



**American
Red Cross**

Office of the Corporate Ombuds

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



A Message from the Corporate Ombuds

The Office of the Ombuds continues to deliver dispute resolution services to the various constituents of the Red Cross. This year we put a renewed focus on implementing state of the art processes and technologies to ensure the Ombuds program remains confidential to create a safe space to meet the needs of volunteers, employees, and external constituents in the dispute resolution process.

I am honored to present the sixteenth annual report on activities of the Office of the Ombuds for the fiscal year 2023—from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. In FY23, Ombuds staff provided dispute resolution services, resources, and support for 1,433 issues raised by 1,080 constituents. This includes group facilitations and conflict management trainings for volunteers and employees. As always, the Office is focused on being a safe and confidential resource for anyone impacted by the American Red Cross, its workplace, mission, and services to share their concerns per the Governance Modernization Act of 2007.

The Red Cross Office of the Ombuds follows the International Ombuds Association standards of practice and code of ethics. We are confidential, informal, impartial, and independent and do not investigate or determine the veracity of the issues raised. By contrast, the Office of Ethics and Compliance investigates allegations of wrongdoing in administrative, civil, and criminal matters. In addition, the Office of Ethics and Compliance 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.

As an advocate for fairness, and promoting an engaged and inclusive culture, the role of the Office of the Ombuds is to provide dispute resolution and informal mediation, and to provide guidance on how best to raise or address issues within the organization. We communicate the experiences of our constituents to appropriate leaders of the American Red Cross to increase awareness on how policies may be practiced and help inform business leaders using the constituent experience. The Office of the Ombuds can be transformative and can empower individuals and teams to overcome disputes, conflicts and barriers that may stand in the way of reaching their full potential.

During FY23, the Office of the Ombuds, identified systemic trends and risks to help leaders make informed business and management decisions. We continued to nurture and strengthen relationships between organizational departments and internal partners, provided information about how policies are being practiced, and collaborated on issue resolution processes. This year we increased outreach and introduced monthly educational events focused on a variety of topics to promote effective conflict resolution skills. These sessions were attended by 409 volunteers and employees.

We continue to meet the needs of our constituents in a hybrid environment and provided support in the following areas: 305 workplace issues, 156 donor-related concerns and questions, and 133 disaster-related matters. This fiscal year, we saw an increase in the number of managers, current volunteers, and staff utilizing the services of the Office of the Ombuds.

We are committed to being a safe, confidential, and no barrier option for volunteers, employees and recipients of Red Cross services and we strive to be a trusted and credible resource for the Red Cross community.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Villafañe, Psy.D.
Corporate Ombuds

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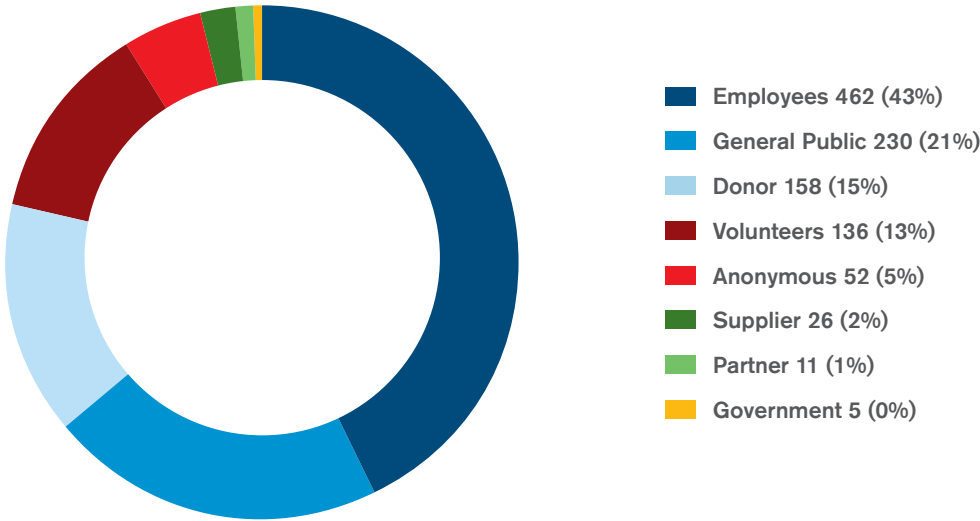
Constituent Profile

In FY23, there were 1,080 constituents received resources and support to address their inquiries and issues through the Office of the Ombuds. This is an increase from FY22 when 730 constituents sought support. This includes constituents wishing to remain anonymous, groups with multiple members, group facilitations, and trainings to address intergroup and intragroup conflict. An additional 409 employees and volunteers were reached through outreach and Ombuds educational events and are not factored into the information below.

