LISTENING
Help the parties clarify the issues, disentangle complicated situations, and prioritize their concerns
Offer a safe place to ventilate, reality test, organize thoughts and feelings

PROVIDING INFORMATION
Provide access to guidelines and policies that may apply
Educate about diversity, how difference in gender, age, cultural backgrounds, etc., may affect the workplace
Make referrals to other resources, facilitate communication with other services or appropriate administrative units

OFFERING A RANGE OF OPTIONS
Reframe issues to suggest options parties have not already thought of
Assist parties in evaluating pros and cons of various options

HELP PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES – THE DIRECT APPROACH
Plan, discuss, and possibly role play an upcoming meeting
Coach parties on negotiation skills, constructive approaches
Look over rough drafts of notes or letters, suggest how to avoid “red flags” of antagonism, emphasize civil tone

INFORMAL INTERVENTION AND SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY
With permission, Ombuds Officers may act as third-party shuttle diplomats, going back and forth between disputants to clarify issues, initiate problem-solving process
Transmit information in an impartial manner, clear up possible misunderstandings
Explore options, identify areas of flexibility or “common ground”

MEDIATION
Parties in conflict may meet in the presence of one or both of the Ombuds Officers to have a facilitated discussion, to listen to each other’s concerns, to “clear the air” and enhance mutual respect
Through the mediation process, parties may negotiate and search for agreement on “ground rules,” future steps
If mutually acceptable, mediation process could result in a collaborative written statement (memo of intention or understanding), which could become an official record if approved by the supervisory “chain of command,” and could include mechanisms for future communication, enforcement, or other administrative follow-up

OTHER RESOURCES
Ombuds Office may assist in providing upward feedback on specific problems such as safety concerns, early warnings of problem areas, recommended system changes
Generic approaches such as recommending training programs or reminders of policies and procedures

NOTE: In all functions, the Ombuds Officers are designated neutrals, not advocates for any party or individual. All communications with the Ombuds Officers are voluntary, and are considered confidential unless permission is granted to speak or act to facilitate resolution.
The Ombuds Office offers informal alternatives, separate from the formal record-keeping or disciplinary process.

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