



The Brain Injury Association
Of North Carolina

Brain Injury Association of North Carolina Family Ombudsman Program

Over the next four years BIANC will work to establish a statewide brain injury family ombudsman program in North Carolina.

The need for a family ombudsman program was very evident in the recent 2007-08 legislative session of the NC General Assembly. Due to funding limitations and licensure issues among several providers, continued access to residential programs for persons with brain injury was in great jeopardy. Families responded with extensive advocacy to legislators by making literally thousands of phone calls, office visits and personal pleas. This recent crisis has set the stage for the formal development of a family ombudsman program that can, not only react to specific needs, issues, and complaints, but can also have a proactive voice for legislative initiatives. This program will also work closely with the Advisory Council and the Lead Agency to help implement the Call for Action Position Paper (http://bianc.net/docs/TBI_Council_Call_to_Action.doc) developed by the Council. A network of family representatives will be recruited to serve as ombudsmen to the Lead Agency. They will represent families statewide who have a family member with TBI. A lead ombudsman will be identified and participate in Advisory Council meetings and attend the annual grantee leadership meeting.

Year 1: The Lead Agency will work with BIANC including, Project STAR, which houses a Family and Community Support Office of BIANC, to develop job descriptions for ombudsmen and lead ombudsman for Advisory Council approval. Initially four family members will be recruited, screened, trained, housed and supervised by BIANC and assigned to each of the four regional Family and Community Support Offices statewide. The ombudsmen will serve as links to families, helping families and people with TBI find resources, information and support. They will also provide outreach activities aimed at greater understanding of TBI in the community, especially nursing homes and public school systems. A data collection system will be designed to capture information on inquiries, concerns, issues and outcomes. An ombudsman training program will be developed by BIANC and presented to the Grant Oversight Committee and the Advisory Council for further recommendations and advice. BIANC will consult with the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) regarding the application of all or identified components of the Partners in Policymaking Program. Several states have used HRSA grants to modify this program for families with brain injury. These programs will be reviewed for possible replication and modification for North Carolina. An evaluation will be designed, drawing heavily on already existing evaluation tools constructed by HRSA grantees as well as NCCDD.

Year 2: Continue the program as determined by the previous year’s evaluation. Review the training plan and make any needed changes. Evaluate again at the end of the year. An important part of this evaluation will be to determine what is needed for the network to continue beyond the end of the grant.

Year 3-4: Continue the program as determined by the previous year’s evaluation. Follow through on any activities related to program sustainability.

What is an ombudsman in traditional role

An **ombudsman** ([English](#) plural: conventionally *ombudsmen*) is a person who acts as a trusted intermediary between an organization and some external constituency while representing the broad scope of constituent interests.

Usually appointed by the organization, but sometimes elected by the constituency, the ombudsman may, for example, investigate constituent complaints relating to the organization and attempt to resolve them, usually through recommendations (binding or not) or mediation. Ombudsmen sometimes identifies organizational roadblocks running counter to constituent interests.

An ombudsman may not be appointed by a legislature, but may instead be appointed by, or even work for, a corporation such as a utility supplier or a newspaper, for an [NGO](#), for a professional regulatory body, or for local or municipal government.

Ombudsman time frames:

Objective 1.2 Establish four family ombudsman programs with regional distribution statewide.		
▪ Develop job descriptions.	1 st quarter Year 1	Lead Agency, BIANC, Project STAR
▪ Develop ombudsman training program	1 st quarter Year 1	BIANC/ECAC
▪ Recruit, screen and train four ombudsmen.	2 nd quarter Year 1	BIANC
▪ Develop outreach activities and data collection system.	3 rd quarter Year 1	BIANC/ Ombudsmen
▪ Design and implement evaluation tool including, measure of consumer satisfaction.	4 th quarter Year 1	BIANC
▪ Continue program per evaluation.	Year 2	BIANC/ Ombudsmen
▪ Review training plan and make necessary changes.	2 nd quarter Year 2	BIANC/ECAC
▪ Evaluate to determine program status.	4 th quarter Year 2	BIANC/Lead Agency
▪ Continue program as determined by evaluations, including consumer satisfaction.	Years 3-4	BIANC/ Ombudsmen
▪ Make plan for sustainability of the program	Year 4	BIANC/ Ombudsmen