

**44-5,110. Ombudsman program; qualifications and appointment of ombudsmen; special ombudsmen, contracts; dissemination of program information.** (a) The director of workers compensation shall establish an ombudsman program within the division of workers compensation to assist injured employees and persons claiming death benefits in obtaining benefits under the workers compensation act. The director shall employ qualified persons as ombudsmen for the program.

(b) Each ombudsman shall meet with or otherwise provide information to injured employees, shall investigate complaints and shall communicate with employers, insurance carriers and health care providers. An ombudsman may assist claimants in mediation conferences and otherwise assist unrepresented claimants, employers and other parties to protect the rights of such parties under the workers compensation act.

(c) In cases of emergency, on a case-by-case basis, the director may enter into contracts with trained mediators or other qualified persons to perform services under the ombudsman program as special ombudsmen. Each special ombudsman shall receive a fee commensurate with the services rendered in accordance with the contracts for services. The fee for a special ombudsman shall be taxed as costs in the claim to which the special ombudsman is assigned against the respondent.

(d) The director of workers compensation shall widely disseminate information about the ombudsman program.

**History:** L. 1993, ch. 286, § 11; L. 1996, ch. 79, § 14; Apr. 4.