



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Office of the Corporate Ombudsman

American Red Cross

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A Message from the Corporate Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman was launched in October 2007 in accordance with the Governance Modernization Act of 2007. Our Office was created with the intention and focus of being a safe and confidential resource for all persons impacted by the American Red Cross, its workplace, mission and services to share their concerns. Since October 2007, we have provided resources and support to nearly 6,900 constituents; reached over 18,900 constituents through conflict resolution, education, outreach, and facilitation; and addressed approximately 17,350 issues.

I am pleased to present the thirteenth annual report on the activities and initiatives of the Office of the Corporate Ombudsman for fiscal year 2020—from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. This report reflects concerns and inquiries brought to the Ombudsman Office from both internal and external constituents.

In FY20, the Ombudsman Office provided resources and supported 1,458 issues raised by 721 constituents. Through outreach, trainings, and group facilitations we were able to reach an additional 1,536 volunteers, employees and partners while supporting our donors, and recipients of our mission-related services. The Ombudsman Office helps identify trends and emerging issues within the organization to inform leadership about matters that may impact the organization.

The issues raised with the Ombudsman comprise a small slice of data from self-selecting internal and external constituents. Moreover, the role of the Office of the Ombudsman is to provide informal dispute resolution and informal mediation, and to provide guidance on how best to raise or address issues within the organization. While we do not investigate or determine the veracity of the issues raised, we advocate for a fair process.

The Office of Investigations, Compliance and Ethics investigates allegations of wrongdoing in administrative, civil and criminal matters. The Office of Investigations, Compliance and Ethics provides oversight of the Whistleblower hotlines and fully supports any employee, volunteer or member of management who reports fraud, waste, abuse, Red Cross policy violations, illegal, unsafe or unethical conduct, or any other misconduct within the organization.

A few additional enhancements we made this year include virtual Ombudsman Office, leveraging technology and hosting two virtual Ombuds Day events for employees and volunteers. We connected staff and managers to the Human Resources SharePoint site for issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided trends to the Biomedical Services team from donors and staff regarding pandemic related questions, supported the workforce in discovering ways in which to survive their “new normal” and navigate a remote work environment. The Ombudsman Office also provided support to individuals and teams confronting issues of racial justice and inequality by hosting sessions, providing leaders with facilitation resources to help them create a safe space to engage their teams in a dialogue around issues of race and inequality.

Looking forward, we will continue to support the dispute resolution process as a confidential, neutral, informal and independent office in the American Red Cross and enhance collaboration with the formal parts of the organization as we navigated a new work environment predicated by world events.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Villafaña, Psy.D., CO-OP®
Corporate Ombudsman

