

About Long-Term Care Ombudsman

What Is a Long-Term Care Ombudsman?

Long-Term Care Ombudsmen are advocates for residents of nursing homes, board and care homes, and assisted living facilities. Ombudsmen provide information about how to find a facility and what to do to get quality care. They are trained to resolve problems. Ombudsmen can assist with complaints or concerns about the nursing homes or assisted living centers.

Ombudsmen are required to keep concerns confidential, unless the ombudsman is given permission to share the information with another agency or person. Sometimes there is an exception to the confidentiality policy if ombudsman are mandated to report elder abuse by state statute. Under the federal Older Americans Act, every state is required to have an Ombudsman Program that addresses complaints and advocates for improvements in the long-term care system.

A Long-Term Care Ombudsman:

- Resolves complaints made by or for residents of long-term care facilities
- Educates consumers and long-term care providers about residents' rights and good care practices
- Promotes residents' community involvement through volunteer opportunities
- Provides information to the public on nursing homes and other long-term care facilities and services, residents' rights and legislative and policy issues
- Advocates for residents' rights and quality care in nursing homes, personal care, residential care, and other long-term care facilities
- Promotes the development of citizen organizations, family councils, and resident councils

What Concerns Does an Ombudsman Address?

- Violation of residents' rights or dignity
- Physical, verbal, sexual, or mental abuse, deprivation of services necessary to maintain residents' physical and mental health, or unreasonable confinement
- Poor quality of care, including inadequate personal hygiene and slow response to requests for assistance
- Improper transfer or discharge of patient
- Inappropriate use of chemical or physical restraints
- Any resident concern about quality of care or quality of life

What to Expect if You Call a Long-Term Care Ombudsman

If you contact an ombudsman to ask for assistance in resolving a problem, they will first determine whether you want information so that you are better informed to solve the problem yourself or whether you want their direct assistance in investigating and working to resolve the problem.

If you want assistance in working to resolve the problem, the ombudsman will open a case and will call the issue you present a “complaint”—or the case may have more than one complaint. As the resident advocate, the ombudsman will want to know the resident’s goals as a critical part of the investigation. So, if you are not the resident, the ombudsman may tell you that they need to visit the resident before they take any further action on your complaint. The ombudsman will work to resolve the complaint to the resident’s satisfaction. In cases where the resident cannot communicate his/her goals, the ombudsman may work with the resident’s representative to resolve the complaint.

Ombudsmen are not regulators. Instead, they help resolve problems with or on behalf of residents by providing information, negotiating, and advocating for the resident interests.

Source: [National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center](#). Find an Ombudsman in your state or territory by visiting the [National Consumers Voice for Quality Long Term Care](#) get help page: http://theconsumervoice.org/get_help

If you are in danger and want law enforcement to respond, call 911. To talk to someone confidentially for support and information, call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) at 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224. To find your local sexual abuse victim service program, call the [Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network](#) at 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE).