Andrew M. Cuomo, *Governor*
Jeff Wise, *Executive Director*

NYS Justice Center
For the Protection of People with Special Needs

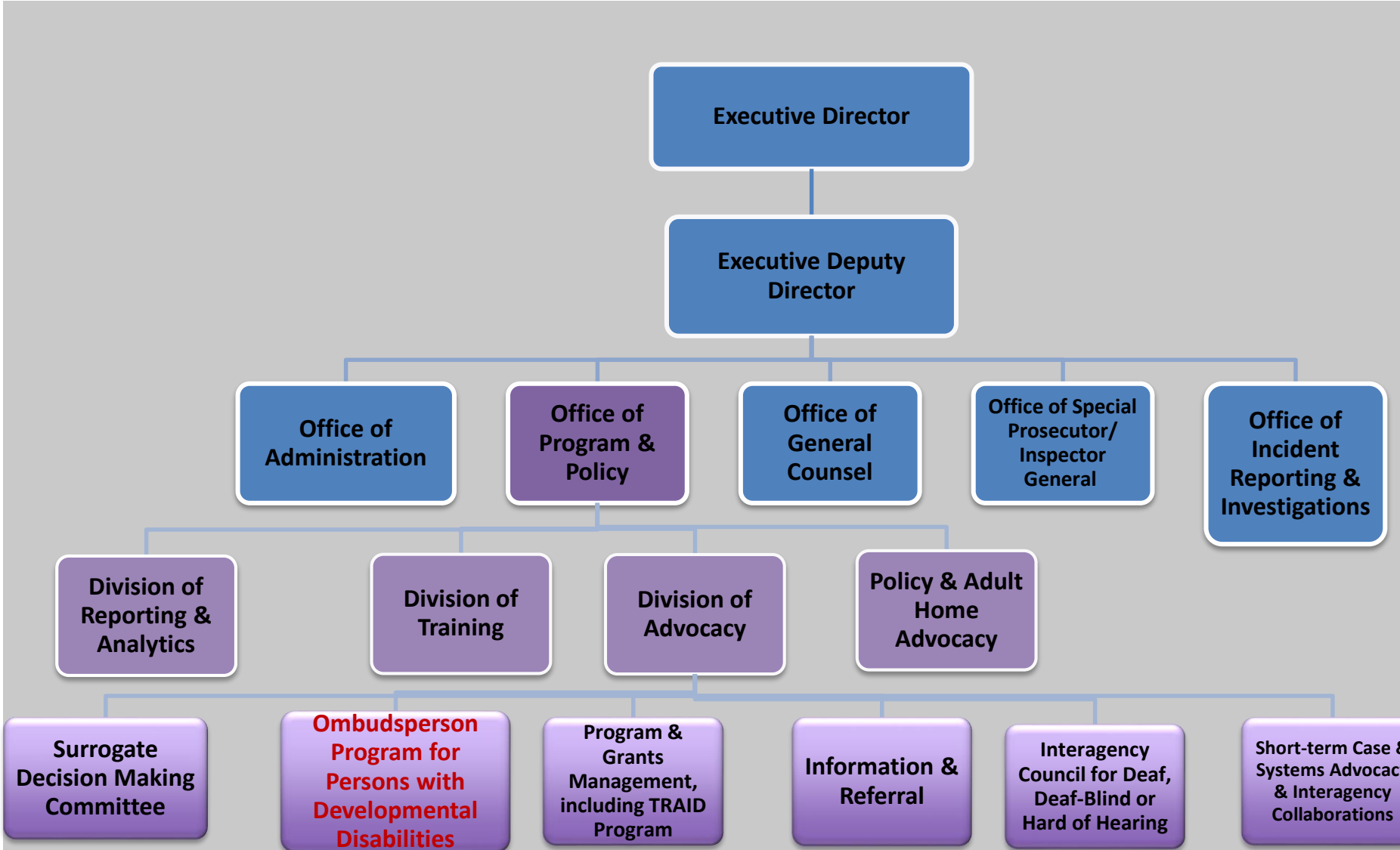
Division of Advocacy and Outreach

Ombudsperson Program for People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