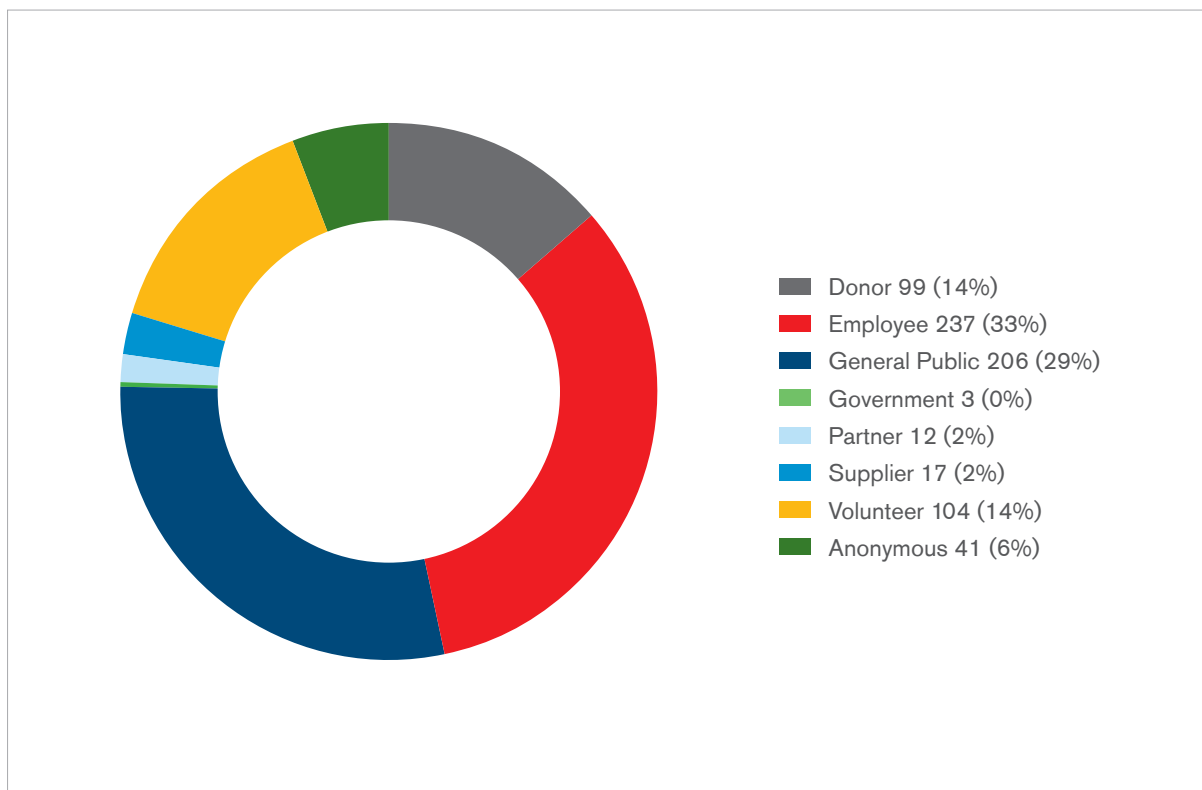
Constituent Profile

It is important to note that an increase or drop in the number of contacts with the Ombudsman Office does not necessarily indicate growing or reduced problems in the organization.

In FY20, 719 constituents reached out to the Ombudsman Office, and received resources and support to address their inquiries and issues compared to 994 constituents in FY19. The decrease in constituent contacts in the latter part of the fiscal year was primarily due to a decrease in outreach events and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic shifts towards a virtual work environment.

Figure 1 illustrates the number and composition of internal and external constituents who contacted the Ombudsman Office in FY20 excluding 1,536 recipients from outreach, group facilitations and training and an additional 105 contacts who either did not leave a message, were unable to schedule time, or whose reason for reaching the Ombudsman Office was not within the scope of the Red Cross or the Office of the Ombudsman.

Figure 1. All Constituents (719 Total)

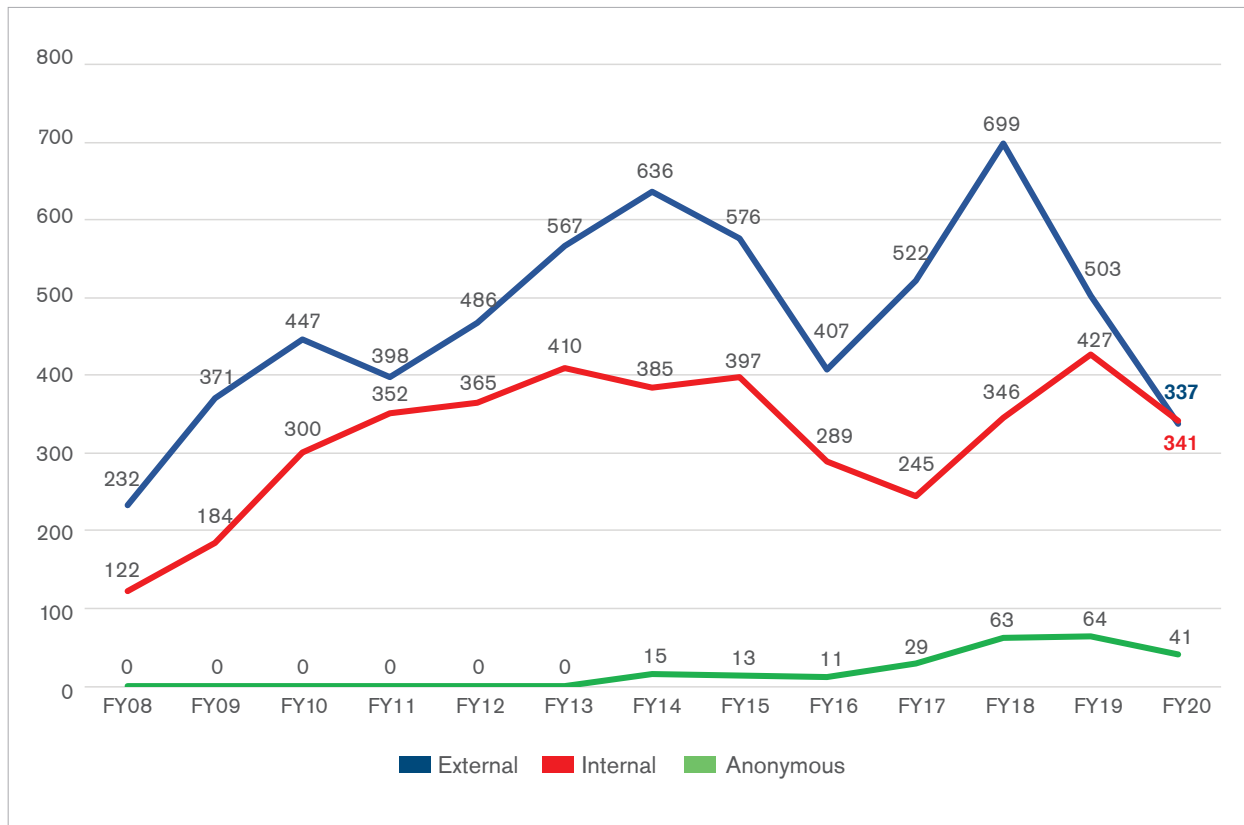


In FY20, 46 percent of contacts receiving Ombudsman resources and support were initiated by external stakeholders, while 48 percent were initiated by internal stakeholders. The remaining 6 percent of contacts identified as “anonymous” represents 41 contacts compared to 64 anonymous contacts in FY19.

