

IOA Certification Program-Certified Organizational Ombuds: Application Case Scenarios

Part of your application involves responding to two case scenarios. You will be asked to address one case scenario involving a visitor, and one case scenario involving the organization. You may select the case scenario you would like to respond to from each category as long as you answer one from each category.

You may provide a written response or you may upload a video response.

While these are hypothetical scenarios, you are free to answer hypothetical or answer through the lens of how you would handle it in your own organization.

I. Case Scenarios -Visitors

1. Mark, a manager in the communication and marketing department, came to see you, the ombuds. He came to see you to get your help preparing for a performance evaluation meeting with Lucas, an employee. Lucas is a copyeditor who Mark supervises. Mark says that Lucas does good work but has consistent challenges showing up to work on time. It just seems like if Lucas would put in a little more effort, he should be able to get to work on time. Mark says that Lucas has mentioned that he has trouble with keeping track of time, and it has to do with his ADHD. Mark says that he has already been more than considerate to Lucas, and Lucas just needs to get his act together or else it is not fair to others. Mark is also worried about what his boss would think of him if he cannot get Lucas to show up to work on time. Mark says that the problem must be documented at this point in Lucas' performance evaluation. Mark wants your help to make sure he does not say anything during the meeting he may regret later.
2. In your role as Ombuds, you meet with a staff member who, under the condition of absolute confidentiality, shares concerns about the actions of their manager. After carefully listening and reviewing the information provided, you assess that the situation may pose a significant risk to the organization if left unaddressed. You strongly believe the matter warrants attention from senior leadership—specifically, the manager's supervisor—so they can consider appropriate vigilance, intervention, or preventive measures. You consider raising the issue without disclosing the identity of the staff member or the specific details shared during the conversation. However, you are also aware that due to factors such as the size of the team, the nature of the complaint, past interactions, and the broader organizational culture, there is a real risk that the individual's identity may be inferred or suspected.

3. Maria has been with the organization for 15 years. She began her career in an administrative role at a busy field office and has since been promoted to a more senior administrative position, leading a team for the past five years. Maria is well-regarded by her colleagues and has consistently received strong performance reviews. In a meeting with the Ombuds, Maria shares that she recently applied for a professional-level position. Over the past two years, she has taken on stretch assignments aligned with this role and believes she has performed well. She felt confident about her interview and believes she meets—or exceeds—all the stated requirements for the position. Despite this, she was not selected as a finalist. Instead, two external candidates—both male, with less experience and the same nationality as the hiring manager—were shortlisted. Maria expresses concern about potential gender and racial discrimination. She notes that the hiring manager has a reputation for favoring male staff and showing a lack of trust and respect for local employees.

II. Case Scenarios - Organizational

1. Due to a leadership change within your organization, you will have a new administrative supervisor. The position holder, not the reporting line has changed. They will be coming to you from outside of the organization. Please share your thoughts and preparations for your first one-to-one.
2. The organization hired a new EEO director who has never worked with an organizational ombuds and is concerned about confidentiality. Someone from the EEO office has asked to meet with you for information on a case they have. They have also shared that your visitor has permitted them to hear the confidential information shared when you met with them. How would you navigate this situation?
3. Your organization has an ADR Advisor Department in addition to an Ombuds office and the ADR office is the specified informal step to several formal processes. The new director of the ADR office feels the Ombuds office is redundant and only pulls resources away from it. How do you navigate?