

REALTOR® OMBUDSMAN PROGRAMS

Santa Barbara Assn.: Ombudsman will respond to questions and complaints about members for ethics and arbitration matters. May contact members to inform them that a client or customer has raised a question or issue and may contact members to obtain information necessary to provide an informed response before matters ripen into disputes and possible charges of unethical conduct.

Hunterdon/Somerset Assn. (New Jersey): Used to resolve disputes between public and Realtors®, and between Realtors® themselves. Designed to open up communication in the early stages of a dispute before matters escalate to formal complaints or conflicts. Ombudsmen are not allowed to serve on the Grievance or Professional Standards Committees in order to be truly neutral.

Marin Real Estate: Provided to the public to identify and seek to resolve misunderstandings and disagreements before matters ripen into formal charges of unethical conduct or claims for money. The program provides a place for people to go with questions, issues or concerns they may have in working with members to buy or sell homes.

Tahoe Sierra Board: One ombudsman serves as a trained mediator to handle informal grievances from agents and clients. The California Assn. of Realtors® encouraged all their real estate boards to implement the program in order to raise professionalism of membership and to benefit the community at large. Examples: misrepresented advertisements, a Realtor® not submitting all purchase offers, and disclosure issues.

Austin Board: Ombudsman can field and respond to an array of inquiries and complaints, including general questions regarding real estate practices, transaction details, ethical practices and enforcement issues. They can open lines of communication between Realtors® in an attempt to resolve misunderstandings before they evolve into larger disputes and charges of unethical conduct.

Santa Clara County Assn.: The Ombudsman/Resource Specialist responds to a wide variety of inquiries and complaints including: general questions about real estate practice, transaction details, ethical practices, and enforcement issues. Since the function of the Ombudsman is mainly that of an information resource and a public relations person, he or she cannot render an opinion on whether someone's claim has merit or speculate on the chances of success of the ethics or arbitration claim.

Pacific West Assn. (Anaheim): Ombudsman may call members and attempt to resolve the misunderstanding or matter without any formal paperwork required by the complainant. The program is beneficial if time is of the utmost importance, and neither party wants to file a formal written complaint.

Downey Assn. (Downey, CA): The Ombudsman Committee members are the past three Presidents of their association that assist parties that do not want to file an official complaint. They ask for an email with a written description of situation, along with their name and telephone number, and name of member they are complaining against. They will not determine whether an ethics violation has occurred, rather they anticipate, identify, and resolve misunderstandings before matters escalate into a dispute/hearing.

ADA County Assn. (Idaho): They offer both mediation services and ombudsman services. Ombudsman services are similar in scope to mediation, however the ombudsman has "investigative" authorities. The ombudsman will not decide who is "right", but will gather all the facts and present them to the disputing parties.

The Inland Gateway Assn. (Riverside County): Offers mediation for conflicts between parties and offers ombudsman third party assistance to resolve issues between agents.