



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

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November 14, 2007

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Environmental Health Committee, State Board of Health—
Keith Higman and Karen VanDusen

**SUBJECT: OFFICE OF THE EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN—
MISSION: RESOLVING CONFLICT WITH SCHOOLS**

Background and Summary

In 2006, ESHB 3127 created the Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO) within the Governor's Office. Its mission is to promote equity in education and academic success for K-12 students in public schools in Washington. It provides information about the public school system to parents, students, and community members; helps resolve conflict between families and the education system as a neutral third party; promotes family involvement in schools; and identifies and recommends educational strategies that contribute to the achievement of diverse students. OEO accepts complaints only from parents, legal guardians, and students and its efforts to assist with complaint resolution do not replace existing complaint procedures that may exist in school districts.

The Board has heard requests from parents and teachers that there be an ombudsperson within state government that could help resolve complaints about lack of compliance with the Board's school environmental health and safety rules. It appears that the authorizing statute for OEO would allow it to perform part of that function, and the complaint section of the second discussion draft rule refers to the office.

Governor Gregoire appointed the first director of OEO, Adie Simmons, in September 2006. Ms. Simmons has had a distinguished career with school districts in the Puget Sound region and in child advocacy. She has received four PTA Golden Acorn awards for child advocacy, a Washington Excellence in Education award, and a National Partnership District Award from John Hopkins University. Ms. Simmons is here today to explain to the Board the role of her office and how it might be relevant to concerns about school environmental health and safety. Please see materials behind Tab 13, including an order form demonstrating the variety of information provided by her office.

Recommended Board Action

None.