There were an additional 102 contacts who either: did not leave a message, were unable to schedule time, or the reason for reaching the Office of the Ombuds was resolved or was outside the scope of the office, and no further action was needed by the Office of the Ombuds.

Figure 1 illustrates the number and composition of internal and external constituents who contacted the Office of the Ombuds and received conflict coaching, trainings, and group facilitations in FY23.

Figure 1. All Constituents* (1,080 Total)



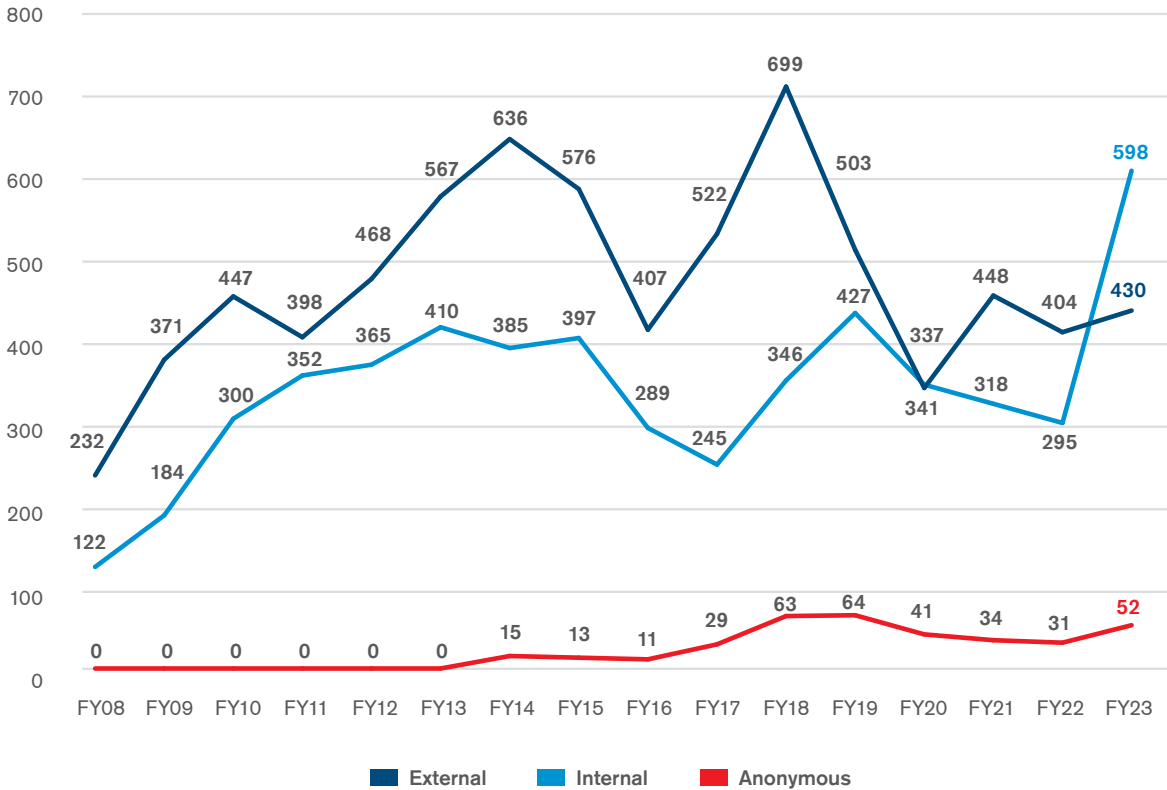
*Note: An increase or drop in the number of contacts with the Ombuds Office does not necessarily indicate growing or reduced problems in the organization.

