



HR Ombuds Program

Program Summary & Capability Overview

Introduction and Structure

A fair, confidential, and independent channel for employees to be heard — designed around your organization, backed by a clear governance framework, and available to launch in no more than a couple of weeks, not months.

As we introduce the HR Ombuds Program, we want to be clear about how it is structured- because the value of this Program, and the flexibility it offers, both depend on it.

The Ombuds function operates independently from Foley & Foley's Employment Law Practice. This is a deliberate design choice, and it rests on three safeguards:

- **Staffing-** the Ombuds role is filled executively by an experienced HR professional- never an attorney. The HR professional in that seat has no role in advising on legal matters or defending the client's legal interests. She has no knowledge of any of the employment law matters that may arise whether through advice and counsel provided by our team of employment lawyers or another employment lawyer. This distinct intentional separation keeps the relationship focused on hearing people out rather than building or defending a legal position.
- **Confidentiality-** conversations with the Ombuds and any related notes or records, are kept entirely separate from the legal team's files. Attorneys on your account do not have access to the Ombuds records, and nothing discussed in that channel flows into legal advice or case strategy, except where the law requires disclosure (for example, certain safety or harassment reporting obligations).
- **Distinct reporting lines-** the Ombuds reports through the HR Solutions Practice Group, not through employment counsel, and engagement terms for the program are set out separately from any legal engagement your organization may have with the Firm.

For clients who engage the Ombuds Program on a standalone basis, these safeguards mean exactly what they say: no attorney-client relationship is created by the engagement, no attorney reviews or has access to what is shared with the Ombuds, and the Program can be used entirely independently of any legal services from our Firm.

For clients who also work with our Employment Law Practice, this same separation is what makes something else possible. Because the two functions are genuinely walled off from one another, a client can choose to engage both the Employment Law Practice and the HR Ombuds Program at the same time, gaining the benefit of our full integrated risk management platform. This dual engagement is entirely the client's choice: we will only structure it when the client is fully informed about how the separation works and is comfortable proceeding on that basis, with the same safeguards- no shared files, no crossover and reporting, independent confidentiality- remaining firmly in place regardless of how many services your team has our team provide.

What the HR Ombuds Program Is

The HR Ombuds Program gives your employees a confidential, independent resource for raising workplace concerns — from interpersonal conflict and policy questions to fairness and process complaints — alongside, not in place of, your existing HR, legal, and compliance channels.

At its core, the Ombuds is an **external, independent advocate for fair process** — not an advocate for any one employee, manager, or the organization itself. That neutrality is what earns employee trust, and what allows the Program to hold up to scrutiny if a matter is ever reviewed by leadership, your Board, or outside counsel.

Every program is built specifically for your organization: your structure, sector, existing HR infrastructure, and risk profile — captured through our Client Intake Questionnaire — shape the final Program Document.

What's Included, Start to Finish

Step	What Happens
1. Consultation & Discovery	We work through the Client Intake Questionnaire with your team to understand your governance structure, sector, size, and existing HR infrastructure.
2. Program Document Development	We prepare a client-specific Program Document: intake procedures, confidentiality protocol, the decision-making framework below, recordkeeping standards, and launch materials.
3. Final Review Meeting	We walk your team through the draft of the Program Document, confirm it reflects your organization's specifics, and finalize it for adoption.
4. Launch & Ongoing Direct and Immediate Access to an Ombuds	Employees gain access to a dedicated phone line and email address, staffed by Foley HR Solutions, with defined response-time standards.

How Decisions Get Made

A program is only as credible as its decision-making process. We build a tiered escalation framework into every Program Document, so employees and leadership alike know exactly who resolves what:

Tier	Matter Type	Who Decides	Ombuds's Role
1	Routine, individual workplace concerns	Your designated HR Program Liaison	Intake, review, written findings & recommendations
2	Senior-management involvement, systemic patterns, or elevated legal/reputational risk	CEO or another executive you designate	Independent findings & recommendations, briefed directly to the decision-maker
3	Board Level- Matters involving the CEO, a Board member, or enterprise-wide risk	Your Board of Directors, or a Board-designated committee	Independent written findings report delivered to the Board

Tier	Matter Type	Who Decides	Ombuds's Role
Optional	Any matter you elect to route to committee	Ombuds Review Committee	Facilitation, documentation, and presentation of findings

Committee option: Organizations with a Board, more than roughly 150 employees, or a heightened need for defensibility often add a cross-functional Ombuds Review Committee (HR, Legal/Compliance, and — for elevated matters — an executive sponsor or independent member) to review findings and render or recommend decisions. We recommend it; it's not required.

Throughout, Foley HR Solutions acts in an advisory and facilitative role — we don't make final personnel or governance decisions on your behalf. That authority stays with your organization, which keeps the Program defensible and keeps you in control.

What We Can Build Into It

Every engagement starts with the core program above. Depending on what the Intake Questionnaire tells us about your organization, we can also build in additional support, which will change the program set-up fixed fee:

Add-On	What It Adds
Employee Awareness Rollout	Launch email/memo, intranet and poster content, and employee handbook language to introduce the Program organization-wide.
Manager & Employee Training	Live or recorded training so managers know how the Program interacts with their own reporting obligations, and employees know how and when to use it.
Ombuds Review Committee Design	Charter, composition, quorum, and voting protocol for a formal review committee (see above).
Aggregate Trend Reporting	Periodic, de-identified reporting to leadership on concern volume and themes — surfacing systemic issues without breaching individual confidentiality. Monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, or annual cadence.
Secure Web Intake Form	A branded, confidential online intake option alongside phone and email.
Employee Climate / Satisfaction Survey	Baseline and track how employees perceive fairness and trust over time.
Annual Program Review & Refresh	A yearly check-in to update the Program Document and escalation matrix as your organization changes — new leadership, growth, restructuring, or a change in Board composition.

Add-ons are scoped and quoted once we understand your organization through the Intake Questionnaire — nothing is bundled in without your sign-off.

What Makes This an Effective, Durable Program

- A written, tiered escalation framework — so there's never ambiguity about who resolves what.
- A documented, external, and independent intake and review process, reducing conflicts of interest.
- Built-in anti-retaliation language protecting employees who use the Program in good faith.
- Defined Ombuds response standards (acknowledgment within no later than 24 hours for routine issues and no longer than two hours for urgent issues).
- Aggregate, de-identified reporting that gives leadership visibility into trends without compromising confidentiality.
- A clear boundary with legal representation — the Program is a business/HR advisory service, not a substitute for counsel, and doesn't interfere with any employee's statutory rights or deadlines.
- Built to flex — additional services can be layered in as your organization grows or changes.

Investment

Standard Program Setup \$2,800 <i>One-time fixed fee — consultation, program document development, and final review meeting – no add-ons</i>	Ombuds Services \$400 / hour <i>Ongoing — dedicated phone and email line for employees to reach Ombuds</i>
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Add-on services above are quoted separately based on scope.

Getting Started

Next Steps:

- Completing the Client Intake Questionnaire, which tells us about your organizational structure, governance, sector, and existing HR infrastructure so we can scope your Program Document and recommend the right add-ons;
- We will confirm the scope and terms of our engagement including the effective date under a Client Engagement & Fee Agreement signed by both parties; and
- Get started.