

# Conference Ombuds Charter

## APA Charter for NPC26 Conference Ombuds Services

### I. INTRODUCTION

To support APA's commitment to ensuring that NPC26 is safe and welcoming for all, consistent with the principles outlined in its Code of Conduct and Harassment Policy at APA Meetings, APA will provide organizational conference ombuds services in connection with its NPC26 Conference taking place in Detroit, MI, during April 24-28, 2026 ("Conference Ombuds Program"). APA's goal is to have a conference that is as inclusive and accessible as possible for attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone participating in NPC26, regardless of gender, sexual orientation/identity, race/ethnicity, religion, employment status, or field status. In addition, APA desires to improve the conduct and climate at future conferences with aggregate data and feedback on trends and recommendations from the ombuds.

### II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE OMBUDS

The Conference Ombuds Program is designed to be an independent, impartial, informal, and confidential channel for conference attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone participating in NPC26 to discuss any issues related to the conference. The ombuds selected to provide these services ("Conference Ombuds" or "Ombuds") will be available to provide information confidentially and will provide a safe place for people to discuss such issues as safety, actions from overly-friendliness to harassment, micro-aggressions, free speech, integrity, privacy, conflicts of interest (including accessibility, lodging, and food), alcohol consumption and conference cliques. The ombuds is a resource to informally discuss any of these or other conference-related concerns and help inquirers develop options, problem-solve, create paths for self-advocacy, and make informed choices about the best path forward.

This Charter sets forth the operating principles under which the conference ombuds program will operate and reflects the APA's commitment to the conference ombuds and the role of this position.

### **III. STANDARDS OF OPERATION**

The Conference Ombuds is a member of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and shall adhere to IOA's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice in performing ombuds services for NPC26. See <https://www.ombudsassociation.org/standards-of-practice-code-of-ethics>. These tenets require organizational ombuds programs to be independent, impartial, informal, and confidential:

#### **1. Independence**

The Conference Ombuds is an independent contractor, not an APA staff member or employee. The Ombuds functions outside existing administrative and management structures pursuant to a contract between MWI and the APA and does not participate in APA decision-making, investigations, or formal processes.

#### **2. Impartiality**

As an impartial third party, the Ombuds assists individuals and groups in exploring concerns, identifying options, and considering issues of fairness and equity from multiple perspectives. The Ombuds does not, however, provide legal or other kinds of advocacy or enforce the APA's Code of Conduct and Harassment Policy at APA conferences. The Conference Ombuds does not render services or become involved in any matter that would be a conflict of interest for a Conference Ombuds to do so.

#### **3. Informality**

The Conference Ombuds provides a means for off-the-record discussions of concerns. The Ombuds is empowered to provide only informal assistance and do not conduct investigations, make or override decisions, determine policy, testify or participate in formal or administrative proceedings with respect to confidential communications, provide legal advice, or accept legal notice of claims against the APA or any other organization, entity, or person. For those wishing to assert claims or have on-the-record communications, the Conference Ombuds can identify appropriate formal channels so that individuals may make informed choices about which process they decide is best for them to pursue.

#### **4. Confidentiality**

Communications with the Conference Ombuds are confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. This principle of confidentiality helps the Conference Ombuds provide a safe place for conference attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone participating in NPC26 to voice concerns, evaluate issues, and identify options for possible further action. The Conference Ombuds Program is a purely voluntary resource. No one is required to use it, but those who do will be deemed to have

agreed to respect and abide by the above principles on which it was created and not to call the Ombuds, MWI, or the Conference Ombuds Program to testify or produce documents related to confidential communications in any administrative or legal proceeding. The APA has also agreed not to call upon, or attempt to have, the Conference Ombuds or the Conference Ombuds Program disclose confidential communications, or to testify or produce documents relating to confidential communications, in any administrative or legal proceeding.

Consistent with the International Ombuds Association Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, the only exceptions to this confidentiality principle are: (a) when, during the course of communications with the Conference Ombuds, an inquirer gives the Ombuds permission to make a disclosure, and the Ombuds agrees it is appropriate to do so, or (b) when the Conference Ombuds determines that there is an imminent threat of serious harm.

#### **IV. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The Conference Ombuds will be involved in pre-event planning to ensure she is well-prepared to support conference attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone else participating in NPC26 regarding any conference-related issues identified above.

The conference ombuds will be available onsite from April 24-28, 2026. Conference attendees, staff, and exhibitors will be advised how to contact the ombuds, and the times and places where the ombuds may be found will be posted online.

As an impartial third-party resource, the Ombuds supports fair and equitable processes by assisting individuals in identifying options and making informed choices. The Ombuds, however, does not provide legal or other forms of advocacy or enforce the APA's Code of Conduct and Harassment Policy.

The Conference Ombuds has been authorized to continue assisting inquirers after the conference for a limited period when consultation has not yet been concluded or when an issue is raised within a reasonable time after an event or conference.

#### **V. ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING**

The Conference Ombuds reports to the Chief Operations Officer and the Meeting Director. The Ombuds may, at their discretion, meet with and alert other senior leadership at the APA to share any systemic issues or trends the Ombuds believes may help the organization address identified or potential issues, improve the climate for membership in future conferences, or improve its policies and practices. Even when reporting issues to senior leadership, the Conference Ombuds will protect the confidentiality of those using Ombuds' services.

**VI. RECORD-KEEPING**

The Ombuds provides only informal assistance, and although informal notes may be temporarily created only as needed, the Ombuds does not retain permanent records containing personally identifiable information or confidential communications. Communications with the Conference Ombuds are not part of APA's formal records, personnel files, or investigative files. Any post-event or conference reporting to senior leadership will include only aggregate data, the Ombuds' insights and observations on the types of issues raised, and any recommendations.

**VII. INQUIRY ABOUT THE USE OF THE CONFERENCE OMBUDS IS INAPPROPRIATE; RETALIATION FOR DOING SO IS PROHIBITED**

The APA supports efforts to manage and resolve conflicts informally to preserve collegial and effective working relationships and to avoid the time and expense of formal proceedings or litigation. Because the Conference Ombuds Resource is intended to be a confidential resource, it is not appropriate for anyone at the APA to inquire about an individual's use of it or any communication that may have occurred there. Furthermore, discouraging or preventing eligible visitors from using the Conference Ombuds Resource is inappropriate because it is contrary to the organization's intent to provide it as a resource for early and informal management and resolution of conflicts.

Retaliation includes direct or indirect actions, whether overt or subtle, that could reasonably discourage an individual from consulting the Conference Ombuds Resource.

While the organization supports and encourages the use of the Conference Ombuds Resource for conflict management, an individual's use of the Ombuds Resource must always be entirely voluntary. Reminding individuals that the Conference Ombuds Resource is available as an option is acceptable. However, no one may be ordered or required to visit the Ombuds, nor may an individual be punished for not seeing the Conference Ombuds.

All attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone participating in NPC26 shall have the right to consult the Conference Ombuds without fear of retaliation or reprisal. Retaliation against any attendee or staff for consulting with the Conference Ombuds or against the Ombuds for actions within the legitimate scope of duties as described in the Charter is prohibited.

**VIII. PROCEDURE FOR REVISION OR REVOCATION OF THIS DOCUMENT**

This Charter remains in effect unless otherwise revoked by the APA, and such revocation shall be provided in writing to MWI's Director of Ombuds Services. Any revision to this Charter shall be jointly agreed to in writing by both the APA and the Ombuds representatives from MWI and shall be appended to this document.

CLIENT

Signed:



Name: Alejandro Fuentes

Title: Chief Financial and Member Engagement Officer

Date: 02/17/26

*Duly Authorized Hereunto*

MWI

Signed:



Name: Charles P. Doran

Title: Executive Director

Date: 02/18/2026

*Duly Authorized Hereunto*