

**Year 3 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

**International Ombuds Association**

**Organizational Ombuds' role in responding to predictors and  
symptoms of harm**

**Relevant Rubric Area(s):**

- Response: Anonymous and Non-Mandatory Reporting
- Remediation: Confidential Resources and Support Services
- Evaluation: Evaluating Policies and Procedures

**Description of Work:**

In response to the Remediation Working Group's Call for Information on Responding to Predictors and Symptoms of Harm, the International Ombuds Association convened two focus groups (one in late May, the other in early June) to assist in gathering information about the impact of campus organizational ombuds in supporting respectful and equitable campus climates. The invitation to participate was sent to nearly forty IOA members whose institutions are also members of the Action Collaborative.

Participants were informed that the two sessions would be facilitated in a way to provide a space where they could share and discuss their efforts, strategies and practices, as ombuds, to identify and address the predictors and symptoms of harm—which, prior even to formal reporting or investigation, may be indicators for harassment, and a signal that an institutional response is necessary.

For members who agreed to participate, they were asked to read the Remediation Working Group's call for information and review the matrix created to categorize honor, support and remediation efforts prior to their scheduled focus group session. Participants also were provided the specific discussion prompt:

NASEM is collecting information on how institutions are addressing underlying predictors and symptoms of harm on campus. NASEM defines predictors and symptoms of harm to “include evidence of uncivil behaviors, increased anger, alienation, depression, stress, anxiety, increased burnout, decreased performance, and evidence of lower career satisfaction.”

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As an organizational ombuds, how does your work address – or support your institution in addressing – unhealthy environments within the institution/environments showing the above symptoms and predictors of harm? Please consider this in the context of individuals, groups, and the institution as a whole.

### **Next Steps:**

Following the focus groups, participant responses were aggregated and categorized in a way that aligned with the Remediation Working Group's survey and matrix. Specifically, responses were categorized according to services provided to those who have experienced harm; services provided to those who have caused harm; and services provided for the community as a whole. Consistent with the matrix, responses were further categorized around whether the ombuds' work related to preparation and education for preventing/addressing incidents of harm; after an institution is notified and/or during an investigation; post process with finding; and post process without finding. Given what we've learned from these discussions, we will highlight the work of ombuds and their programs in our response to the Remediation Working Group's survey and plan to expand upon our learnings in an article to the Journal of the International Ombuds Association and/or in the special ombuds edition of the American Bar Association's September Just Resolutions e-newsletter.

**Website for further information (if applicable):** <https://www.ombudsassociation.org>

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