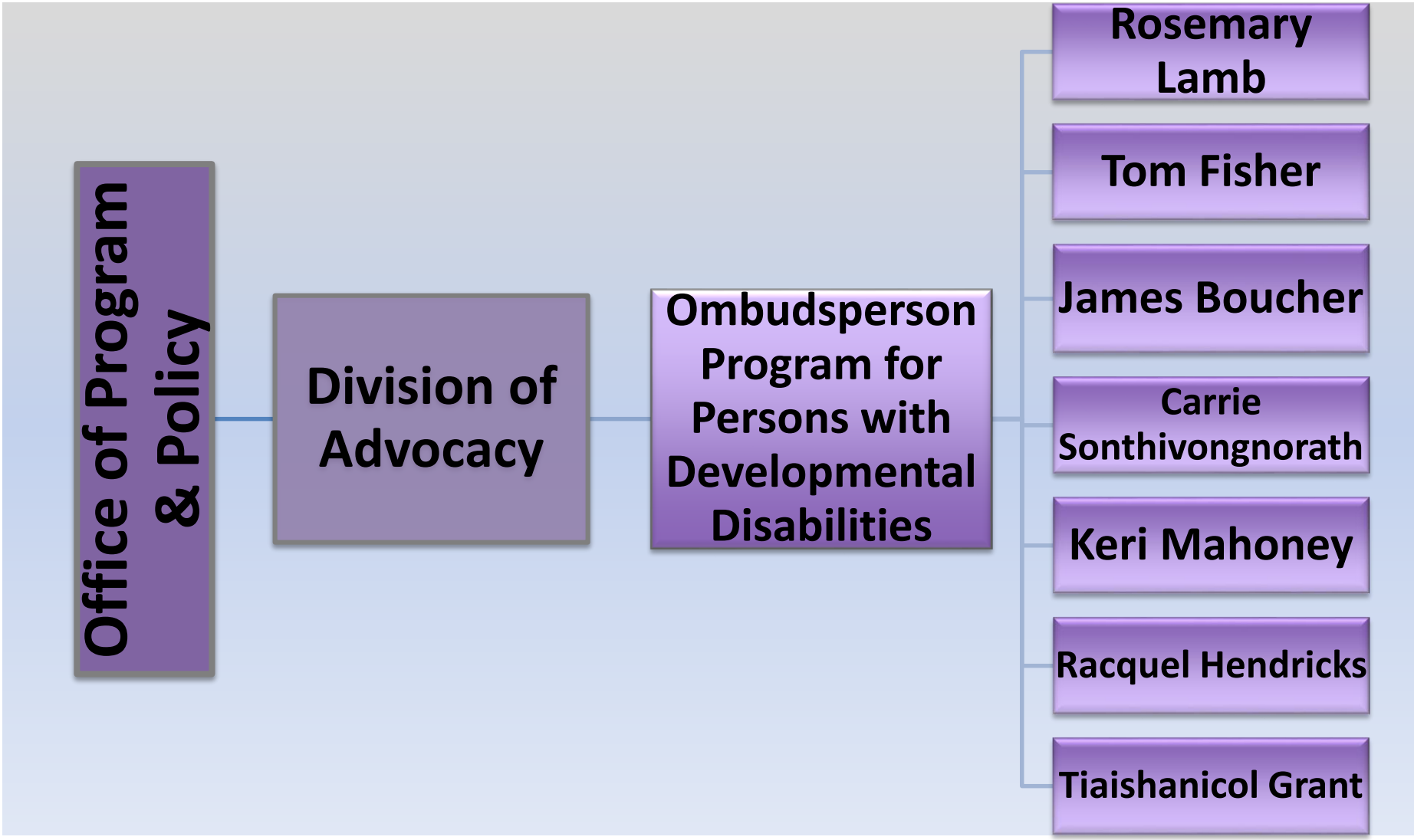
July 9, 2015

NYS Justice Center For the Protection of People with Special Needs

Organizational Chart



Organizational Chart



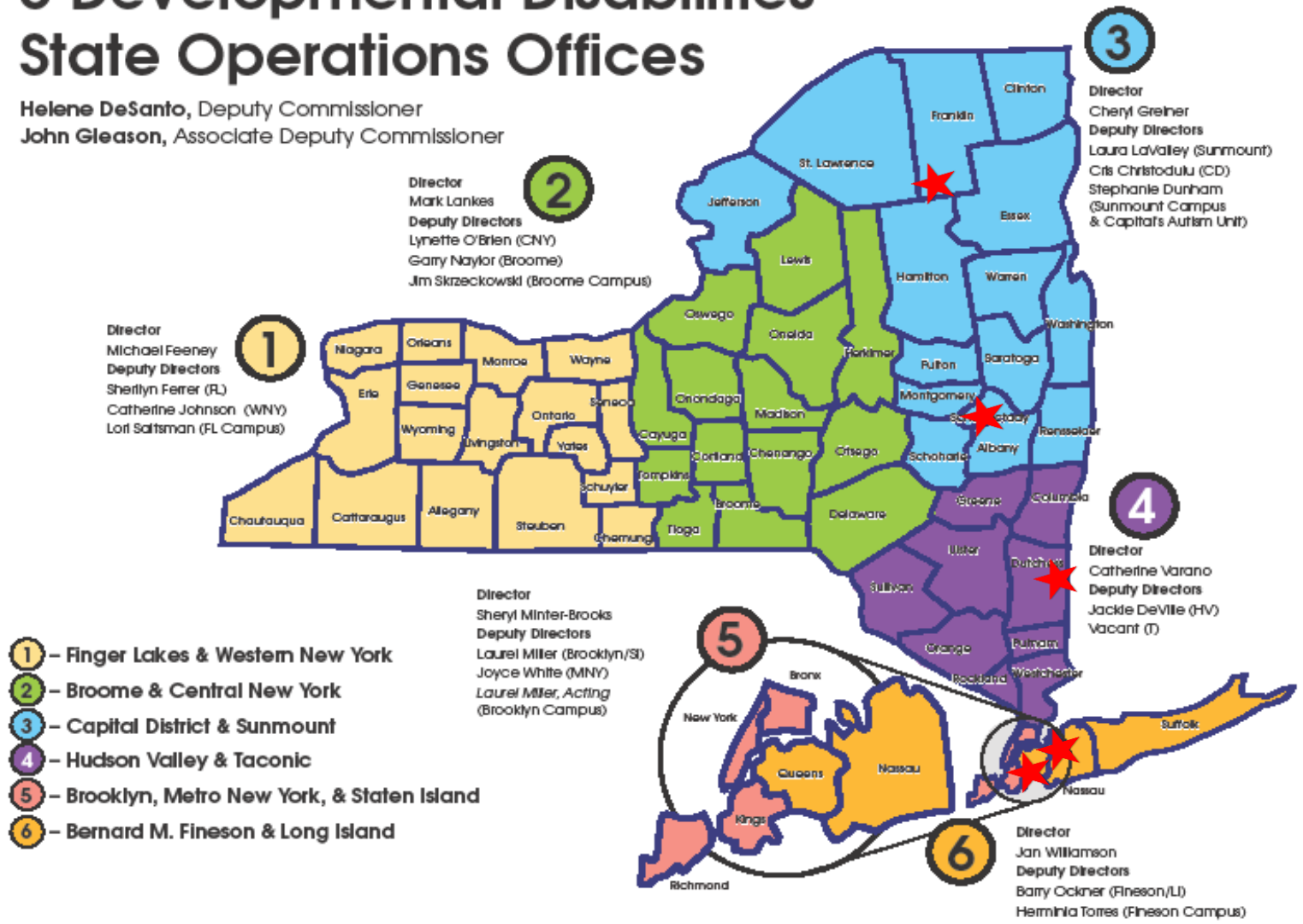
Ombudspersons and Regions

Name	Location	Office	Cell
James Boucher	Sunmount DDSO	518-359-4349	James.Boucher@ justicecenter.ny.gov
Carrie Sonthivongnorath	Capital District DDSO	518-370-7583	Carrie.Sonthivongnath@ justicecenter.ny.gov
Keri Mahoney	Taconic DDSO	845-877-6821, ext. 3035	Keri.Mahoney@ justicecenter.ny.gov
Racquel Hendricks	Bernard Fineson DDSO	718-217-5941	Racquel.Hendricks@ justicecenter.ny.gov
Tiaishanicol Grant	Brooklyn DDSO	718-642-6321	Tiaishanicol.Grant@ justicecenter.ny.gov

