

Great Rivers Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization

Policy Title:	Ombuds Services	Policy No. 7001.01
Category:	Quality Management	Date Approved: 2/14/2020 Date Revised: 06/11/2021 Date Reviewed: 5/5/2021
Reference:	Washington Administrative Code 182-538C-040 Health Care Authority (HCA) Contract with Great Rivers Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 71.24	

POLICY:

- 1.1. Great Rivers Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization (Great Rivers BH-ASO) provides unencumbered access to and maintains the independence of the behavioral health Ombuds Service. The Ombuds Service is independent of Washington Apple Health Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), Great Rivers BH-ASO, and contracted behavioral health service providers, which includes independent decision making to include all activities, findings, recommendations, and reports.
- 1.2. Great Rivers BH-ASO will ensure in its contracting for Ombuds services there is a separation of personnel functions (e.g., hiring, salary and benefits determination, supervision, accountability, and performance evaluations).
- 1.3. The regional behavioral health Ombuds shall have lived experience as described in Chapter 71.24 RCW. Great Rivers BH-ASO ensures the Ombuds Service is comprised of individuals who are receiving or have received services in the behavioral health system, or their family members.
- 1.4. The Ombuds Service assists individuals who have or who are receiving Washington Apple Health Managed Care Organization (Medicaid) or Great Rivers BH-ASO funded behavioral health services, or their family members. The Ombuds Service receives, investigates, advocates for, and assists eligible individuals with the resolution of grievances, the appeal process when applicable, and, if necessary, the administrative fair hearing process. Ombuds Services may involve other persons at the individual's request.
- 1.5. Great Rivers BH-ASO ensures the Ombuds services are made available to those who are eligible to receive Medicaid or Great Rivers BH-ASO funded behavioral health services and are trying to access them.
- 1.6. Great Rivers BH-ASO and its network providers and BHAs shall provide information about the Ombuds Service to eligible individuals and family members or support persons. Great Rivers BH-ASO and its network of providers and BHAs will allow Ombuds to perform its duties and responsibilities effectively and without restriction. Great Rivers BH-ASO and its provider network will not obstruct or otherwise hinder the ability of the Ombuds to assist and advocate for individuals,

- designated family members, or other interested persons if the Ombuds Service is within its scope of work.
- 1.7. Information about the Ombuds Service will be posted in a public place at Great Rivers BH-ASO and at each network provider and BHA contracted with Great Rivers BH-ASO. Information about the Ombuds Service will be provided at intake or at any time the information would benefit an individual, enrolled or seeking enrollment, an identified family member, or their designated representative.
 - 1.8. The Ombuds information about its services, such as brochures and posters, will be made available in the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) required language(s).
 - 1.9. Great Rivers BH-ASO will ensure information about the Ombuds Services and the grievance process are distributed to all network providers and their subcontractors.
 - 1.10. Great Rivers BH-ASO will ensure Ombuds can perform their duties free of retaliation and demonstrate effective intervention on behalf of Ombuds should retaliation issues arise.
 - 1.11. Great Rivers BH-ASO will ensure Ombuds have access to Great Rivers BH-ASO personnel and have the authority to enter a Great Rivers BH-ASO's facility for the purposes of outreach, fact-finding, assessing systemic service issues, and to resolve individual grievances or systemic issues related to the contracted services, provided that reasonable time, notice, and confidentiality requirements are met.

DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. "Individual" means any person who is currently enrolled in Medicaid or Great Rivers BH-ASO funded behavioral health services, has been enrolled in services, or is eligible to be enrolled in Medicaid or Great Rivers BH-ASO funded behavioral health services. For Individuals age thirteen (13), this also includes their legal representatives such as guardian, power of attorney, or designated family members.
- 2.2. The Ombuds Service is a Great Rivers BH-ASO service to assist Individuals as defined above with the grievance, appeal, or administrative hearing process. The service may also assist individuals in understanding behavioral health services, how to complete forms such as mental health advance directives, or other Ombuds-related services.

