

What is the Thurston/Mason Behavioral Health Ombuds Service?

The State of Washington has established an independent Ombuds service to receive inquiries, comments, concerns, and grievances from mental health and substance use disorder clients whose services are paid for by Medicaid. Contact can be initiated by clients, their family members or other interested parties. The Ombuds will determine how to proceed with an issue based on Washington State and Federal laws.

What is the purpose of this service?

The service is designed to resolve issues quickly, impartially and in the best possible way. The Ombuds receives information concerning the quality of service and client satisfaction and assists in resolving issues confidentially. The Ombuds' primary goal is to help clients and providers work together to ensure dignified, timely and quality service and to assure that client rights are protected.

Who can use this Service?

Residents of Thurston and Mason Counties who are eligible to receive or are receiving Medicaid funded mental health and/or substance use disorder services may use the Ombuds service.

What the Ombuds CAN do

- **Listen** to your problem.
- **Address** all issues in a way consistent with Washington State and Federal Laws.
- **Analyze** what is involved and help you determine an appropriate solution.
- **Assure that your concerns are heard** in the way in which you want them heard, clearly and without judgment.
- **Explain and investigate** facts, laws, policies and procedures.
- **Advocate** for your behavioral health treatment choices and rights.
- **Mediate** to resolve the problem consistent with Washington State law.
- **Assist** in resolution of a grievance on behalf of a behavioral health services consumer and the Thurston Mason BHO until the matter is resolved.
- **Assist public behavioral health consumers** in addressing a denial, termination, suspension or reduction of services through the grievance or appeal process.
- **Assist family** and community members in addressing issues with publically funded behavioral health services.
- **Assist with Administrative Hearings**
- **Provide information** and referral on resources and your rights.
- **Remain in contact** with you to see that you are kept informed until the issue or grievance is resolved.
- **Recommend changes** to correct a problem or prevent future occurrences.
- **Maintain your confidentiality.**

What the Ombuds CANNOT do

The Ombuds cannot:

- Provide counseling, substance use disorder treatment, or other therapeutic services.
- Insist that a TMBHO funded provider provide case management or other services, if not deemed medically necessary by a TMBHO provider agency.
- Provide case management services directly. However, Ombuds **CAN** assist in providing information and referral or assist with a grievance that may help a consumer get his or her case management needs met.
- Use your name without consent.
- Provide medical opinion and/or make a recommendation for a particular medication. However, the Ombuds **CAN** assist you in the request for a second opinion.
- Enforce a recommendation or ensure any specific outcome. However, the Ombuds **CAN** make a recommendation to a TMBHO provider agency or the TMBHO directly.
- Give legal advice or act as your attorney.

What is an Ombuds?

An Ombuds provides information and referral and assists in resolving issues with your Medicaid funded TMBHO mental health or substance use disorder provider, as well as with the TMBHO itself. The Ombuds can also assist with preparing a Mental Health Advance Directive.

What is a Mental Health Advance Directive?

A Mental Health Advance Directive is a binding legal document that allows you to make decisions and express your wishes about your mental health treatment in advance, including medications, short term admission to inpatient treatment and other issues. It also provides an opportunity, if you choose, to appoint an 'agent' to make treatment decisions for you and specifies which decisions and in what way.

What is involved in preparing a Mental Health Advance Directive?

An Ombuds will assist with preparing this document with anyone that is a mental health consumer receiving services through a TMBHO provider agency presently or in the past. You will meet with the Ombuds for approximately two hours and complete the documents. The Ombuds will then make copies and get the documents to you in their finalized form.

The Ombuds is functionally independent from the TMBHO or any of its provider agencies. However, the Ombuds functions under the geographic jurisdiction of the Thurston Mason Behavioral Health Organization (TMBHO) and performs duties in accordance with State law.

The TMBHO is responsible for providing the Medicaid behavioral health funding and contracts with behavioral health provider agencies. These provider agencies are contracted with the TMBHO to provide medically necessary mental health and substance use disorder services for consumers enrolled in the Medicaid system.

TMBHO is a division of the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department.

How can you contact the Behavioral Health Ombuds?

Office: (360) 867-2556
Cell: (360) 280-7656
Toll free: (800) 658-4105
Address: Thurston-Mason
Behavioral Health Organization
412 Lilly Road
Olympia, WA 98506
E-mail: ombuds@co.thurston.wa.us

When a person receives a Medicaid behavioral health benefit, the person will receive a Medicaid Benefits Handbook from DSHS.

The Benefits Handbook has a list of individual client rights. These rights can also be found under WAC 388.877.

THURSTON / MASON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OMBUDS

A Behavioral Health Ombuds is available to assist clients of Medicaid funded Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder services in Thurston

and Mason Counties to:

- **Resolve concerns and grievances**
- **Provide information and referral**
- **Assist with Mental Health Advance Directives**
- **Assist with Appeal and Administrative Hearings pertaining to their Behavioral Health Services**

--quickly

--confidentially

--free of charge