External constituent contacts are categorized as government, current partners, suppliers (prospective), blood donors, financial donors, service members and the general public. Internal constituent contacts are categorized as employees, volunteers, former employees, former volunteers, current contractors, and retirees.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship of internal, external and anonymous contacts since the Ombudsman Office began its reporting in FY08.

Figure 2. Internal and External Constituents by Fiscal Year



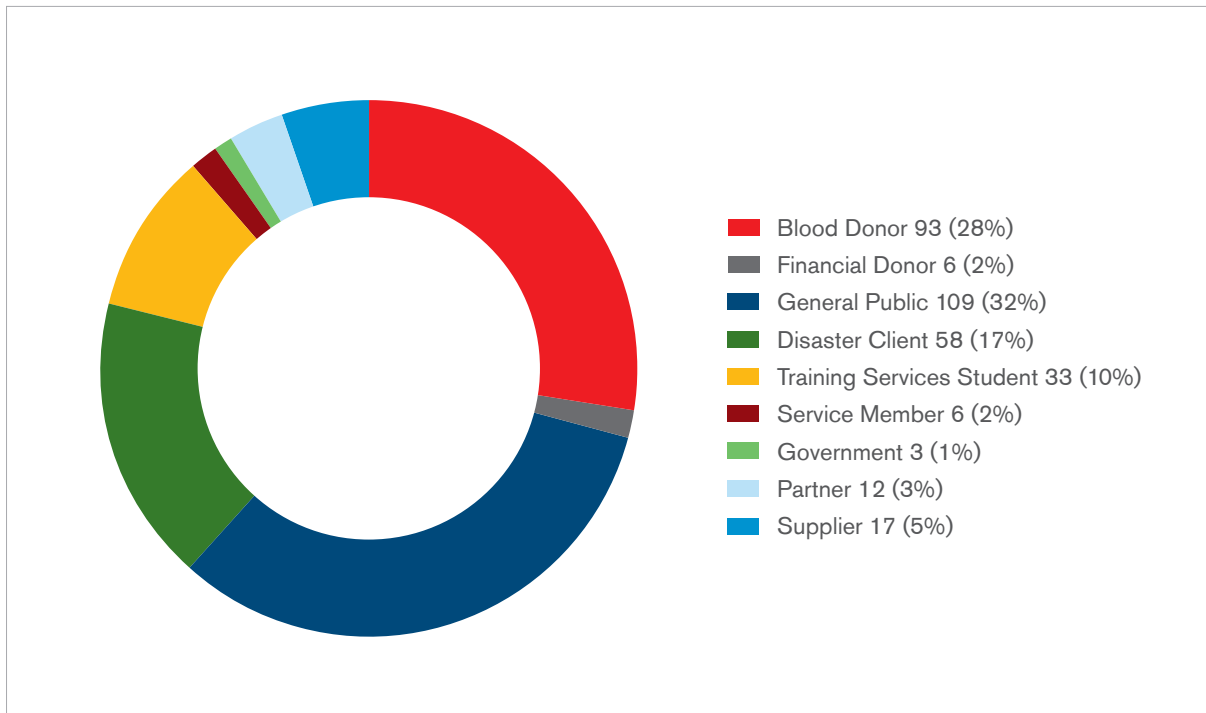
External Constituents

In FY20, a total of 337 external constituents contacted the Office of the Ombudsman with concerns or inquiries and received support and resources. We do not report detailed information on those that wish to remain anonymous, and they are not included in this part of the report.

During FY20, Red Cross donors accounted for 14 percent of all constituents contacting the Ombudsman Office and 30 percent of external constituents. Of the 99 donors reaching out to the Office of the Ombudsman, 93 were blood donors and 6 were financial donors with various concerns. It should be noted that the blood donor contacts are from a base of nearly 2.54 million volunteer donors nationwide.

Figure 3 illustrates the various types of external constituent contacts.

Figure 3. External Constituents (337 Total)



*In FY18, there were 377 constituents requesting resources related to the Hurricane Harvey Immediate Assistance program.

