

# ORGANIZATIONAL OMBUDSMAN CERTIFICATION

**Information Session  
Conference Call**

605-475-5920

Access code 6744105

**11 February 2020**

**1:00 PM ET**

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

## Board of Certification

Kirsi Aulin, President

Eligibility Committee – Kelley Alexander, Chair

Professional Practice Committee - Scott Deyo, Chair

Finance Committee – Jennifer Mounneh, Chair

Appeals Committee – Lauren Bloom, Chair

Communications Committee - Guy Weber, Chair

Recertification Committee – Elizabeth Hill, Chair

# PURPOSE OF CERTIFICATION

To promote, examine and maintain standards for the advancement of organizational ombudsmen. It does so by identifying -- for organizational ombudsman practitioners, their organizations, and the public -- those organizational ombudsmen who have voluntarily sought and obtained certification.

# INTENT OF CERTIFICATION

- To promote visibility for Certified Organizational-Ombudsman Practitioners® and practitioners who are Candidate for CO-OP®;
- To acknowledge that there is a body of knowledge and experience required to be an organizational ombudsman practitioner, and that certification demonstrates that an individual has that knowledge and experience;
- To ensure consistent adherence to the key ethical values and Standards of Practice of the organizational ombudsman as defined by IOA; and to acknowledge practitioners who cannot fully adhere to the standards due to limitations imposed by their organization;
- To enhance the status and credibility of the profession and present a reliable image to the public.

# REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION ELIGIBILITY

## First Step Requirement:

- ❖ Must Pass Exam (and apply for Certification within three years)

There are no pre-requisites required to take the exam.

Candidates who pass the exam and wish to become a [Certified Organizational-Ombudsman Practitioner® \(CO-OP®\)](#) must also complete the Second Step Requirements

OR

Apply for [Candidate for CO-OP®](#) if their practice is subject to organizational limitations that prevent the full adherence to the standards

# REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION ELIGIBILITY

## Second Step Requirements:

- Must have bachelor's degree or equivalent
- Must have at least of one year full-time experience, or its equivalent, working as an Organizational Ombudsman in an organization that adheres to the IOA Standards of Practice (SOPs) and Code of Ethics (COEs)
  - One year = 2000 hours
- Complete the application form, submit the associated fee, sign the Certification Agreement form, and include any other supporting documents
  - Some examples of supporting documentation include: employment verification, job descriptions, charters, websites, and brochures.
- Successfully complete an interview with a member of the Eligibility Committee to ensure the applicant is practicing to the IOA SOPs and COEs or request the Candidate for CO-OP® credential.
  - The interview consists of a set of questions based on the IOA SOPs and COEs; following the interview, the Eligibility Committee meets to discuss the candidate and vote to either certify or deny certification.

# RECERTIFICATION

Must obtain 60 Professional Development Hours (PDHs) and apply for recertification every 4 years

- Training/education received (usually counted as 1 PDH per 1 hour)
- Training/teaching conducted (limited to 15 PDHs of the 60 required)
- Mentoring, writing/publishing (limited to 15 PDHs of the 60 required)

# CERTIFICATION EXAM

Certification Exam - 100 Multiple Choice questions

Questions are based on **THREE CONTENT DOMAINS**

1. Recognize Ethical Principles and Foundational Theories
2. Apply Ethical Principles and Foundational Theories while working with Individuals
3. Apply Ethical Principles and Foundational Theories while working with Organizations

<http://www.ombudsassociation.org/Certification/Obtaining-Certification/Examination/Preparation-and-Sample-Examination-Questions.aspx>

# CONTENT DOMAIN ONE

## RECOGNIZE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES

**45%**

**45 items**

- A. IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice
- B. Interpersonal and Organizational Communication
- C. Conflict Theory
- D. Program Operations

# CONTENT DOMAIN TWO

APPLY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES  
WHILE WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS

**35%**

**35 items**

A. Case management

B. Ombudsman actions

# CONTENT DOMAIN THREE

## APPLY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES WHILE WORKING WITH ORGANIZATIONS

**20%**

**20 items**

- A. Know the organization
- B. Build organizational effectiveness
- C. Influence leadership

# SAMPLE QUESTION ONE

1. The International Ombudsman Association *Code of Ethics* requires that an organizational ombudsman maintain neutrality, informality, confidentiality, and

(A) mediation.

