



PRESS RELEASE

State of Iowa
Office of Ombudsman

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Office of Ombudsman
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Ombudsman Publishes 2016 Annual Report

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DES MOINES – Complaints to the Iowa Office of Ombudsman increased by 3 percent in 2016, and those numbers may go up even further this year, according to the Ombudsman’s annual report released today.

The Ombudsman opened almost 4,600 cases last year, more than two-thirds of which were jurisdictional complaints. Cases involving state government agencies made up 49 percent of the cases opened in 2016. Local government represented 36 percent of the cases. While the Ombudsman’s investigators spend much of their time informing citizens how state and local governments work and coaching them on how to resolve problems, the office also investigates issues when merited.

The annual report highlights 10 cases investigated in 2016 by the Ombudsman staff. In one case, an Ombudsman investigator persuaded a city council to rescind the appointment of a new council member because the council had not followed procedural requirements in state law.

In another case, the director of a small non-profit Medicaid provider was told that managed care organizations (MCOs) would not pay for the home-birthing services she offers. The issue was resolved after an Ombudsman investigator brought it to the attention of the state agency that oversees MCOs. Complaints about MCOs became commonplace last year, after the state changed the way it insures the poor. “The number of managed Medicaid complaints from both consumers and providers are now consuming the resources of more than one full-time staff person in my office,” Ombudsman Kristie Hirschman writes in the report.

Hirschman says the increased case numbers are one of the reasons she decided to produce a scaled-down version of the Ombudsman’s annual report. Hirschman plans to supplement the report with more timely, periodic summaries of the office’s most effectual work on the office’s website.

Hirschman was named Ombudsman by the Iowa Legislature in March after 21 years in the office. She writes in the annual report that she was “honored and humbled by the appointment. “I assure you that I will work tirelessly to lead this great Iowa institution,” she writes.

The Ombudsman’s report can be found online at www.legis.iowa.gov/Ombudsman.