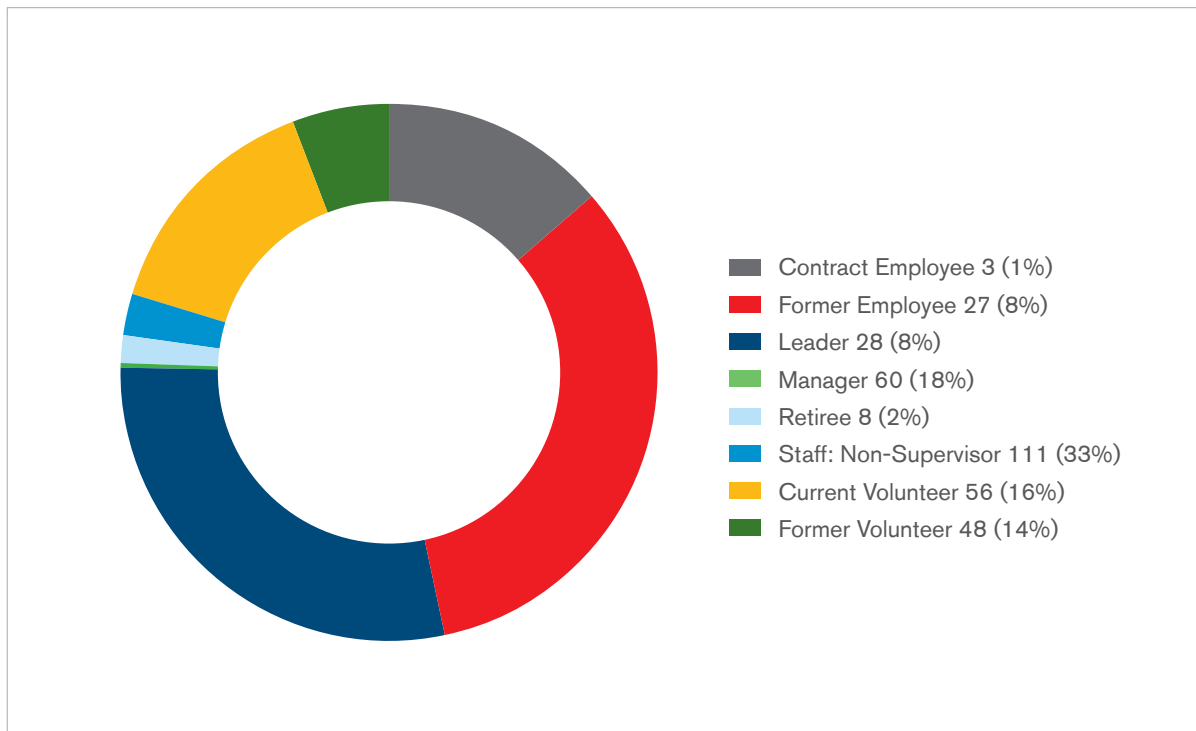
Internal Constituents

In FY20, 202 current employees contacted the Ombudsman Office. Employees comprised 69 percent of internal constituents and 33 percent of all constituents to the Ombudsman Office in FY20. We do not collect detailed information on those that wish to remain anonymous and they are not included in this part of the report.

Leader is defined as someone who supervises multiple teams or is in an executive role. A manager is responsible for a program, supervises work groups or teams with deliverables. A contract employee is generally hired for a specific job, for a defined period of time, at a specific rate of pay. AmeriCorps participants, temporary disaster employees or an employee contracted through a third-party agency have been categorized as contract employees for data purposes.

Figure 4 reflects internal constituents by category and role within the Red Cross.

Figure 4. Internal Constituents (341 Total)



Issues

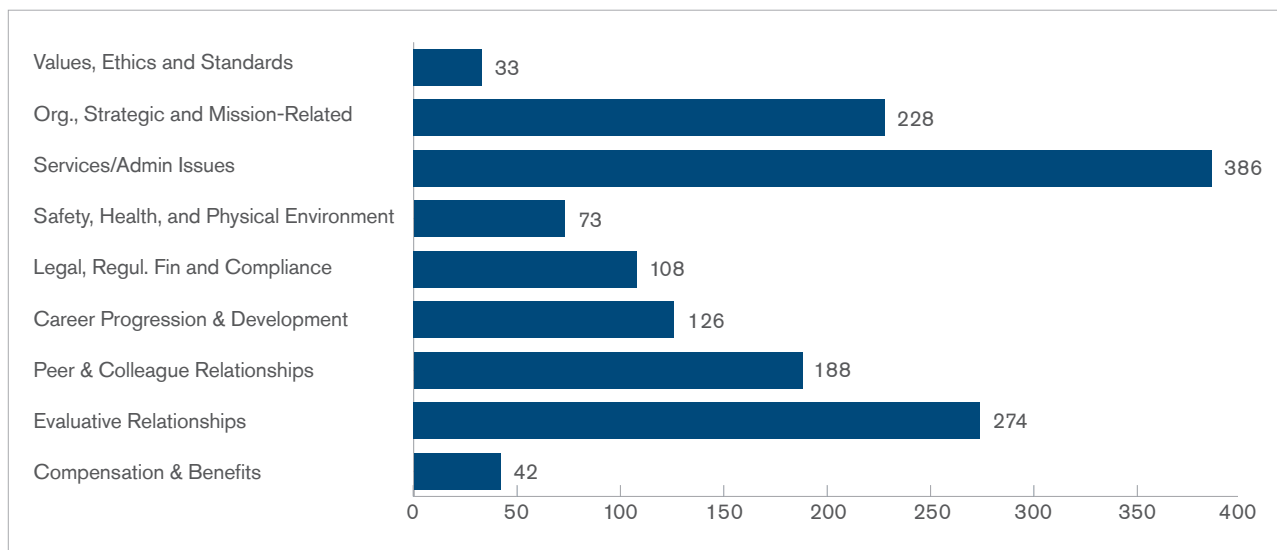
Reasons for Contacting the Ombudsman Office

