



Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Final Rule  
 Federal Register, Vol. 80, No. 28, 7704-7767  
 Published February 11, 2015

45 CFR Parts 1321 and 1324

<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">Final Regulation</a>          Federal Register, Vol. 80, No. 28</p>	<p><i>*Note: Effective July 1, 2016 the Administration for Community Living (ACL) consolidated their regulations into one subchapter resulting in the LTCOP rule number changing from 45 CFR 1327 to 45 CFR 1324. We are in the process of revising our resources to reflect that change. Information about the consolidation is available <a href="#">here</a>.</i></p>
<p><b>PART 1321 – GRANTS TO STATE AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS ON AGING</b></p>	
<p><b>§1321</b>          1. The authority citation for part 1321 continues to read as follows:          Authority: 42 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.; title III of the Older Americans Act, as amended.</p> <p>2. Section 1321.11 is amended by revising paragraph (b) to read as follows:</p>	
<p><b>§ 1321.11 State agency policies.</b>          * * * * *</p> <p>(b) The policies developed by the State agency shall address the manner in which the State agency will monitor the performance of all programs and activities initiated under this part for quality and effectiveness. The State Long-Term Care Ombudsman shall be responsible for monitoring the files, records and other information maintained by the Ombudsman program. Such monitoring may be conducted by a designee of the Ombudsman. Neither the Ombudsman nor a designee shall disclose identifying information of any complainant or long-term care facility resident to individuals outside of the Ombudsman program, except as</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>otherwise specifically provided in § 1324.11(e)(3) of this chapter. * * * * *</p> <p>3. Part 1324 is added to read as follows: PART 1324—ALLOTMENTS FOR VULNERABLE ELDER RIGHTS PROTECTION ACTIVITIES Subpart A—State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Sec. 1324.1 Definitions.</p> <p>1324.11 Establishment of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.</p> <p>1324.13 Functions and responsibilities of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.</p> <p>1324.15 State agency responsibilities related to the Ombudsman program.</p> <p>1324.17 Responsibilities of agencies hosting local Ombudsman entities.</p> <p>1324.19 Duties of the representatives of the Office.</p> <p>1324.21 Conflicts of interest. Subpart B [Reserved] Authority: 42 U.S.C. 3001 et seq</p>	
<p><b>PART 1324 – ALLOTMENTS FOR VULNERABLE ELDER RIGHTS PROTECTION ACTIVITIES</b></p>	
<p><b>§1324.1 Definitions.</b> The following definitions apply to this part:</p>	
<p><i>Immediate family</i>, pertaining to conflicts of interest as used in section 712 of the Act, means a member of the household or a relative with whom there is a close personal or significant financial relationship.</p>	
<p><i>Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman</i>, as used in sections 711 and 712 of the Act, means the organizational unit in a State or territory which is headed by a State Long-Term Care Ombudsman</p>	
<p><i>Representatives of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman</i>, as used in sections 711 and 712 of the Act, means the employees or</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>volunteers designated by the Ombudsman to fulfill the duties set forth in § 1324.19(a), whether personnel supervision is provided by the Ombudsman or his or her designees or by an agency hosting a local Ombudsman entity designated by the Ombudsman pursuant to section 712(a)(5) of the Act.</p>	
<p>Resident representative means any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) An individual chosen by the resident to act on behalf of the resident in order to support the resident in decision-making; access medical, social or other personal information of the resident; manage financial matters; or receive notifications;</li> <li>(2) A person authorized by State or Federal law (including but not limited to agents under power of attorney, representative payees, and other fiduciaries) to act on behalf of the resident in order to support the resident in decision-making; access medical, social or other personal information of the resident; manage financial matters; or receive notifications;</li> <li>(3) Legal representative, as used in section 712 of the Act; or</li> <li>(4) The court-appointed guardian or conservator of a resident.</li> <li>(5) Nothing in this rule is intended to expand the scope of authority of any resident representative beyond that authority specifically authorized by the resident, State or Federal law, or a court of competent jurisdiction.</li> </ul>	
<p><i>State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, or Ombudsman</i>, as used in sections 711 and 712 of the Act, means the individual who heads the Office and is responsible to personally, or through representatives of the Office, fulfill the functions, responsibilities and duties set forth in §§ 1324.13 and 1324.19.</p>	
<p><i>State Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, Ombudsman program, or program</i>, as used in sections 711 and 712 of the Act, means the program through which the functions and duties of the Office are carried out, consisting of the Ombudsman, the Office headed by the Ombudsman, and the representatives of the Office.</p>	
<p><i>Willful interference</i> means actions or inactions taken by an individual in an attempt to intentionally prevent, interfere with, or attempt to impede the</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>Ombudsman from performing any of the functions or responsibilities set forth in § 1324.13, or the Ombudsman or a representative of the Office from performing any of the duties set forth in § 1324.19.</p>	
<p><b>§1324.11 Establishment of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman</b></p>	
<p>(a) The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman shall be an entity which shall be headed by the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, who shall carry out all of the functions and responsibilities set forth in § 1324.13 and shall carry out, directly and/or through local Ombudsman entities, the duties set forth in § 1324.19.</p>	
