



King County

King County Ombudsman's Office

Government Accountability and
Oversight Committee Briefing
May 12, 2015

Briefing Overview

Ombudsman's Office – What We Do

- Ombudsman/Public Complaints
 - Rural Ombudsman
- Ethics Enforcement
- Whistleblower Protection/Retaliation
- Lobbyist Disclosure
- Tax Advisor

Ombudsman Mission Statement

To promote public confidence in King County government by responding to complaints in an impartial, efficient, and timely manner, and to contribute to the improved operation of County government by making recommendations based upon the results of complaint investigations.

Ombudsman

General government oversight through investigation of administrative acts of administrative agencies

- Jurisdiction: all Executive branch agencies, including Assessor, Elections, and King County Sheriff's Office
- Exceptions: County Council and their staffs, County Executive and his/her personal staff, the Prosecuting Attorney and his/her staff, Judges and employees of the Judicial branch

Investigate acts that contrary to law or regulation, arbitrary, inconsistent, unfair, and otherwise objectionable

Subpoena power, authority to inspect agency premises and examine records and documents, issue formal findings and recommendations

Rural Ombudsman Program

Council-directed function

Good Visibility of Position

- In the field
- Interagency/Community workgroups
- Within departments

Recent appointment

Ethics Enforcement

Ethics Code promotes public confidence in government

- Guide for behavior for county employees
- Prevent conflicts of interest and misuse of county resources

Applies to all county employees – including Council, Executive, and the Prosecuting Attorney – with the exception of Judicial branch

Formal investigative process resulting in written findings, conclusion and order that may include penalties

- Mediation/Settlement Options
- Findings may be appealed to the Ethics Board

25 ethics-related inquires in 2014

Whistleblower Protection

Roadmap for employees to report “Improper Governmental Action,” and retaliation.

Applicable to all county employees, with the exception of the Judicial Branch

Improper Governmental Action includes violation of law, ordinance, or rule; gross waste of public funds; gross mismanagement; and/or creates a substantial danger to the public health or safety

Formal process that results in written findings, and may include penalties

- Mediation Options

Retaliation findings may be appealed to the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings

Whistleblower Program Annual Report

- 37 whistleblower complaints in 2014

Lobbyist Disclosure

Full disclosure of lobbyists and lobbyists' employees in order to protect the openness and integrity of legislative process