In FY23, 40 percent of contacts receiving Ombuds resources and support were initiated by external stakeholders, while 55 percent were initiated by internal stakeholders. The remaining 5 percent of contacts identified as “anonymous” represents 52 contacts compared to 31 anonymous contacts in FY22 and are comprised of internal and external constituents. The increase in internal constituents is attributed to an increase in group facilitations.

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 Office of the Ombuds began its reporting in FY08.

Figure 2. Internal and External Constituents by Fiscal Year



External Constituents

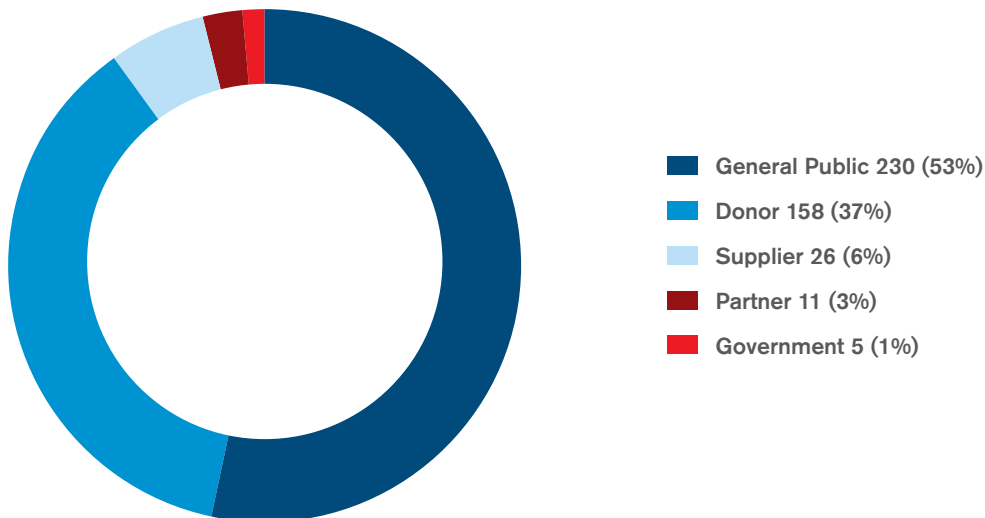
In FY23, a total of 430 external constituents contacted the Office of the Ombuds with concerns or inquiries and received support and resources.

During FY23, Red Cross donors accounted for 15 percent of all constituents contacting the Office of the Ombuds. Of the 158 donors reaching out to the Office of the Ombuds, 138 were blood donors and 20 were financial donors. It should be noted that the blood donor contacts are from a base of over 2.2 million active volunteer donors for FY23.

We do not report detailed information on those who wish to remain anonymous, and they are not included in this part of the report.

Figure 3 illustrates the various types of external constituent contacts.

Figure 3. External Constituents (430 Total)



*Note: General Public includes: disaster clients (93), training students (18), members of the military, veterans, and their families (12) and all other general inquiries (102) related to Red Cross mission delivery.

Internal Constituents

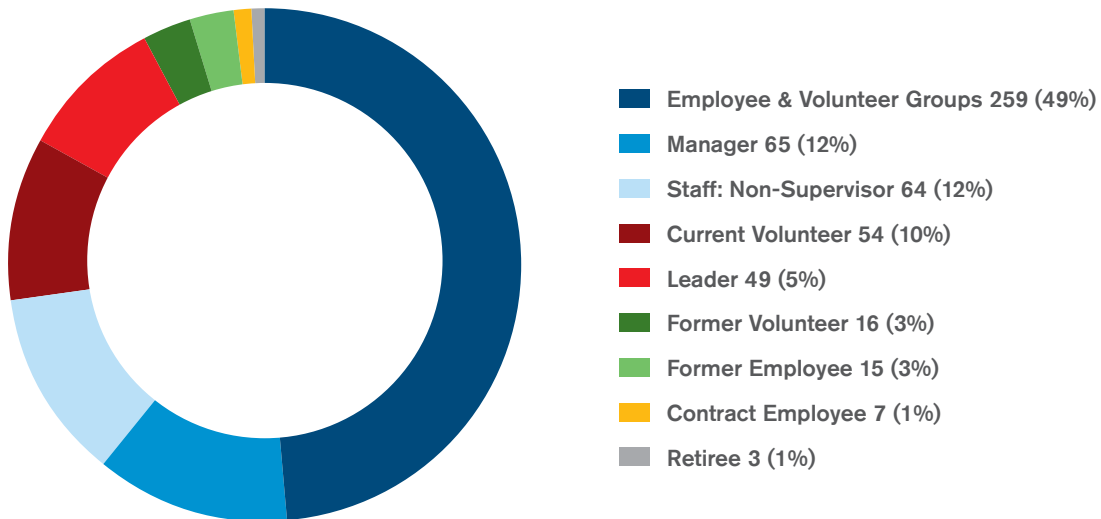
In FY23, 339 internal constituents contacted the Office of the Ombuds for individual support and an additional 259 volunteers and employees took part in group facilitations and trainings to learn about conflict resolution practices and address interpersonal and group conflict. Group facilitations and trainings are generally requested by leaders and managers of regions, departments and divisions seeking support for their workforce, including current volunteers and employees.

