We want to be sure our visitors understand the standards under which we operate, the services we provide, and the limitations of our work. We'll review these in our first appointment with you and we encourage you to ask questions about anything that needs further explanation.

**Standards:** The Ombuds Office is a *neutral, confidential, informal* and *independent* resource for the resolution of concerns and conflicts for UMass Amherst faculty, staff, and students. Our independence from ordinary administrative channels and our professional neutrality assure visitors that our assistance is unbiased and even handed. Our services are informal in that they supplement, but do not replace, formal processes. We are confidential and will not disclose the fact that you have been to the office or the content of our communications. The two exceptions to confidentiality are if we determine there is an imminent risk of serious harm, and if we are required by law to disclose. We offer all visitors the option to consult with us anonymously. The mutual commitment to confidentiality between our visitors and us is essential to our work.

**Services:** Our services are tailored to the needs of each circumstance discussed with us. The Ombuds staff supports conflict resolution by helping visitors understand the issues, explore their options and, when appropriate, by providing direct conflict management services. We coach visitors in communication, de-escalation, and resolution skills; we provide mediation, restorative practices, and facilitated conversations; and we offer campus conflict education services. We also serve as a conduit to inform campus leaders of statistical trends and patterns that emerge in our work. Our services are voluntary and free of charge.

**Limitations:** The Ombuds Office does not advocate for individuals or positions but rather promotes fair process and effective communication. We do not give legal advice. The office cannot accept notice on behalf of the University; we are not a proper channel to let the University know about an incident. We keep only anonymous aggregate statistical records and shred all identifying notes at the end of a matter. Ombuds Office staff members do not voluntarily testify or produce records for courts or other processes. By utilizing our services you are agreeing not to call the Ombuds staff to testify or produce records concerning your communications with the office. The Ombuds Office may reasonably refuse to accept or continue to work with a visitor.