

Questions for the Correction Ombudsman Nominee

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Correction Ombudsman ([CGS §§ 18-81jj & 18-81qq](#))

The correction ombudsman is the head of the Office of the Correction Ombudsman and serves, or designates someone to serve, on the Governmental Accountability Commission. The office provides services to people in Department of Correction (DOC) custody. These services include, among other things, (1) evaluating DOC's delivery of services to incarcerated individuals; (2) periodically reviewing DOC's nonemergency procedures for carrying out its statutory duties and evaluating whether these procedures conflict with incarcerated individuals' rights; and (3) receiving communications from individuals in DOC custody about department decisions, actions, omissions, policies, procedures, rules, or regulations.

The correction ombudsman must also conduct site visits of DOC correctional facilities; review their operation and nonemergency procedures, including use of force procedures; recommend procedure and policy changes to DOC; and annually report to the Judiciary Committee on the confinement conditions in the state's correctional facilities and halfway houses.

The correction ombudsman must take all possible actions to ensure the rights of individuals in DOC custody, such as conducting public education programs; undertaking legislative advocacy; proposing systemic reform; and, after exhausting all other means, pursuing litigation.

Questions

1. How has your background and professional experience prepared you for this role?
2. You have been serving as the interim correction ombudsman since September of last year.
 - a. What have been the greatest challenges you have faced in setting up the office and beginning its work?
 - b. What has been the demand for the office's services since the beginning of your tenure? Does the office have sufficient resources to meet the demand and, if not, what resources does it need?
 - c. What types of complaints has the office received since it began accepting them? Are there any identifiable trends among the complaints?
 - d. What policy proposals do you think the legislature should consider enacting to help the office become more effective?
3. The governor's FYs 26/27 [budget proposal](#) appropriates approximately \$400,000 for the office in each fiscal year. How does this amount compare with what you believe are the office's funding needs?
4. By law, the correction ombudsman's office must, among other things, evaluate DOC's delivery of services to people in the department's custody, conduct facility site visits, and recommend procedure and policy changes to DOC. How do you envision the relationship between DOC and this office?
5. The correction ombudsman must publish on the office's website a semiannual summary of all ombudsman services and activities during the previous six months ([CGS § 18-81qq\(a\)\(2\)\(H\)](#)). How significant is this level of transparency? How else will the public and incarcerated individuals be informed about your role and the office's services?
6. During an investigation, the law requires the ombudsman to make good faith efforts to give the DOC commissioner an opportunity to investigate and respond to concerns raised by incarcerated individuals or others, before making the matter public ([CGS § 18-81qq\(e\)](#)). What is a reasonable time for DOC to do so, and why?
7. The law sets the ombudsman's initial term at two years, with the possibility of reappointment for succeeding terms ([CGS § 18-81jj\(m\)](#)). What are the costs and benefits associated with extending the duration of the initial term?
8. The governor's FYs 26/27 [budget proposal](#) eliminates funding for electronic messaging services for individuals in DOC custody but keeps free telephonic communications.
 - a. How would this policy change affect the lives of those who are incarcerated?

- b. What DOC programming resources should the legislature prioritize for funding purposes when establishing the biennium budget?
- c. If savings must be realized, where do you recommend the legislature should focus its efforts for corrections-based spending cuts?

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