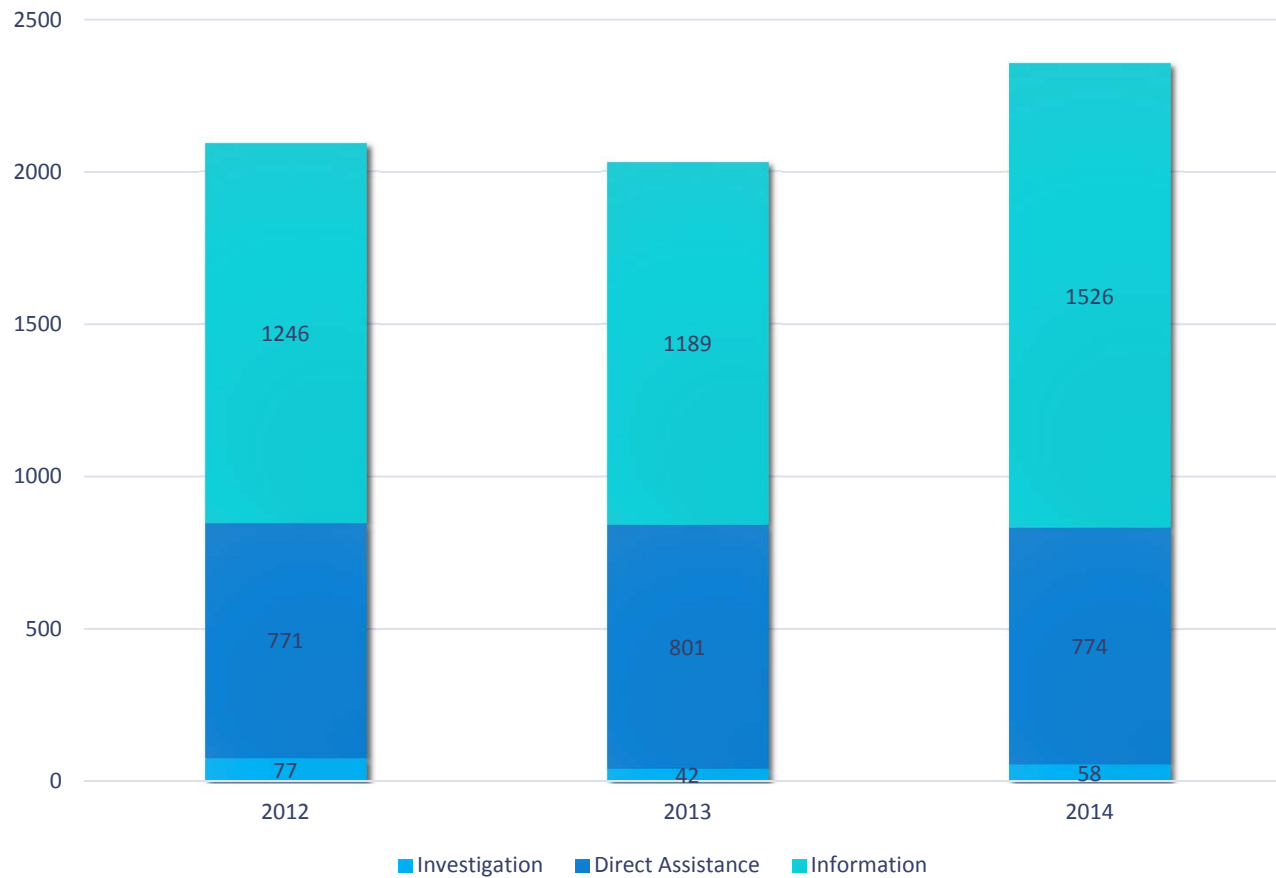
Requires registration of paid lobbyists and some grassroots lobbyists