Employees comprised 86 percent of internal constituents. Fourteen internal constituents chose to not identify their role and were not considered anonymous. We do not collect detailed information on those who 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, 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 (598 Total)



Issues

Reasons for Contacting the Ombuds Office

In FY23, a total of 1,443 issues were brought to the attention of the Office of the Ombuds and include issues brought forward from all constituents, including anonymous constituents, plus trainings and group facilitations addressing group conflict. Many constituents may present more than one issue and no more than three as reflected in the issue count in the figure below.

The issues are represented according to the uniform reporting categories promulgated for the Organizational Ombuds field by the International Ombuds Association (IOA). The reporting categories are designed to classify the types of issues for which people use Ombuds services and help identify trends for consistent historical reporting.

The top issues which were brought to the Office of the Ombuds and remain relatively stable across the years are:

- Services/Administrative Issues: (1) quality of services provided, (2) administrative decisions and interpretation or application of rules, and (3) concerns about the behavior of the service provider toward a constituent.
- Evaluative Relationships: (1) giving and receiving feedback with concerns of performance evaluations, (2) respect and treatment impacting department climate, and (3) concerns of retaliation if concerns are addressed with management.
- Organizational, Strategic & Mission-Related: (1) principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving, including records management, (2) technology systems as it related to blood donor appointment scheduling, and (3) organizational climate and communication around change management.

Figure 5. Issue Identification
All Issues Identified Under IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (1,443 Total)