In FY20, a total of 1,458 issues were brought to the attention of the Ombudsman Office. The issues are represented according to the uniform reporting categories promulgated for the organizational ombudsman field by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). The reporting categories are designed to classify the types of issues for which people use Ombudsman services and help identify trends for consistent reporting.

The top issues and sub-issues in:

- Services/Administrative Issues are: (1) quality of services provided and (2) responsiveness/timelines.
- Evaluative Relationships are: (1) department climate, and (2) requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise, or a consultation on how to work with situations in an evaluative relationship.
- Organizational, Strategic & Mission-Related are: (1) technology systems (2) principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving, including records management, and (3) communication content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, and quality of communication about strategic issues.

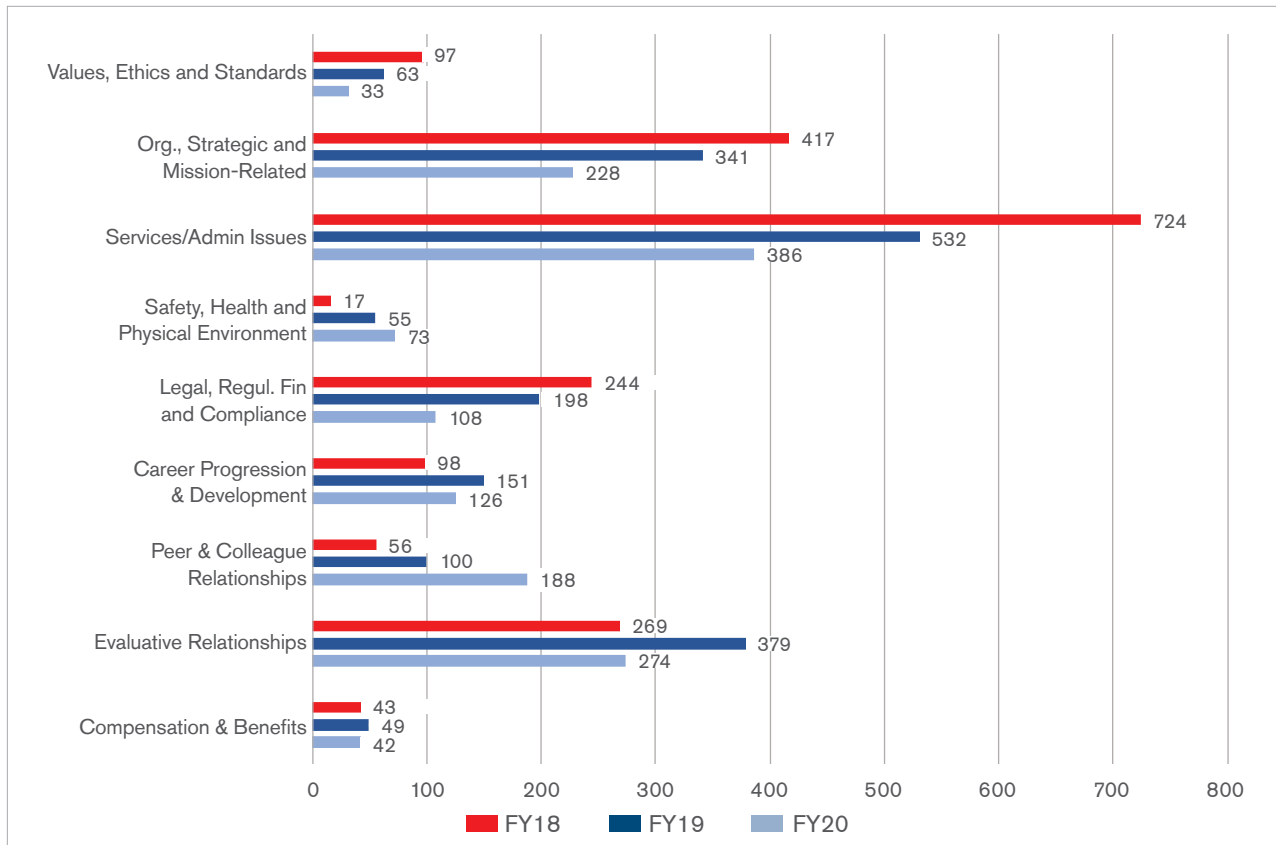
Figure 5. Issue Identification
All Issues Identified Under IOA Uniform Reporting Categories
(1,458 Total)