Updated: 2/14

6 Developmental Disabilities State Operations Offices

Helene DeSanto, Deputy Commissioner
John Gleason, Associate Deputy Commissioner



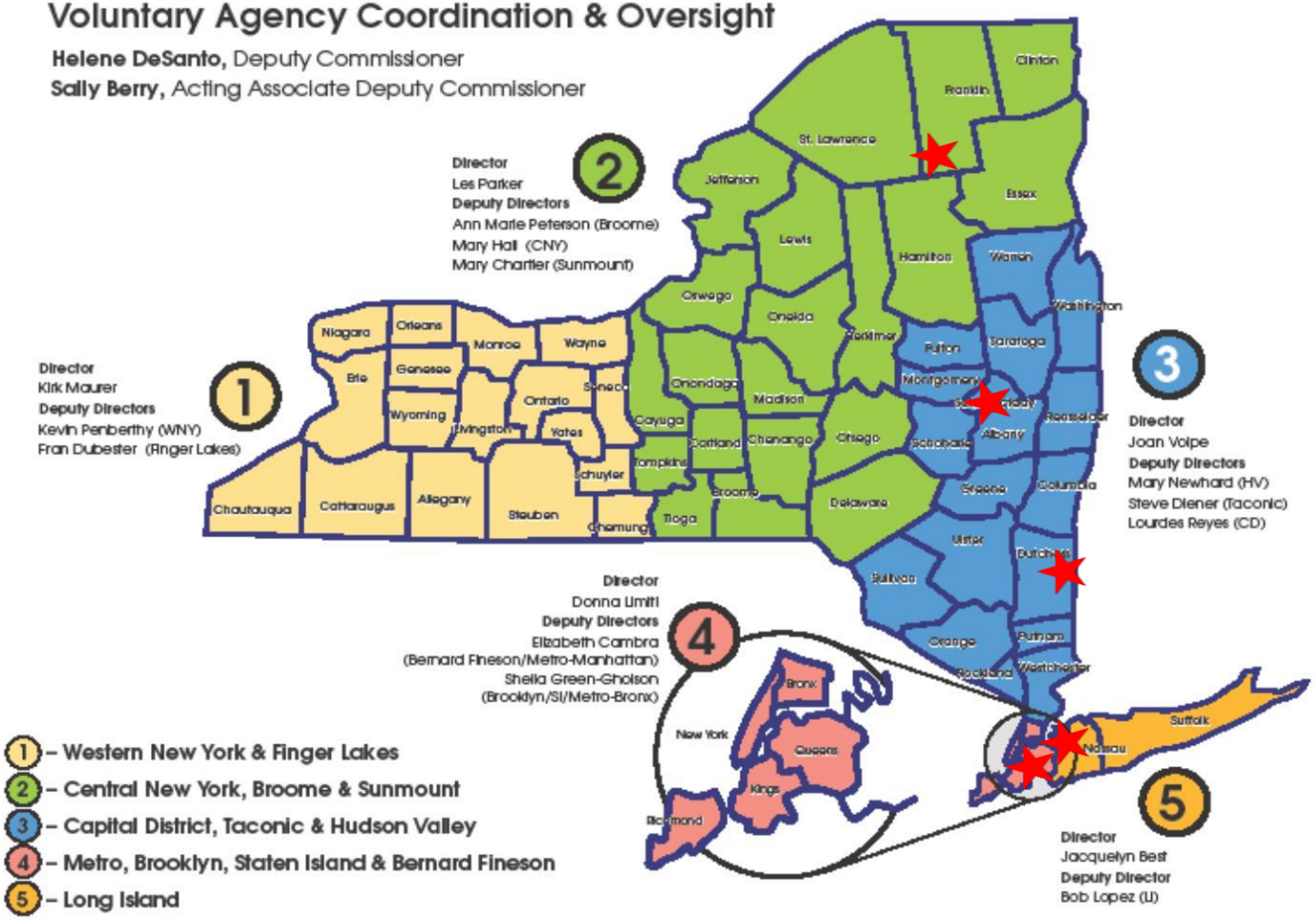
1 – Finger Lakes & Western New York
2 – Broome & Central New York
3 – Capital District & Sunmount
4 – Hudson Valley & Taconic
5 – Brooklyn, Metro New York, & Staten Island
6 – Bernard M. Fineson & Long Island