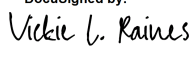
PROCEDURE

- 3.1. Great Rivers BH-ASO and its provider network will provide unencumbered access to the Ombuds Services for individuals, family members, other interested party grievances, and those trying to access Medicaid or Great Rivers BH-ASO-funded services.
 - 3.1.1. The Great Rivers BH-ASO Ombuds are responsive to the age and demographic character of the region.
 - 3.1.2. Ombuds advocate for and assist individuals with resolving issues, grievances, and appeals at the lowest possible level.
 - 3.1.3. The Ombuds will initiate outreach and assist with resolving grievances provided that reasonable time, notice, and confidentiality requirements are met. This includes being available to advocate and support people through the grievance, appeal, and administrative hearing process and involving others at the

- person's request. Ombuds will support individuals in the pursuit of a formal resolution.
- 3.1.4. The Ombuds will be accessible via a toll-free independent phone number.
- 3.2. Great Rivers BH-ASO's Ombuds Service will:
- 3.2.1. Collaborate and coordinate with allied systems to improve the effectiveness of advocacy and to reduce duplication of effort for shared individuals;
 - 3.2.2. Provide information on grievances to HCA, Managed Care Organizations, and the Great Rivers BH-ASO Quality Management Committee to help inform quality improvement initiatives;
 - 3.2.3. Maintain documentation of each grievance including all contact logs and correspondence as appropriate;
 - 3.2.4. Assure response in a timely manner when requested to assist with grievances at any point in the grievance process;
 - 3.2.5. Report any barriers perceived by clients, family members, or stakeholders to Great Rivers BH-ASO Quality Management Manager, Great Rivers BH-ASO Advisory Board, and/or Great Rivers BH-ASO Governing Board. Reports will be provided to MCOs when related to MCO members;
 - 3.2.6. Receive training and adhere to confidentiality standards consistent with current state (Chapters 71.05, 71.2, and 70.02 RCW) and federal regulations;
 - 3.2.7. Involve other persons at the individual's request;
 - 3.2.8. Submit reports, information, recommendations regarding complaints and grievances, and/or other information as requested to HCA and Great Rivers BH-ASO in the prescribed format and within the timelines specified. Ombuds may also provide reports to the advisory board, local and consumer advocacy groups, and the provider network;
 - 3.2.9. Be independent decision making to include all activities, findings, recommendations, and reports; and
 - 3.2.10. Prepare reports and formalize recommendations at least biannually to the Community Behavioral Health Advisory Board.
- 3.3. Great Rivers BH-ASO'S provider network will collaborate with Ombuds and ensure that staff understands the Ombuds Service and its role. The provider will:
- 3.3.1. Ensure timely access to service site(s), BHA personnel, and records relating to the individual with appropriate releases, so that the Ombuds can reach out to individuals, and provide assistance with the grievance process.
 - 3.3.2. Ensure current Ombuds Service materials are available and posted in a conspicuous place so that individuals and family members have access at every service location without special request;
 - 3.3.3. Assist in problem resolution and employ best efforts to resolve concerns, and grievances at the lowest possible level;
 - 3.3.4. Make every effort to ensure no discriminatory, disciplinary, or retaliatory actions are taken against a provider or individual for any

- communications made or information given or disclosed to aid the Ombuds Service in completing its duties and responsibilities; and
 - 3.3.5. Ensure all employees receive initial and ongoing training as needed regarding the Ombuds Service. Great Rivers BH-ASO'S provider network will provide access to any Ombuds Service training, if requested, so that eligible individuals and their families are provided the opportunity to understand the right to file a grievance and the process to do so.
- 3.4. Ombuds Training
 - 3.4.1. Ombuds will facilitate training regarding Ombuds Services for new and existing network providers, the system of care, allied systems as appropriate, individuals and families, and others by request.
 - 3.4.2. Ombuds will participate in trainings sponsored by the State and Great Rivers BH-ASO in the areas of confidentiality standards, conflict resolution, and grievances.
- 3.5. Monitoring
 - 3.5.1. Great Rivers BH-ASO CED or delegated staff will monitor the Ombuds Statement of Work as a part of contract monitoring activities. Great Rivers BH-ASO will review data on a quarterly basis with each Ombuds and complete the Ombuds Monitoring Tool. Great Rivers BH-ASO's Chief Executive Director or QM Manager will also solicit ongoing feedback from the Ombuds and will bring forward Ombuds observations and suggestions for quality improvement to the Quality Management Committee (QMC).
 - 3.5.2. This policy will be reviewed by Great Rivers BH-ASO's QM Manager annually.
 - 3.5.3. The performance of Ombuds Services will be monitored through feedback from individuals who have accessed Ombuds Services, any MCO, HCA, or the Great Rivers BH-ASO Behavioral Health Advisory Board.

PROCEDURE SIGNATURE

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7/9/2021

Vickie L. Raines, Chair
 Great Rivers BH-ASO Governing Board

Date