The Office of the Public Advocate assists in finding resolutions to public complaints and concerns involving Snohomish County government. This office is an independent entity and serves as an impartial intermediary between the citizen and the county government.

How can the Office of the Public Advocate help me?

The Office of the Public Advocate is a free public service dedicated to finding a transparent and ethical resolution in conflicts with Snohomish County government agencies in a fair and impartial way. Although the Public Advocate cannot determine outcome or overturn decisions within Snohomish County government, they can work with departments and division management to determine if a possible alternative solution can be met.

What kind of complaints does the Public Advocate’s Office take?

The Public Advocate can consider complaints surrounding administrative acts that are:
- Contrary to county law or regulation
- Based on mistaken facts or irrelevant considerations
- Services inefficiently performed
- Unclear or inadequately explained when reasons should have been revealed
- Unreasonable, unfair, oppressive or inconsistent with the general course of an administrative agency’s functioning
- Improper in motivation or based on irrelevant considerations

Can I remain anonymous?

Anyone utilizing the Office of the Public Advocate can remain anonymous if they contact the Public Advocate via phone or in person.

If you send an email or any printed item to the Office of the Public Advocate, it is subject to the Public Records Act (Chapter 42.56 RCW).
Contacting the Public Advocate

What steps should I take before contacting the Public Advocate?

1. Establish the issue.
   Determine exactly what the problem is and what remedy you are seeking.

2. Talk to a supervisor.
   Ask to speak with a supervisor if the staff in an agency is unable to assist you. Find out if the agency needs any additional information from you that will help them better understand the problem.

   Whether you are seeking a service or filing a complaint, keep records of the contact(s) you have. Keep copies of all documents you receive or provide.

What can’t the Public Advocate help with?

The Public Advocate cannot investigate the administrative conduct of:

- The Snohomish County Executive and his/her personal staff
- The Prosecuting Attorney or his/her staff
- The Judicial Branch of county government
- Any governmental entity other than Snohomish County
- Any private business or non-profit organization
- An issue about which you have an appeal in process, or are currently taking court (legal) action

Before contacting the Public Advocate, ask the right questions:

- Why was my request denied?
- What law or policy applies?
- Was the law or policy applied consistently?
- What appeal process (if any) is available to me?

How it works

Seeking resolution with the Public Advocate.

Has the complaint been through the appeals process?

- NO
  - The Public Advocate will provide you with information for a referral to the correct administrative office professional.

  If your complaint has completed the appeals process and has not been resolved, a formal or informal investigation could begin.

- YES
  - Has the complaint been resolved?
    - NO
      - An investigation by the Office of the Public Advocate will follow.
    - YES
      - No further action is needed.

Once the investigation is complete, the Public Advocate will issue a determination with recommendations for the entities involved.