(B) independence. \*

(C) isolation.

(D) discernment.

## SAMPLE QUESTION TWO

2. During a discussion, a visitor asks a question about a policy, but the ombudsman does not know the answer. The ombudsman would:

- (A) identify the appropriate resources to interpret the policy. \*
- (B) redirect the conversation to other subjects.
- (C) answer the question based on general knowledge of the organization.
- (D) reach an agreement with the visitor about the proper policy interpretation.

## SAMPLE QUESTION THREE

3. When the ombudsman becomes aware of a significant concern or pattern of concerns, the

(A) ombudsman may ask permission to discuss the concern or the pattern with the appropriate person(s) or office in the organization. \*

(B) ombudsman may discuss such concerns, but only at the executive level, in ways that disclose individually identifiable information.

(C) best practice is to try to direct revision of relevant policies by managing the process of re-drafting policies.

(D) best practice is to demand an action plan from the administration to correct the concerns, and to set appropriate deadlines.

# DATA

As of February 1, 2019:

- 319 Ombuds have taken the exam (92% have passed).
- 105 individuals are currently certified.
- 21 Ombuds from 14 different countries outside of the US have received certification.

# CO-OP® CERTIFICATION

In general, applicants whose practice and/or program fully aligns to the IOA Standards of Practice (SOP) will be granted certification. The following are examples of situations in which the standards are not being met and the individual cannot be CO-OP® certified.

- An applicant is not in an ombuds position or has not been in an ombuds position for at least one year (2000 hours) at the time of application.
- An ombuds program and/or the ombuds are not independent from other organizational entities; they are misaligned to or affiliated with a compliance function; they hold another position in the organization, which creates a conflict or interest or the perception of not being independent or neutral. (SOPs 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 2.4).
- An ombuds has exceptions to confidentiality that go beyond an “imminent risk of serious harm”; a university ombuds is a mandatory reporter under Title IX and/or Clery Act (SOP 3.1)
- An ombuds has the authority to formally investigate an issue or creates and maintains records containing identifying information (SOPs 4.5, 4.6).

# CANDIDATE FOR CO-OP® CREDENTIAL

- To recertify as a Candidate for CO-OP®, practitioners must complete the same requirement for professional development hours (PDHs) as CO-OP® certified practitioners.
- This step confirms that a candidate has passed the exam and has presented evidence of experience working as an organizational ombudsman for 1 year or 2000 hours.
- This person has also held the title of Ombuds, Ombudsman or its equivalent within the last 4 years.
- The individual has performed the role of an organizational ombuds, listening to concerns, helping to create options, weighing the pros and cons of the various options with visitors, coaching, escalating and providing other Ombuds services.
- This individual **does not have to be** practicing to standards in all circumstances. Individuals who are designated Candidate for CO-OP® status will receive a detailed letter describing their status.

# INACTIVE STATUS

- Any CO-OP® who experiences a change in organizational requirements or job that affects their ability to practice to standards can notify the Eligibility or Recertification Committee of the change and their need to be put into “Inactive Status.”
- An individual in inactive status will not be able to use the CO-OP® credential on resumes or business cards.
- The individual also will not be listed on the certification website or in the IOA Conference booklet as a CO-OP®.
- Individuals will be reinstated if they can demonstrate that they are able once again to practice to standards.
- Individuals would be expected to provide evidence of 60 hours of professional development within the four years prior to reinstatement.
- To recertify as a Candidate for CO-OP®, practitioners must complete the same requirement for professional development hours (PDHs) as CO-OP® certified practitioners.

# ELIGIBILITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kelley Alexander (Chair) – Cox Communications

Brian Bloch – Department of the Interior

William King - Virginia Commonwealth University

Joan Waters - Columbia University

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## Questions and Answers

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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