

Introduction to the DD Ombuds



In 2015 people found out a person, Laura, who was receiving services was being abused and neglected by her caregiver. The caregiver was paid by the state.

Laura's DDA Case Manager wasn't checking on her to make sure she was okay

Washington legislature passed "Laura's Law"

Laura's Law created...

Enhanced Case
Management in DDA

Office of
Developmental Disabilities Ombuds



King5, Susanna Frame, 2016

DD Ombuds created in 2016

[RCW 43.382](#)

Private, non-profit contracting with the WA State Department of Commerce

Independent of the service system

Provide DD Ombuds services statewide

Exercise independence and authority

Protect confidentiality

Powers and Duties of DD Ombuds

- Provide information on rights and responsibilities
- Investigate complaints
- Address complaints and resolve issues at the lowest level possible
- Monitor service delivery
- Review state institutions, state-licensed facilities, and residences
- Report on services to people with developmental disabilities
- Publish reports on systemic issues to policy makers
- Make recommendations for changes in policy and procedures.

WHO DO WE HELP?

- Children and adults with a developmental disability
- Living anywhere in Washington, but especially...
 - Own home
 - Supported-living
 - Assisted-living
 - Adult Family Home
 - State institutions
 - Stuck in the Hospital



HOW DO WE HELP?

- For individuals with developmental disabilities:
 - Protect ability to make your own choices
 - Take direction from the disabled person
 - Low level solutions and work up to solve the issues
 - Advocate with you and help you advocate for yourself
- At the systems levels:
 - Recognize trends
 - Regular meetings with state agencies to address issues
 - Write reports with recommendations and advocate for those changes

HOW DO PEOPLE CONTACT US?

- We go out and visit people – some people do not have internet or phone access.
- People call or email or fill our on-line Complaint form.
- We get referrals from family members, case managers, service providers.
- Priorities – situations where there may be abuse or neglect, people who do not have family or an advocate, people in a restrictive settings, people at risk of losing services.

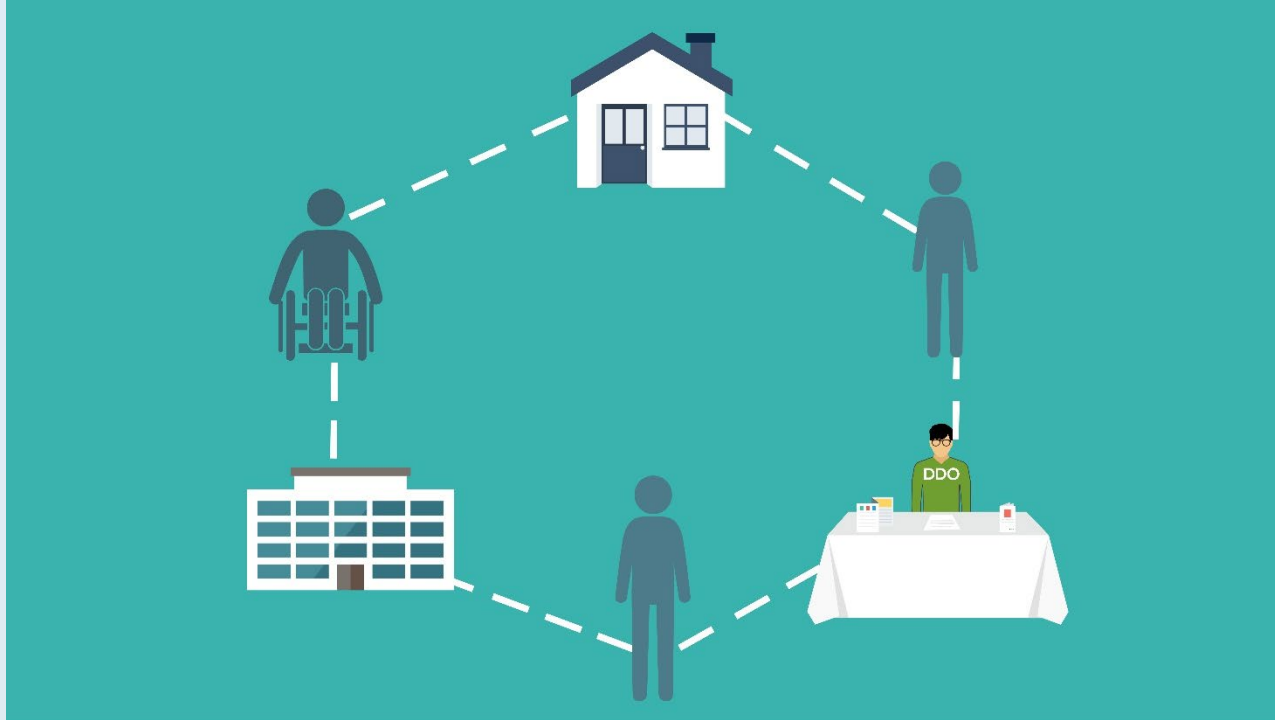
COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

- We work with individuals w/developmental disabilities, families, or legal representatives to try and resolve complaints about services. Some are pretty simple...
- **Example**
 - Sarah applied for DDA-services for her 8-year-old-daughter
 - Sarah was told by her daughter's Case Resource Manager (CRM) that they would schedule a "Functional Assessment" in two weeks
 - It has been two months and Sarah hasn't heard from her CRM
 - Sarah contacts the DD Ombuds and submits a complaint
 - The DD Ombuds call the CRM's Supervisor and ask for a Functional Assessment to be scheduled. There had been a change in case manager.
 - Sarah get a Functional Assessment scheduled for her daughter and is closer to getting services.