5 Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices

Updated: 2/14

Voluntary Agency Coordination & Oversight

Helene DeSanto, Deputy Commissioner
Sally Berry, Acting Associate Deputy Commissioner



1 – Western New York & Finger Lakes
2 – Central New York, Broome & Sunmount
3 – Capital District, Taconic & Hudson Valley
4 – Metro, Brooklyn, Staten Island & Bernard Fineson
5 – Long Island

Service Region

Since the catchment area is so large for each Ombudsperson:

- Proactively focus on the needs of people living on campus and those who moved out into the community within the past year to year and a half

- Reactively address the needs of other individuals as brought to their attention or assigned by the Director of Advocacy

Program History

- NYS MH LAW § 13.34 : NY Code - Section 13.34: On-site client advocacy in developmental centers
  - Enacted in 1987, Ombudspersons worked for OMRDD- (OPWDD)
  - In 2011, the law was amended to transfer the Ombudsperson Program to CQCAPD, including incumbents from Capital District, Taconic & Sunmount and vacancies in Brooklyn and Bernard Fineson
  - In 2013, the Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Act assumed responsibility for most of CQCAPD's Advocacy Services, transitioning the three original Ombudspersons and two others hired for Brooklyn and Bernard Fineson

Ombudspersons Responsibilities

- Advocate for individuals' and systemic needs
- Promote self-determination/self-advocacy for individuals receiving services
- Advise and consult with individuals receiving services, parents, guardians, correspondents and others about complaints or issues
- Review and attempt to remedy specific complaints with responsible and appropriate staff
- Refer the complaint to the appropriate agency or body, when appropriate

Ombudspersons Responsibilities Cont.

- Receive and keep confidential any complaint, information or inquiry from any source
- Keep records confidential, and shall not be available to the public
- Advise and consult with the Board of Visitors (BOV) with respect to complaints and to regularly attend board meetings
- Meet with the DDSO Director, Deputy Directors, or Administration regularly to address issues or concerns
- Meet with the Commissioner of OPWDD or a representative at least annually regarding systemic issues

Ombudspersons Responsibilities *Cont.*

Advocate through participation in:

- Behavior Review Committee
- Incident Review Committee
- Self-Advocacy Committee
- Risk Management Committee
- Consumer/Individual Quarterly/Annual/ Individual Service Plan (ISP) Meetings
- Placement Meetings

What Ombudspersons Do Not Do

- Do not investigate allegations of abuse, neglect or significant incidents
- Do not have access to information from a specific investigation until it is completed and the results are shared publically
- Do not have access to the Vulnerable Persons Central Registry (VPCR)
- Are not mandated reporters

How We Can Help You

- Collaborate with JC business units to provide advocacy services to individuals and/or families
- Encourage contacting Ombudsperson when investigators are making an announced visit to a state operated program
- Assist with supporting implementation of best practice recommendations or plans for remediation

External Relationships

- Mental Hygiene Legal Services (MHLS)
- Self-Advocacy Association of NYS
- Community based service providers
- Independent Living Centers
- Community advocacy groups
- Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) Regional Centers

Common Issues

- Poorly written transition plans and related implementation
- Serious behavioral incidents in the community resulting in placement in psychiatric centers, jail or back at the Developmental Centers (DCs)
- Loss of appropriate day services and employment

Common Issues *Cont.*

- Community based Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSCs) lack of knowledge about individual needs transitioning into the community
- Status of people that are 730 (court ordered)
- Lack of placement guidelines

Case Examples

Questions?