

The Minnesota Office of the Ombuds for Corrections (OBFC) was created “to promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice in the administration of corrections.” MN Statute 241.90-95

The Office of the Ombuds for Corrections (OBFC) is a neutral and independent investigator of complaints regarding Minnesota corrections agency actions and policies. It is a separate agency that acts independently from the Department of Corrections and reports directly to the Governor.

What the OBFC Can Do

- **Receive, Investigate and Resolve Complaints:** Provides an impartial and unbiased process for incarcerated individuals, staff, and community to share concerns about corrections agency actions and policies and have them investigated.
- **Recommend and Report:** Investigations can lead to recommendations for resolving complaints and improving policies to corrections agency staff and leadership; and to public reports, findings, and statutory change recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.
- **Provide Information:** The OBFC provides education and information to help people navigate the corrections system.

Complaint Information

- **Grievance/Administrative Process Required:** To support a fair and effective agency process, the OBFC requires, in almost all cases, that the agency grievance process or other administrative remedies are sought before a complaint will be accepted.
- **Consent:** The OBFC will not accept a complaint on behalf of another individual without their consent, absent compelling reasons for doing so.
- **Data Practices:** Information received from a complainant is private data under M.S. 13.856, except for name, location, and identification number (if applicable).
- **Interference and Retaliation:** Staff must not prevent or discourage the filing of complaints. Retaliation for making complaints is illegal.
- **Special Mail:** Correspondence to and from the Office of the Ombuds must be delivered unopened.
- **To File a Complaint:** Those in DOC facilities should use the OBFC complaint form available at facility libraries, all others can go to the OBFC web site at mn.gov/obfc/ or if unable to access web, call 651-539-4520.

Other Important Things to Know

- **Authority:** The OBFC cannot force a corrections agency to take any action or discipline anyone.
- **Local Facilities:** Jail or other local adult or juvenile correctional facility grievance/administrative process should be exhausted first, then complaints can be made to the Department of Corrections Inspection and Enforcement unit, info at mn.gov/doc/staff-partners/licensing/inspection-enforcement/. The OBFC may investigate issues the DOC does not.

Ombuds for Corrections Goals

- **Provide Oversight:** Minnesota's correctional facilities confine tens of thousands of people and place staff in often difficult work environments, with restricted public access and minimal outside oversight.
- **Promote Efficiency and Justice:** The Ombuds examines existing policies and procedures, identifies opportunities for raising overall standards, makes recommendations, and produces reports in order to promote efficiency, justice, and fairness.
- **Increase Health and Safety** for incarcerated individuals, staff, and community by:
 - **Increasing Health and Safety**—Ensuring effective correctional programs, policies, and practices which create a safer and healthier environment for incarcerated individuals and staff.
 - **Providing an Outlet**—Providing a productive option for incarcerated individuals frustrated by circumstances that might otherwise lead to harmful conflict.
 - **Increasing Community Safety**—Ensuring the rights of those who are incarcerated are protected and that correctional services promote rehabilitation which reduces recidivism, improves lives, and promotes overall community safety.
- **Promote Equity:** People of color are disproportionately represented in prisons and jails. BIPOC people represent over 55% of the male and 44% of the female prison population. Addressing both individual and systemic issues advances equity and provides for greater accountability and greater transparency in addressing inequitable systems within and outside of corrections.

Office of the Ombuds for Corrections

mn.gov/obfc/

651-539-4520

Office of the Ombuds for Corrections

540 Fairview Ave N, Suite 202

St. Paul, MN 55104

Promoting the Highest Standards of Justice