It is important to note that the issue count reflects individual contacts to the Office of the Ombudsman raising multiple concerns; trainings and group facilitations to address organizational issues; and issues raised by constituents who have reached out to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Figure 6 illustrates the issues raised across the past three fiscal years (FY18-FY20).

Figure 6. Issues – Yearly Comparison



*The spike in issues in the Services/Administrative Issues category in FY18 is reflective of constituent inquiries related to the Hurricane Harvey Immediate Assistance program.

**Note that Services/Administrative Issues inquiries and concerns include requests from external constituents seeking information on services which are out of the scope of the Red Cross mission, questions regarding how the American Red Cross is supporting the COVID-19 pandemic, and other general inquiries including prospective vendor inquiries.

Issues Per Organizational Unit

Figure 7 reflects the number and percentage of issues raised in FY20 pertaining to Red Cross organizational units. There were 206 inquiries from the general public of which 26 inquired about Red Cross services that were not mission related or related to a corporate department specifically and have not been assigned to an organizational unit.

Humanitarian Services includes: International Services, Disaster Cycle Services, Service to the Armed Forces, the Office of Volunteer Services and the chapter networks in the field. Biomedical Services includes inquiries and concerns related to all Red Cross operations focused on blood product recruitment, collections, manufacturing, testing and distribution. Issues and concerns related to specific corporate departments have been designated to National Headquarters (NHQ). All issues presented by a constituent have been attributed to the identified primary unit of concern.

Figure 7. Issues Per Organizational Unit (1,458 Total)

