner, generally no more than the next business day.
- Serve as a confidential and neutral fact finder to assist you in problem solving.
- Listen carefully to your concerns and questions to assist in identifying and clarifying the issues.
- Assist you in navigating the special education process.
- With your permission, reach out directly to your school's special education director to discuss your issues and concerns to facilitate ready resolution.
- Provide you with access to specific information and make referrals to other sources of information as deemed appropriate.
- Follow up with you, when appropriate, to determine if resolution has occurred and, if not, determine if there is a need for further assistance and contact by the Ombudsman or other VDOE staff with the school's special education director.

## HOW DOES THE OMBUDSMAN FACILITATE RESOLUTION?

- Initial Contact: Constituent description of the issue via telephone call or email that may lead to immediate resolution or provision of guidance on how to proceed to facilitate resolution.
- Consultation: Active listening, issues identification and/or clarification, options exploration that may lead to resolution or warrant intervention by ombudsman with school personnel.
- Intervention: Reach out to school staff to discuss issue and offer technical assistance and/or guidance that might lead to resolution.
- Referral: Provide information on resources that may assist you in gaining knowledge of tools and strategies necessary to advocate for your child's educational needs.
- Formal Resolution: As deemed appropriate, provide information on the dispute resolution options of mediation, state complaints, or due process hearings.

## THE SPECIAL EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN DOES NOT:

- Provide legal advice or legal services.
- Attend meetings on behalf of or with the family, but can refer you to those who may.
- Take personnel actions against school staff.

Adapted from: Washington State Office of the Educational Ombudsman (2011), Ombudsman Resource Manual

### Parent Ombudsman

Toll Free: (800) 422-2083

Email: [SpecialEducationOmbudsman@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:SpecialEducationOmbudsman@doe.virginia.gov)