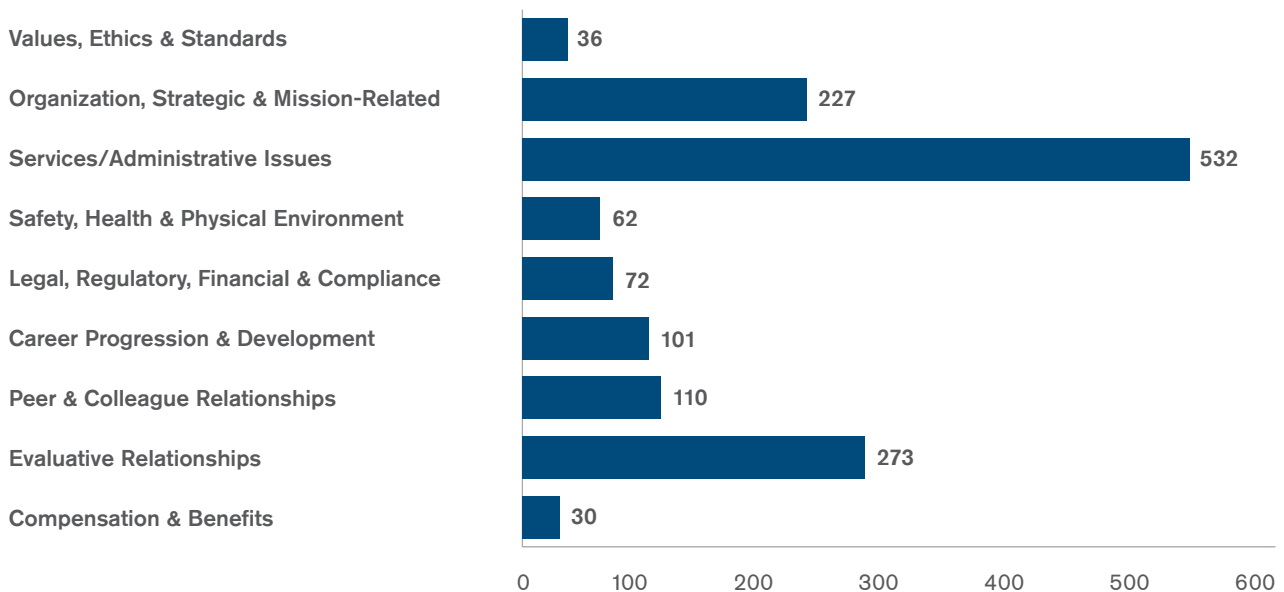
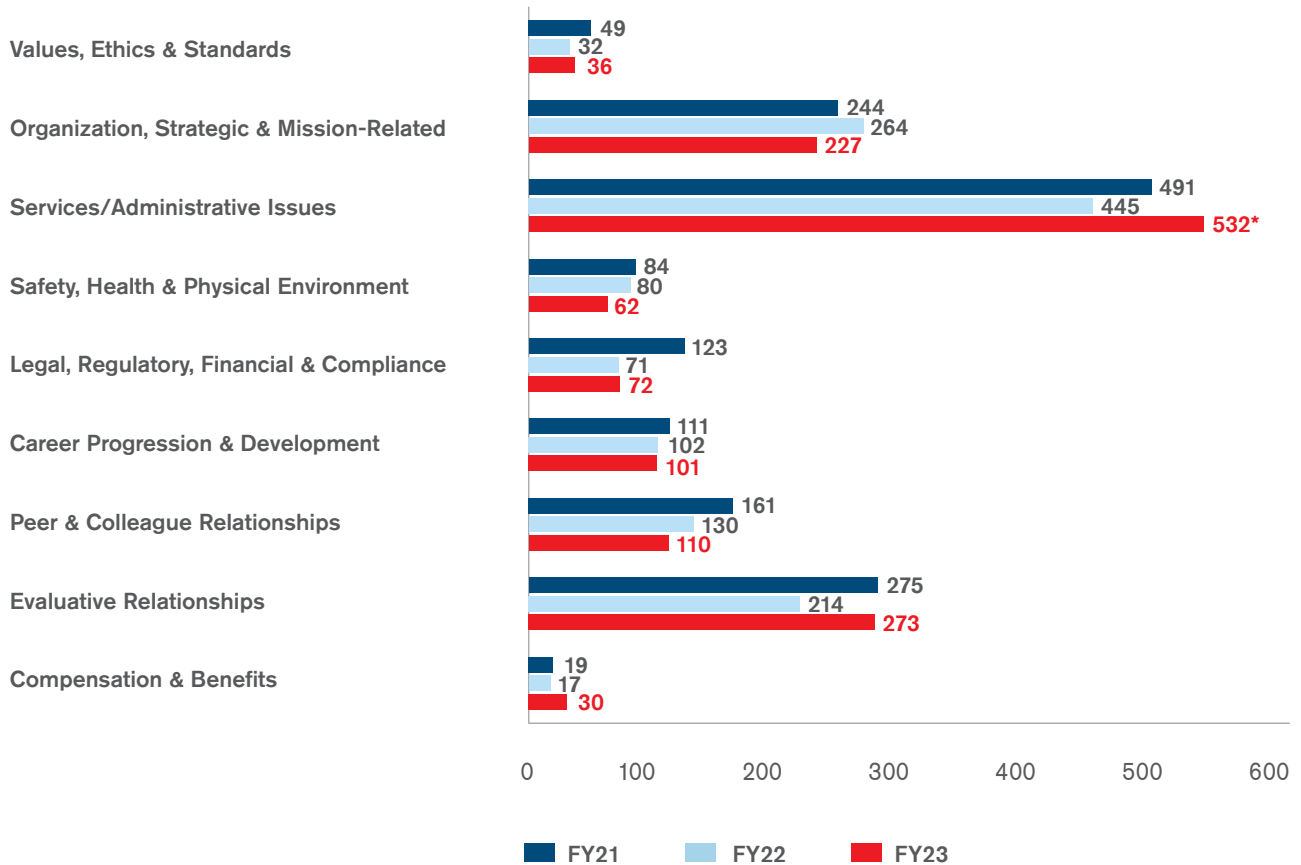


Figure 6 illustrates the issues raised across the past three fiscal years (FY21–FY23).