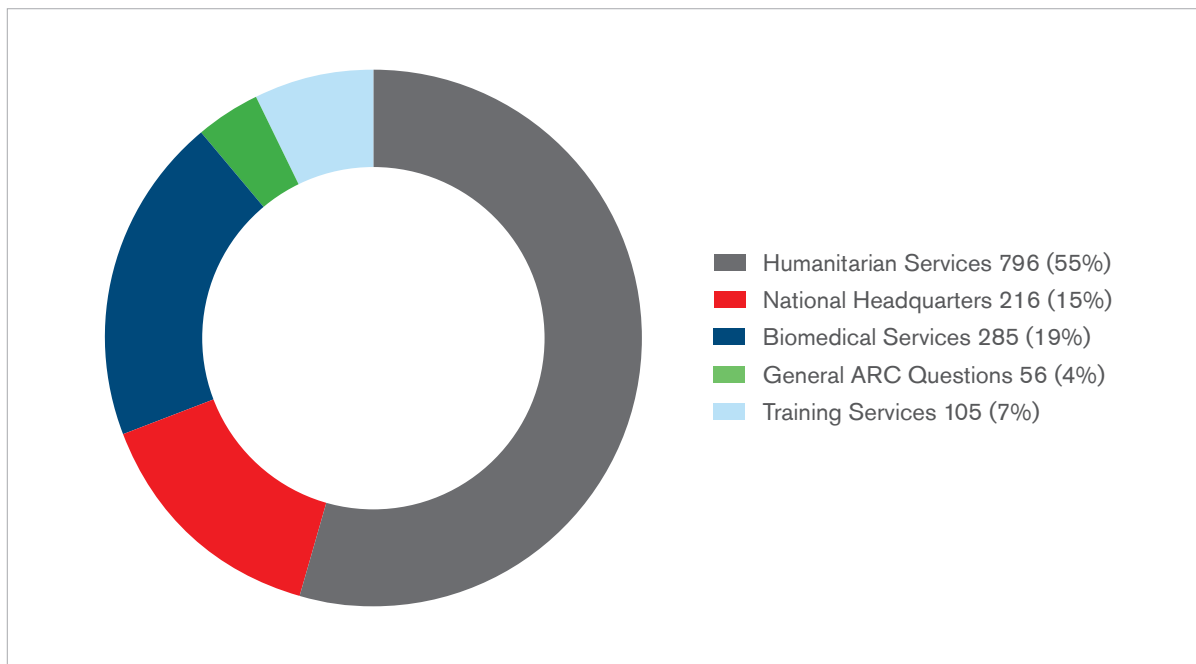
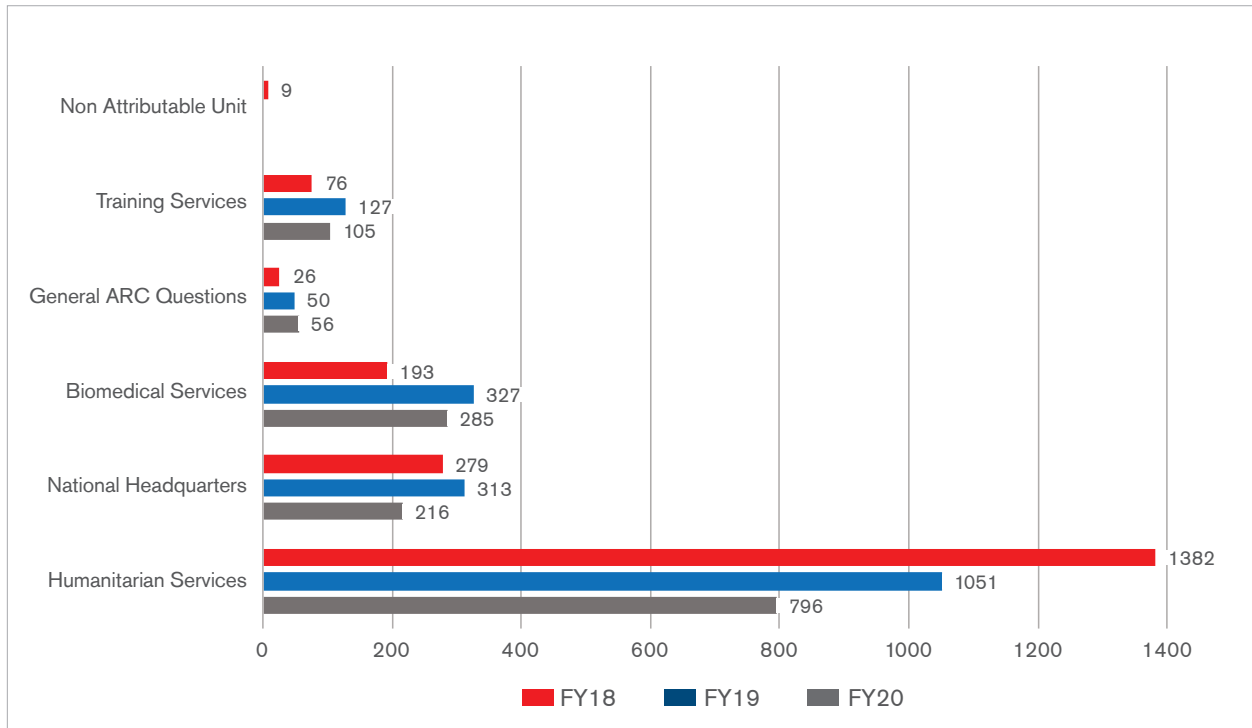


Figure 8 illustrates issues in relation to the Red Cross organizational lines of service from FY18 through FY20.

Figure 8. Issues Per Unit – Yearly Comparison



*The top three issues for Humanitarian Services are: (1) Evaluative Relationships, (2) Peer and Colleague Relationships, and (3) Organizational, Strategic and Mission-Related Issues.

Ombudsman Office Actions

In FY20, the Ombudsman Office engaged in 27 activities related to outreach, training and group facilitation, reaching approximately 1,536 employees, volunteers and partners, and provided support to Spanish speaking constituents.

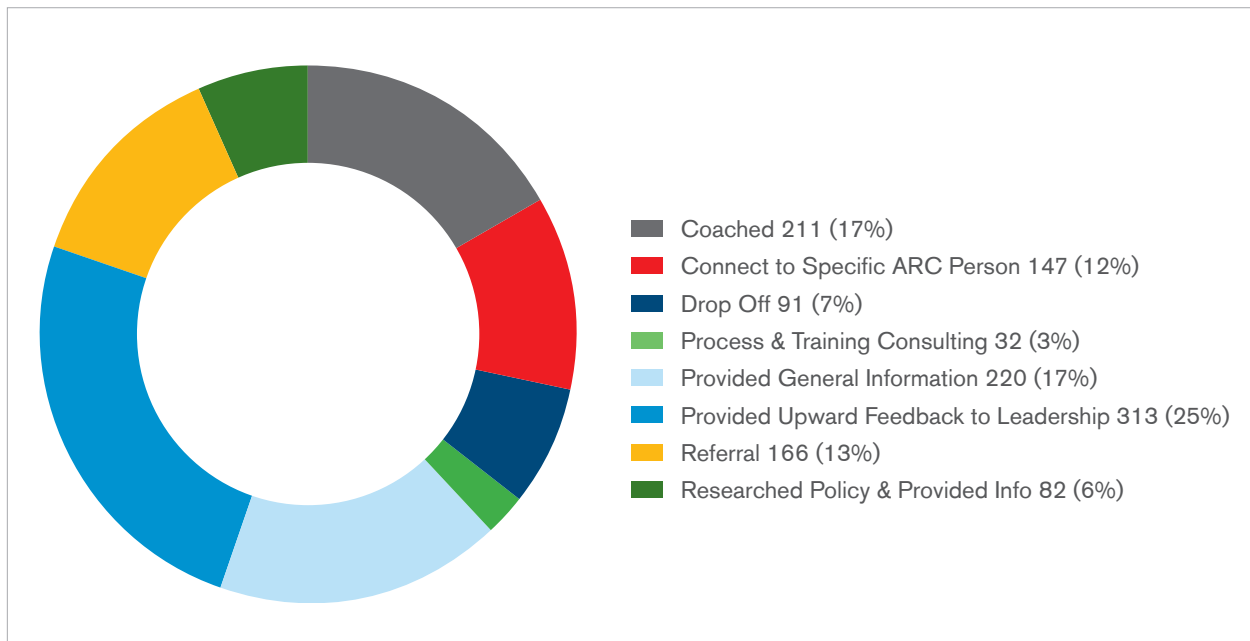
As an enhancement to other parts of the organization, and when appropriate, the Ombudsman Office refers constituents to appropriate departments for formal resolution. In FY20, we:

