

Navy Family Ombudsman Program - Ombudsman Reimbursement



BACKGROUND

Ombudsmen are official volunteers serving as the liaison between the command and command families. Occasional expenses will be incurred during the performance of their duties, some of which are authorized for reimbursement. OPNAVINST 1750.1F, 5.d (8) and Enclosure (6), lists allowable reimbursement items for ombudsmen. Although many expenses are allowed, each commanding officer/commander will determine which expenses they are willing to reimburse. It is important to discuss this with your ombudsman at their selection and/or appointment so that there are no misunderstandings later.

Based on findings in March 2007 by then CNO ADM Mullen "reimbursement (of ombudsmen) is slow or otherwise lacking. Commands have a responsibility to become educated about the use of Appropriated and Non-Appropriated Funds to appropriately reimburse Ombudsmen in a timely fashion." Ombudsmen and the command POC should have a clear understanding of the procedure to follow when filing claims for reimbursement. All claims should be handled in a timely fashion. Although ombudsmen do not expect a salary, serving as a command volunteer should not result in financial difficulty for the volunteer.

GOALS

To provide clear, concise guidance which will ensure that command ombudsmen receive authorized and agreed-upon reimbursement for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in a timely manner.

KEY MESSAGES

- Ombudsman reimbursement is the responsibility of the commanding officer/commander.
- Ombudsmen are entitled to certain reimbursements for expenses incurred during the performance of their duties as command ombudsmen.
- The commanding officer/commander determines which expenses he or she will fund from the allowable reimbursable items.
- A clear procedure needs to be identified for the ombudsmen to follow when filing for reimbursement. This should be explained to both the ombudsman and the command POC who will process the claim. Reimbursement should be handled in a timely manner.

COMMAND STATEMENT

CNIC has tools in place to support command reimbursement of ombudsmen (see resources below). Additionally, CNIC recommends that commands submit ombudsman funding requirements in POM submissions to ensure funding is available.



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Based on a survey of 1389 ombudsmen in October 2007, with 45% responding, ombudsmen continue to experience difficulties in receiving reimbursements. Although 80% who responded said that they have no difficulty receiving reimbursements, 61% said that they do not submit claims at all. Reasons cited include:

- "I kept thinking that it was my way of supporting the unit and cause...but expenses have continued to add up beyond what I thought it would."
- "I have not encountered a need to submit for reimbursement. However, I also have not had any formal meeting with the Commanding Officer since being appointed as the Ombudsman 13 months ago."
- And perhaps the most troubling: "I no longer submit for reimbursement because the finance lady is such a pain."

ACTION

Each command should establish a procedure for the ombudsman to follow to include keeping appropriate records and receipts, and the process to follow to ensure timely reimbursement of allowable expenses. The required forms are listed:

- Appointment Letter
- DD Form 2793 – Volunteer Agreement: Required for the ombudsman to be eligible for reimbursement
- SF-1164 Claim for Reimbursement for Expenses on Official Business (use for local travel expenses)
- DD1351-2, Travel Voucher, Sub-voucher or other command approved travel claim process

RESOURCES

- OPNAVINST 1750.1F, 5.d (8), and Enclosure 6 discuss Ombudsman Program Support and use of Appropriated and Non-Appropriated Funds.
- Ombudsman Program Manual, Module Two – www.ffsp.navy.mil, June 2010 Edition
- Command Leadership School briefs to COs, XOs, and CMCs and spouses include description of ombudsman reimbursement procedures.
- Shore Command Instructors' Briefs includes description of ombudsman reimbursement.
- Command Leadership Tool Kit – www.ffsp.navy.mil



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