

Ombudsman Program Information

What is an Ombudsman? GCAAR's ombudsmen can help parties find solutions to their ethics issues through informal telephone mediation. Like GCAAR's mediation program for arbitration requests, the communications and solutions proposed by an ombudsman can address and solve minor complaints from the public or inter-REALTOR® ethical conflicts.

What can an Ombudsman help me with? An Ombudsman can respond to general questions regarding real estate practices, transaction details, ethical practices, procedural questions, and communication and enforcement issues.

Why should I use the Ombudsman Program instead of filing an Ethics Complaint?

- 1) You can receive non-judgmental real estate related information in a timely manner.
- 2) There is no cost to using the service.
- 3) Many complaints do not expressly allege violations of specific articles of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics and may not concern conduct related to the Code, a necessary requirement for filing an Ethics Complaint.
- 4) If the issue is not resolved through an ombudsman you can still file an Ethics Complaint if you meet the time limitation requirements.*

**TIME LIMITATION – An Ethics Complaint must be filed within one hundred eighty (180) days after the facts constituting the matter could have been known in the exercise of reasonable diligence or within one hundred eighty (180) days after the conclusion of the transaction, if any, or event, whichever is later.*

The Ombudsman will NOT:

- Adjudicate/make the final decision
- Give legal advice
- Determine who is right or wrong
- Disclose your communications – Process is CONFIDENTIAL
- Make any written record of discussions and/or agreement

Who are the Ombudsmen?

REALTORS® appointed to be Ombudsmen must:

- Meet criteria for extensive real estate experience and/or additional qualifications as determined by the GCAAR Board of Directors
- Demonstrate objectivity
- Participate in a training program
- Possess extensive knowledge of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics, state license law and best practices

How does the process work?

- 1) Complete the Ombudsman Intake Form and submit
- 2) A GCAAR staff representative will forward your form to an available ombudsman
- 3) The GCAAR Ombudsman will make all necessary contacts in an attempt to resolve the complaint.

If the Ombudsman's efforts are effective, there is no further action necessary. If the efforts are not successful in resolving your issues, the Ombudsman will advise you about the next step(s) in the complaint process.

For additional assistance, please contact Yvette Robinson, Professional Standards Manager at yrobinson@gcaar.com