

2C.9 Powers.

The ombudsman may:

1. Investigate, on complaint or on the ombudsman's own motion, any administrative action of any agency, without regard to the finality of the administrative action, except that the ombudsman shall not investigate the complaint of an employee of an agency in regard to that employee's employment relationship with the agency except as otherwise provided by this chapter. A communication or receipt of information made pursuant to the powers prescribed in this chapter shall not be considered an ex parte communication as described in the provisions of section 17A.17.

2. Investigate, on complaint or on the ombudsman's own motion, any administrative action of any person providing child welfare or juvenile justice services under contract with an agency that is subject to investigation by the ombudsman. The person shall be considered to be an agency for purposes of the ombudsman's investigation.

3. Prescribe the methods by which complaints are to be made, received, and acted upon; determine the scope and manner of investigations to be made; and, subject to the requirements of this chapter, determine the form, frequency, and distribution of the conclusions and recommendations of the ombudsman.

4. Request and receive from each agency assistance and information as necessary in the performance of the duties of the office. Notwithstanding section 22.7, pursuant to an investigation the ombudsman may examine any and all records and documents of any agency unless its custodian demonstrates that the examination would violate federal law or result in the denial of federal funds to the agency. Confidential documents provided to the ombudsman by other agencies shall continue to maintain their confidential status. The ombudsman is subject to the same policies and penalties regarding the confidentiality of the document as an employee of the agency. The ombudsman may enter and inspect premises within any agency's control and may observe proceedings and attend hearings, with the consent of the interested party, including those held under a provision of confidentiality, conducted by any agency unless the agency demonstrates that the attendance or observation would violate federal law or result in the denial of federal funds to that agency. This subsection does not permit the examination of records or access to hearings and proceedings which are the work product of an attorney under section 22.7, subsection 4, or which are privileged communications under section 622.10.

5. Issue a subpoena to compel any person to appear, give sworn testimony, or produce documentary or other evidence relevant to a matter under inquiry. The ombudsman, deputies, and assistants of the ombudsman may administer oaths to persons giving testimony before them. If a witness either fails or refuses to obey a subpoena issued by the ombudsman, the ombudsman may petition the district court having jurisdiction for an order directing obedience to the subpoena. If the court finds that the subpoena should be obeyed, it shall enter an order requiring obedience to the subpoena, and refusal to obey the court order is subject to punishment for contempt.

6. Establish rules relating to the operation, organization, and procedure of the office of ombudsman. The rules are exempt from chapter 17A and shall be published in the Iowa administrative code.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §601G.9; 82 Acts, ch 1026, §1]

88 Acts, ch 1247, §1; 89 Acts, ch 296, §78

C93, §2C.9

2003 Acts, ch 178, §46; 2006 Acts, ch 1153, §12; 2013 Acts, ch 10, §10; 2013 Acts, ch 140, §48

[T] Section amended