- made 166 referrals to formal parts of the organization such as Concern Connection Line, Human Resources, or the Office of General Counsel,
- connected 147 constituents to various departments in the Red Cross,
- coached, provided process and training consultation to 243 constituents, and
- researched policy and provided information to 302 constituents.

In addition, the Ombudsman helped 163 constituents facilitate conversations to help resolve conflict in the workplace, informal mediation was provided to two constituent groups, and virtual shuttle diplomacy was delivered to 75 constituent groups where resolutions were discovered and embraced, preventing a formal grievance and complaint from being made against the organization.

Figure 9 demonstrates the actions taken by the Ombudsman to bring cases towards resolution and excludes actions taken from group facilitations and trainings for 672 volunteers and employees.

Figure 9. Ombudsman Actions



*Drop Off contacts are categorized as questions, inquiries or concerns that come to the Ombudsman Office and the contacts are voluntarily "dropped" without resolution.

Supporting the Mission

The Ombudsman Office provides an independent, neutral, informal and off-the-record, confidential and alternate channel of communication for all constituents to bring forward and resolve workplace issues and concerns without fear of retribution at any level.

One of the roles of the Ombudsman Office is to provide “upward feedback” to leadership to proactively address workplace and service delivery questions, concerns and issues while maintaining the confidentiality of individual communications. In this way, the Ombudsman can serve as a valuable early warning system for the Red Cross to identify trends and systemic matters to help Red Cross leadership successfully manage risk and ensure Red Cross values and its mission are not compromised.

Ombudsman Office cases are handled in a variety of ways to help meet the needs of various constituents. These include confidential coaching, to help people think strategically through difficult situations, shuttle diplomacy, where we reach out to individuals involved in conflicts or disagreements independent of each other to help move them toward a mutually satisfactory resolution, and other dispute resolution and mediation techniques. As a neutral and independent office, we can also provide process consultations to assist individuals, teams, and leaders to identify the best intervention to address concerns, not limited to: introducing techniques to increase collaboration, communication and helping constituents create options for resolving conflicts.

Leaders, managers and supervisors have reached out to the Ombudsman Office in its neutral and informal role as facilitator to address team and group effectiveness and to gather climate survey data. Through group facilitation the following issues have been addressed: facilitation of race and inequality issues, team and group dynamics as it relates to change management and restructuring, interpersonal issues impacting teamwork, and applying conflict resolution techniques, supported by the Human Resources training curriculum, to real issues.

Ombudsman training addressed topics such as promoting a culture of trust and increased engagement, improving teamwork, designing strategies for difficult conversations, helping constituents identify and appreciate communication differences, increasing accountability and empowerment, skill building for facilitation of difficult conversations and support of the facilitative leadership course offered through Disaster Cycle Services.

Toward the end of the fiscal year, the Ombudsman Office provided support to leaders and teams in the area of Diversity & Inclusion when issues related to race, managing an inclusive work environment, and preventing workplace harassment. When requested to do so, we facilitated team discussions and helped leaders create psychological safety for their teams, as they introduced opportunities to share experiences and emotionally unpack much of what has transpired in our country from the pandemic to race and inequality.

As we celebrate our thirteenth year, the Office of the Ombudsman remains committed to serving the American Red Cross and its stakeholders in a capacity that reflects the Office of the Ombudsman Charter.

2007-2020

6,900 Constituents

Another 18,900 Reached
Through Outreach, Training
and Facilitation

17,350 Issues



**American
Red Cross**

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