Formal process that may include penalties

Findings may be appealed to Hearing Examiner

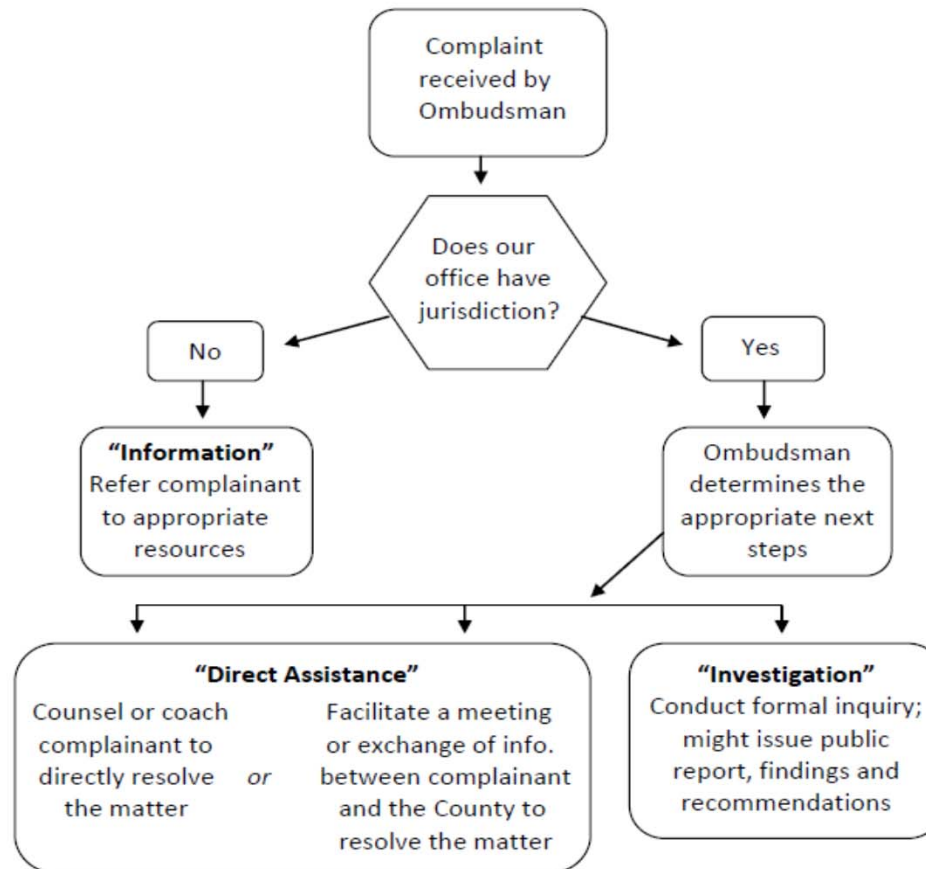
No cases in 2014

Ombudsman Inquiries 2012-2014

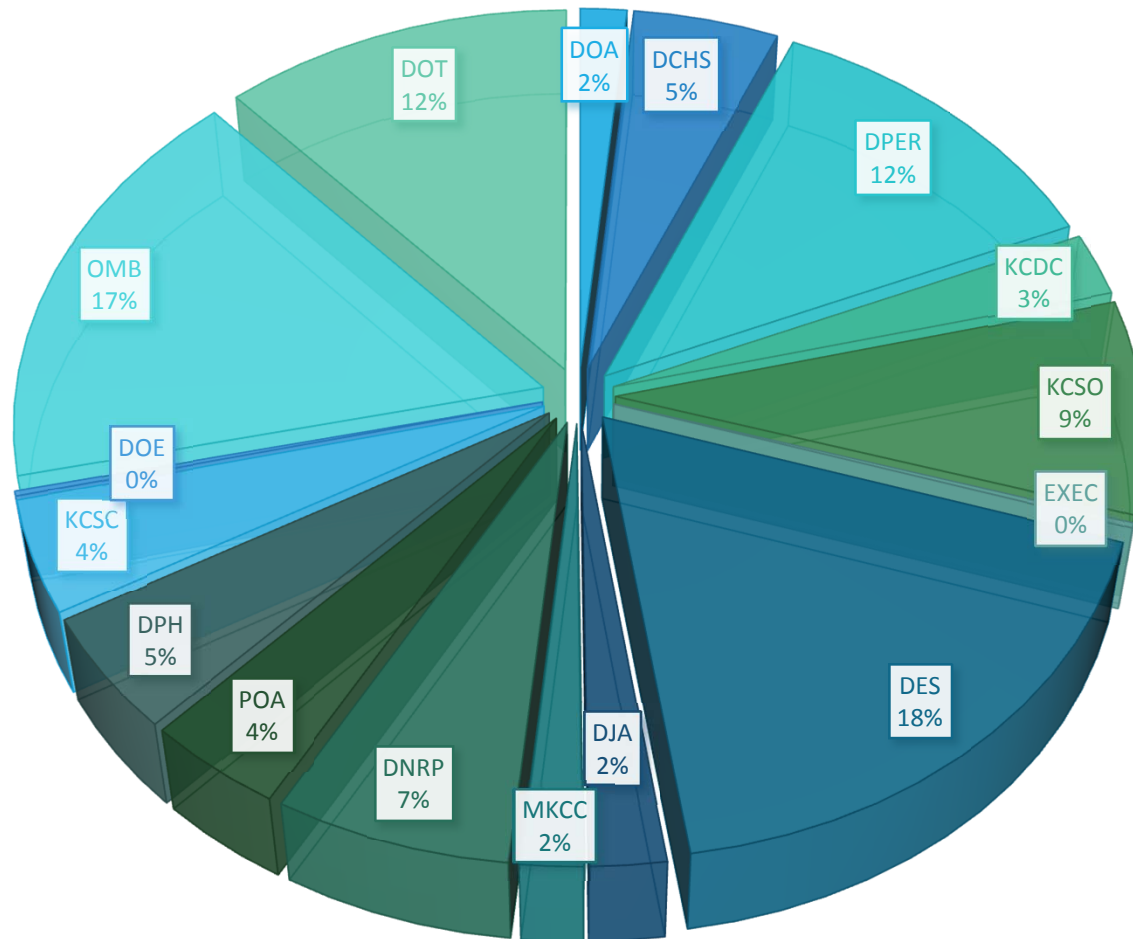


Total Inquiries
2012=2094
2013=2032
2014=2358

Ombudsman Case Workflow

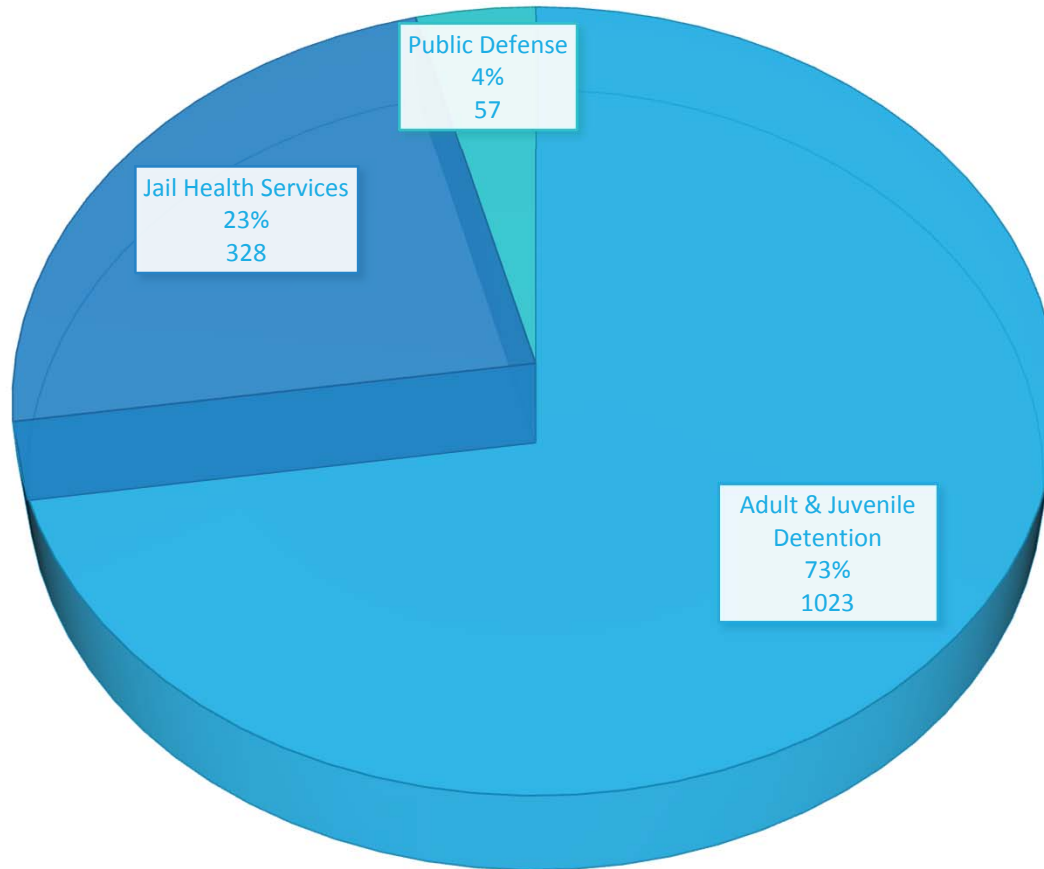


Ombudsman Cases by Agency – 2014



Ombudsman
Inquiries
(Excluding DAJD-
generated calls)
Total=512

DAJD-related Inquiries



Total Jail-related inquiries= 1408

Tax Advisor Program

Provide information regarding all aspects of the residential assessment process

Educate taxpayers on relation of assessment process to property taxes

Offers specific guidance to taxpayers who are considering appeal.

eAppeals support

Logged 5000+ contacts in 2014

Questions?