Figure 6. Issues – Yearly Comparison



*Note: Services/Administrative Issues inquiries and concerns include requests from external constituents include donors, disaster clients, and the general public seeking information on services which may be out of the scope of the Red Cross mission, questions regarding how the American Red Cross is supporting the migration, international events, and other general inquiries including prospective vendor or partnership inquiries.

Issues Per Organizational Unit

Figure 7 reflects the number and percentage of issues raised in FY23 pertaining to Red Cross organizational units. Most of the inquiries were related to Humanitarian Services (718) and the top three concerns were attributed to: (1) chapter/region issues, (2) Disaster Services concerns, and (3) Service to Armed Forces concerns from both internal and external constituents.

Themes captured include: 83 inquiries related to client assistance, primarily from disaster clients; 131 blood donor inquiries related to the blood donation experience and frequency of solicitations; and 72 inquiries concerning 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 (NHO). All issues presented by a constituent have been attributed to the identified primary unit of concern.

Figure 7. Issues Per Organizational Unit (1,443 Total)

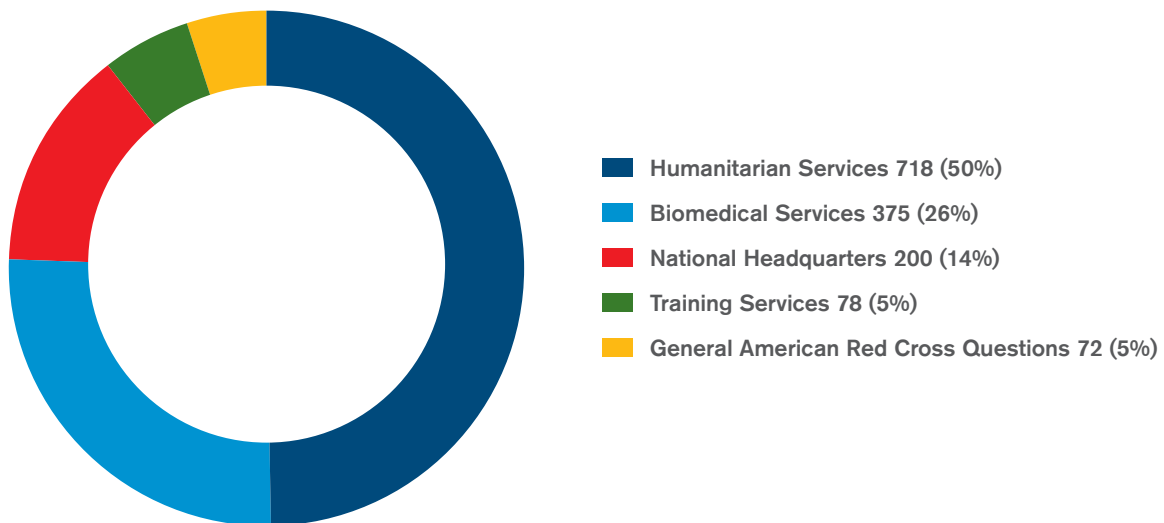
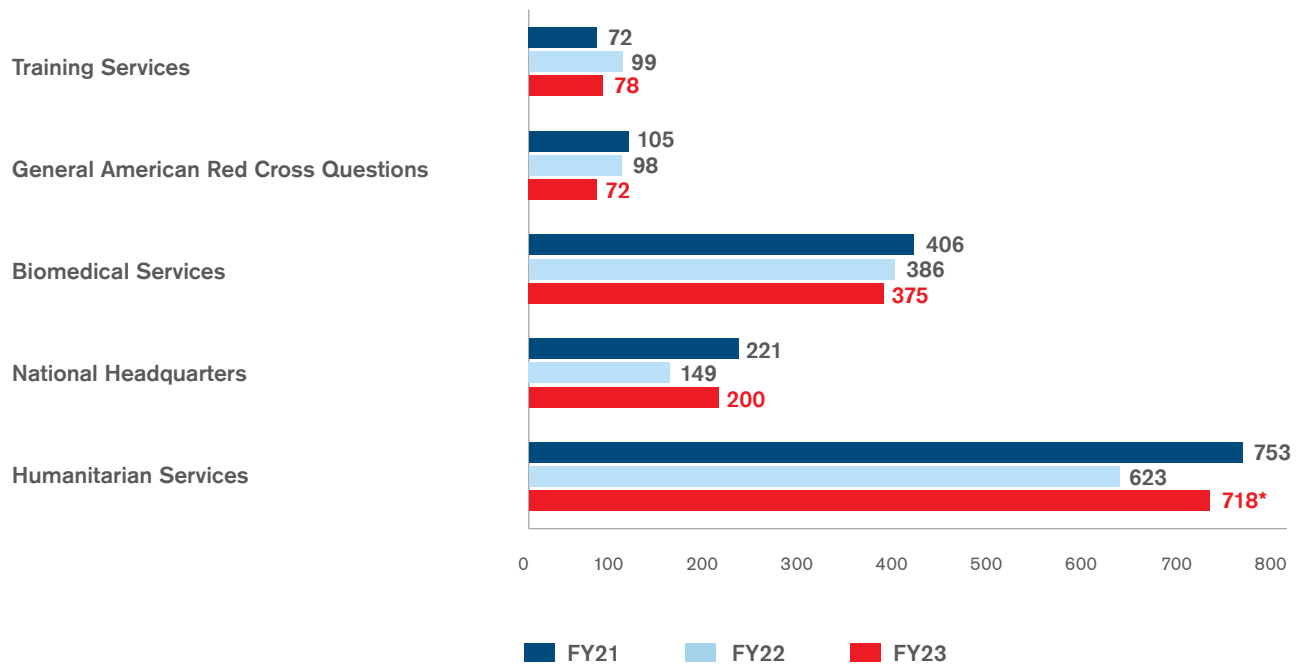


