

WHAT IS AN OMBUDSMAN?

In 1986 the Coast Guard formally instituted an Ombudsman Program to provide a link between the command and families. Morale and mission performance of Coast Guard personnel are closely related to the health and well-being of their families. It is important that members and their families be provided with information and assistance to minimize the disruptions of deployment and moving. The Ombudsman Program can help ease the sacrifices families must make which allow personnel to carry out Coast Guard missions. Finally the Ombudsman Program provides an opportunity for the Coast Guard to tap one of our greatest resources: the strength, courage, and deep concern for others held by Coast Guard spouses.

An Ombudsman is a volunteer spouse designated by and responsible to the command. The Ombudsman assists families by providing information about sources of assistance available to them, informing them about Coast Guard and command policies, and providing information about activities of interest. The Ombudsman also serves as an advisor to the commanding officer -- someone who can keep up with the concerns of families. The Ombudsman will also forward ideas from the families to the appropriate CG command office. For those seeking guidance about particular problems, the Ombudsman attempts to find the best resources possible to assist the individual or the family.

WHAT CAN AN OMBUDSMAN DO?

- An Ombudsman is a liaison between the families and the Command.
- An Ombudsman can direct a grievance or a suggestion to the proper departments.
- An Ombudsman can familiarize you with a variety of organizations.
- When a crisis arises at home, an Ombudsman can refer you to the best possible place for direct help, or professional guidance.
- An Ombudsman is a source of information and outreach.
- An Ombudsman can pass along important information pertaining to military families.
- An Ombudsman can keep you abreast of ship's movements.

WHAT IS NOT WITHIN THE ROLE OF AN OMBUDSMAN?

- An Ombudsman can not address military problems between the member and the Command.
- An Ombudsman is not a substitute for professional counselors.
- An Ombudsman is not a convenience babysitter.
- An Ombudsman does not run a community taxi service.
- An Ombudsman is not a financial institution.
- An Ombudsman is not all-powerful. They are military spouses, volunteering their time and effort for the benefit of everyone in the Coast Guard family.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOURSELF?

- Find out who your Ombudsman is.

- Contact your Ombudsman in time of need.
- Get on the phone tree and or e-mail list.
- Make sure that the Command and your Ombudsman have your correct mailing address and phone number, so you will receive newsletters, etc.