Ombuds Policy

I. The Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) is committed to providing ombuds services to the ACR membership.

II. The goal of the ombuds is to assist the ACR community in managing conflict constructively and to support positive change. Constructively managing conflict stimulates teamwork, promotes excellence, and enhances engagement.

III. The ACR Board will designate an individual to serve as the ACR Ombuds for a two-year term. The ombuds may be a member of ACR, but will hold no other position within the organization.

IV. Ombuds services will be provided in accordance with the International Ombuds Association’s Code of Ethics, as follows:
   a. The ACR Ombuds will be truthful, act with integrity, foster respect for all members of the community served (hereinafter “Member”), and promote procedural fairness;
   b. The ACR Ombuds will operate in accordance with the International Ombuds Association’s Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, acting as a confidential, impartial, informal, and independent resource for Members;
   c. The ACR Ombuds functions independently and is not associated with any compliance function; the ombuds does not serve as an agent of notice for the Board;
   d. The ACR Ombuds is independent and communication with the ombuds is confidential. This includes allegations that may be perceived to be violations of laws, regulations, or policies, including the ACR Sexual Harassment policy;
   e. The ACR Ombuds may unilaterally violate confidentiality if the ACR Ombuds believes there is an imminent risk of serious harm;
   f. The ACR Ombuds will avoid involvement in cases where there may be a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when the ACR Ombuds’ private interests, real or perceived, supersede or compete with his or her dedication to the impartial and independent nature of the role of the ACR Ombuds. When a real or perceived conflict exists, the ACR Ombuds should take all steps necessary to disclose and/or to avoid the conflict.

V. The functions of the ACR Ombuds include but are not limited to:
   a. Providing a safe and confidential forum to surface individual, group, and/or systemic issues;
   b. Listening and helping to clarify Member concerns;
   c. Assisting in the identification of underlying issues and concerns;
   d. Providing information and exploring possible options available to Members;
   e. Where voluntarily agreed by all involved parties, conducting mediations, subject to a written mediation agreement;
   f. Providing a voluntary, confidential forum where whistleblowers may raise concerns;
   g. Collecting data on emerging trends and patterns in ACR, within the scope of their role;
h. Evaluating and analyzing trend information and making recommendations for systemic change;

i. Providing feedback to the ACR Board while protecting the anonymity of the ACR Ombuds’ visitors;

j. Publishing a biennial report that will be made available to the ACR membership at the end of the ACR Ombuds’ two-year term.

VI. The ACR Ombuds will have the following authority and limitations:

a. The ACR Ombuds is authorized to discuss options available to Members, including both informal and formal processes;

b. The ACR Ombuds will request and be provided ACR records and data, for the purpose of facilitating resolution of a particular situation and for analyzing information in order to make recommendations for systemic change;

c. The ACR Ombuds may decline to inquire into a matter or may withdraw from a case if the ACR Ombuds believes involvement is inappropriate for any reason, including a matter not brought in good faith or which appears to be a misuse of the ACR Ombuds’ function;

d. The ACR Ombuds will publicize its non-notice role to the ACR membership and clearly articulate that communication to the ACR Ombuds does not constitute notice to ACR;

e. The ACR Ombuds will not conduct formal investigations of any kind. The ACR Ombuds will not participate in formal dispute processes or outside agency complaints or lawsuits, neither on behalf of any Member or on behalf of ACR. Because confidentiality and informality are critically important to the ACR Ombuds, all communications with the ACR Ombuds are made with the understanding that they are confidential, off-the-record exploration of options to resolve issues, and that the ACR Ombuds may not be called to testify as a witness in any formal or legal proceeding and may not be compelled to reveal confidential communications;

f. The ACR Ombuds does not have authority to adjudicate, impose remedies or sanctions, or to enforce or change policies or procedures.