Figure 8 illustrates issues in relation to the Red Cross organizational lines of service from FY21 through FY23.

Figure 8. Issues Per Unit — Yearly Comparison



*The top three issues for Humanitarian Services remain unchanged from previous fiscal years: (1) Evaluative Relationships, (2) Services / Administrative questions or concerns about the services or administrative offices typically from external constituents, and (3) Organizational, Strategic and Mission-Related Issues.

Ombuds Actions

In FY23, the Office of the Ombuds staff engaged in 40 activities related to outreach, training, and group facilitation, reaching 668 employees and volunteers. Of the 40 activities, ten group facilitations, six training and twenty-four Outreach events were fulfilled virtually.

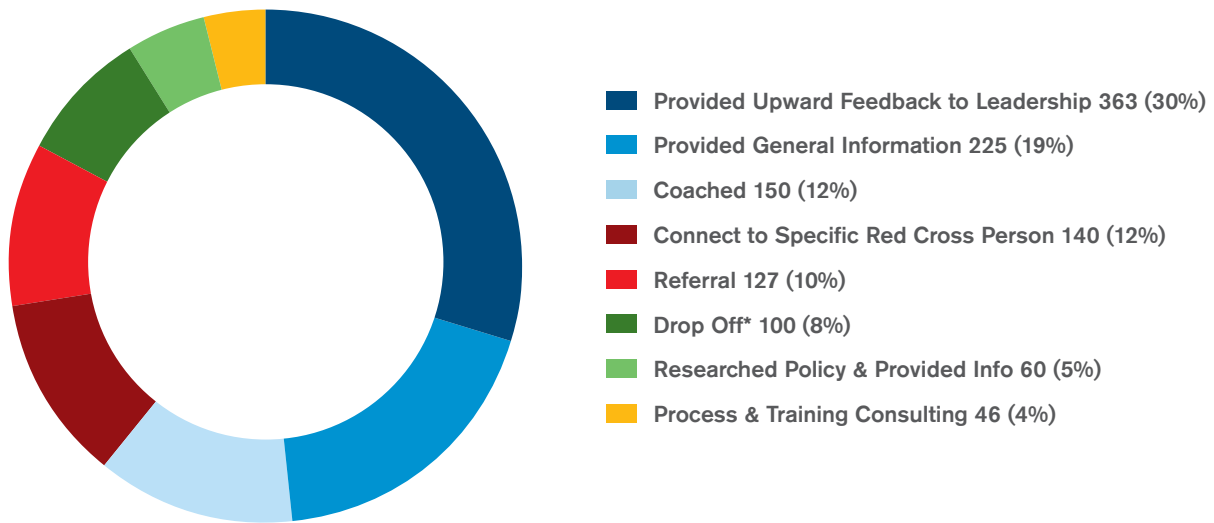
When appropriate, the Office of the Ombuds refers constituents to other departments for formal resolution. In FY23, we:

- worked with various internal departments, providing upward feedback from constituents, and worked towards resolution for 363 issues,
- coached, provided process and training consultation to 196 constituents,
- connected 140 constituents to various departments in the Red Cross
- made 127 referrals to formal parts of the organization such as Concern Connection Line, Human Resources, Office of Ethics and Compliance, or the Office of General Counsel, and
- researched policy and provided general information to 60 constituents.

In addition, the Ombuds helped 105 constituents facilitate conversations to help resolve conflict in the workplace, informal mediation was provided to six constituent groups, and shuttle diplomacy was delivered to 52 constituent groups where resolutions were mutually agreed upon to reduce workplace conflict and preventing a formal grievance and complaint from being made against the organization.

Figure 9 demonstrates the actions taken by the Ombuds to bring cases towards resolution and includes actions taken from individual conflict resolution work, group facilitations, and trainings for volunteers and employees.

Figure 9. Ombuds Actions (1,211)



*Drop Off contacts are categorized as questions, inquiries or concerns that come to the Ombuds Office and the contacts are voluntarily “dropped” without a need for Ombuds Office assistance.

Supporting the Mission

The primary responsibilities of the Office of the Ombuds are: (1) to work with individuals and groups within the American Red Cross to assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues, or concerns, (2) to bring systemic concerns and risks to the attention of the organization for resolution and awareness, and (3) to conduct education, coaching, and group facilitations to increase conflict resolution skills internally. We fulfill our duties according to the International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice: independence, impartiality, informality and confidentiality.

The Office of the Ombuds is the impartial, informal, and confidential resource for internal and external constituents, who come to us without fear of retribution at any level. We engage in constructive problem-solving toward the goal of instilling respect, civility, and equity and have proactively approached business leaders to identify systemic issues.

In all that we do, the Office of the Ombuds strives to empower individuals and teams and provide them with skills and resources to engage in effective conflict and dispute resolutions.

Here are a few examples of how we did our work:

- helped facilitate conversations between teams and leaders.
- surveyed team members confidentially to help identify challenges and solutions for improving communication and change management, supervisor effectiveness and helped identify variables impacting workforce engagement.
- assisted in surfacing issues to formal resolution channels from non-supervisory staff. When an individual was unable or unwilling to surface a concern directly, the Ombuds assisted by helping give voice to the concern and/or creating an awareness of the issue among appropriate decision-makers in the organization.
- facilitated sessions to help teams develop communication skills, provide developmental feedback, and conflict coaching.
- used mediation techniques to help resolve regional team conflicts, which resulted in successful outcomes that potentially reduced litigation costs to the organization.
- utilized shuttle diplomacy (a technique frequently used to help all parties involved in conflict or disagreement, independent of each other and to help move them toward a mutually satisfactory resolution or sense of understanding) internally for volunteers, and non-supervisory staff.
- increased conflict coaching skills for regional groups using learning circles to support intergroup conflict challenges.
- provided upward feedback on behalf of the external constituents to various departments and regional staff for local and national disaster client issues.

Ombuds*TALK*, a monthly virtual outreach event was introduced to the internal Red Cross community this year and has received positive feedback from participants. The topics covered so far include conflict skill building related to compassion, humble inquiry, giving and receiving feedback, mutual learning, ladder of inference, resilience, and decision making.

As we celebrate our sixteenth year, we remain committed to serving the American Red Cross and its stakeholders in a capacity that reflects the Office of the Ombuds Charter with inclusivity and fairness. We are looking forward to continuing the work in an impartial and informal role, to serve as an early warning system for the Red Cross to identify trends and systemic matters that may impact the American Red Cross values and its mission.



Contact Information

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**American
Red Cross**

2007–2023



9,400
Constituents



Another **22,500** reached through
Outreach, Training and Facilitation



21,590
Issues