Examples of issues worked on with individuals

- Accessing DDA Services
- Navigating complex systems (Interplay of DDA, Foster Care, Apple Health, Behavioral Health, etc.)
- Improving Abuse and Neglect response
- Confidentiality
- Respect and dignity
- Discharge/Transitions including Stuck in the Hospital
- Restrictions of rights including Community Protection Program
- Reforms in the Positive Behavioral Support services.

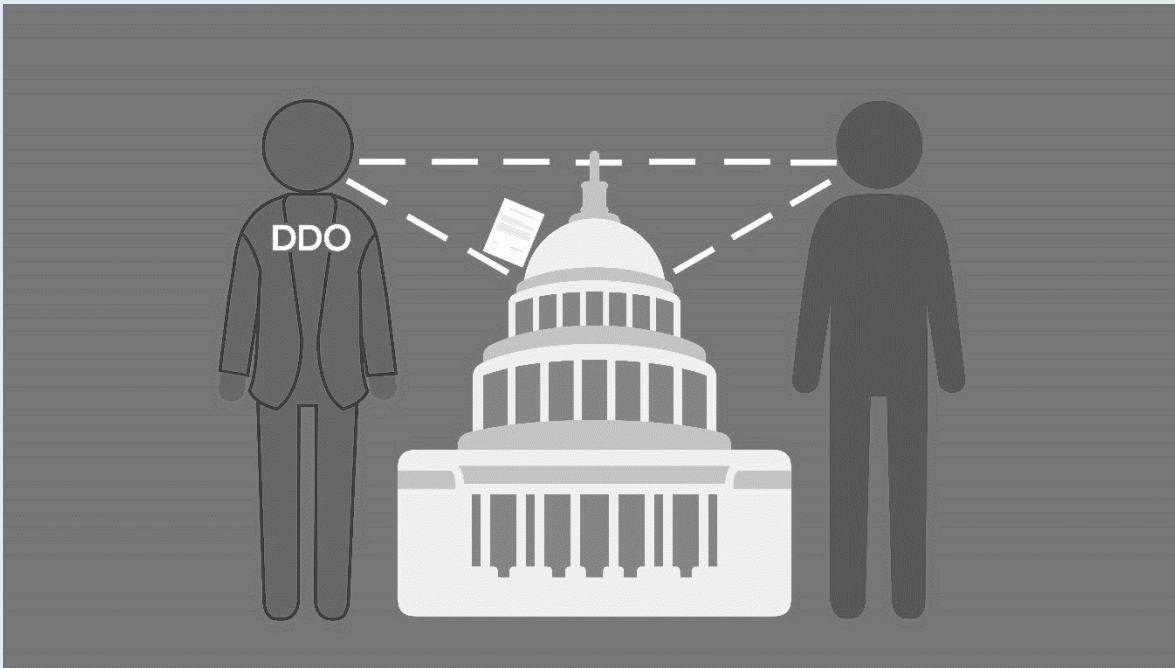
MONITORING



We visit places where people get services

- Example:
 - DD Ombuds visits a home where several people are receiving supported living services.
 - One of the people living there tells the DD Ombud they have been waiting to move closer to their family.
 - DD Ombuds helped explain the way to ask for a new provider in a new location and helped the person talk with their case manager.
 - The person didn't know they can include their own information in the referral. DD Ombuds made sure the process was in place and the person was able to move close to family.

IMPROVING SYSTEMS



Recommendations to service providers, the State, and the Legislature on how to improve services

- **Reports:**

- *Stuck in the Hospital* (2018)
- *Improving Services for Youth with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities in Foster Care* (2019)
- *No Way Out: An Introduction to the Community Protection Program* (2021)
- *“I Want to Go Home” Reevaluating DDA’s Children’s Services to Prevent Hospitalization and Out-of-State Placement* (2022)
- *60 Voices of People in the Community Protection Program* (2023)
- *Investigating the Lake Burien Youth Transitional Care Facility* (2026)

The DD Ombuds

- Staff in Spokane, Tacoma and Seattle
 - Betty Schwieterman - DD Ombuds Director
 - DD Ombuds Deputy Director and Region 3 DD Ombuds – Noah Seidel
 - Region 1 DD Ombuds and Staff Attorney – Lisa Robbe
 - Region 2 DD Ombuds – Leigh Walters
 - Self-Advocacy Educator - Tim McCue
 - Office Assistant - Trang Le
- Funding
 - Current contract amount is \$1,279,650. Recent increase in funding to expand services in SFY 2027.



Office of
**Developmental
Disabilities
Ombuds**

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