<p>(b) The State agency shall establish the Office and, thereby carry out the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program in any of the following ways:          (1) The Office is a distinct entity, separately identifiable, and located within or connected to the State agency; or          (2) The State agency enters into a contract or other arrangement with any public agency or nonprofit organization which shall establish a separately identifiable, distinct entity as the Office.</p>	
<p>(c) The State agency shall require that the Ombudsman serve on a full-time basis. In providing leadership and management of the Office, the functions, responsibilities, and duties, as set forth in §§ 1324.13 and 1324.19 are to constitute the entirety of the Ombudsman’s work. The State agency or other agency carrying out the Office shall not require or request the Ombudsman to be responsible for leading, managing or performing the work of non-ombudsman services or programs except on a time-limited, intermittent basis.          (1) This provision does not limit the authority of the Ombudsman program to provide ombudsman services to populations other than residents of long-term care facilities so long as the appropriations under the Act are utilized to serve residents of long-term care facilities, as authorized by the Act.          (2) [Reserved]</p>	
<p>(d) The State agency, and other entity selecting the Ombudsman, if</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>applicable, shall ensure that the Ombudsman meets minimum qualifications which shall include, but not be limited to, demonstrated expertise in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Long-term services and supports or other direct services for older persons or individuals with disabilities;</li><li>(2) Consumer-oriented public policy advocacy;</li><li>(3) Leadership and program management skills; and</li><li>(4) Negotiation and problem resolution skills.</li></ul>	
<p>(e) Policies and Procedures</p> <p>Where the Ombudsman has the legal authority to do so, he or she shall establish policies and procedures, in consultation with the State agency, to carry out the Ombudsman program in accordance with the Act. Where State law does not provide the Ombudsman with legal authority to establish policies and procedures, the Ombudsman shall recommend policies and procedures to the State agency or other agency in which the Office is organizationally located, and such agency shall establish Ombudsman program policies and procedures. Where local Ombudsman entities are designated within area agencies on aging or other entities, the Ombudsman and/or appropriate agency shall develop such policies and procedures in consultation with the agencies hosting local Ombudsman entities and with representatives of the Office. The policies and procedures must address the matters within this subsection.</p>	
<p>(1) <i>Program administration.</i></p> <p>Policies and procedures regarding program administration must include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) A requirement that the agency in which the Office is organizationally located must not have personnel policies or practices which prohibit the Ombudsman from performing the functions and responsibilities of the Ombudsman, as set forth in § 1324.13, or from adhering to the requirements of section 712 of the Act. Nothing in this provision shall prohibit such agency from requiring that the Ombudsman, or other</li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>employees or volunteers of the Office, adhere to the personnel policies and procedures of the entity which are otherwise lawful.</p> <p>(ii) A requirement that an agency hosting a local Ombudsman entity must not have personnel policies or practices which prohibit a representative of the Office from performing the duties of the Ombudsman program or from adhering to the requirements of section 712 of the Act. Nothing in this provision shall prohibit such agency from requiring that representatives of the Office adhere to the personnel policies and procedures of the host agency which are otherwise lawful.</p>	
<p>(iii) A requirement that the Ombudsman shall monitor the performance of local Ombudsman entities which the Ombudsman has designated to carry out the duties of the Office.</p>	
<p>(iv) A description of the process by which the agencies hosting local Ombudsman entities will coordinate with the Ombudsman in the employment or appointment of representatives of the Office.</p>	
<p>(v) Standards to assure prompt response to complaints by the Office and/or local Ombudsman entities which prioritize abuse, neglect, exploitation and time-sensitive complaints and which consider the severity of the risk to the resident, the imminence of the threat of harm to the resident, and the opportunity for mitigating harm to the resident through provision of Ombudsman program services.</p>	
<p>(vi) Procedures that clarify appropriate fiscal responsibilities of the local Ombudsman entity, including but not limited to clarifications regarding access to programmatic fiscal information by appropriate representatives of the Office.</p>	
<p>(2) <i>Procedures for access.</i> Policies and procedures regarding timely access to facilities, residents, and appropriate records (regardless of format and including, upon request, copies of such records) by the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office must include, but not be limited to:</p> <p>(i) Access to enter all long-term care facilities at any time during a</p>	

## FINAL RULE

facility's regular business hours or regular visiting hours, and at any other time when access may be required by the circumstances to be investigated;

(ii) Access to all residents to perform the functions and duties set forth in §§ 1324.13 and 1324.19;

(iii) Access to the name and contact information of the resident representative, if any, where needed to perform the functions and duties set forth in §§ 1324.13 and 1324.19;

(iv) Access to review the medical, social and other records relating to a resident, if—

(A) The resident or resident representative communicates informed consent to the access and the consent is given in writing or through the use of auxiliary aids and services;

(B) The resident or resident representative communicates informed consent orally, visually, or through the use of auxiliary aids and services, and such consent is documented contemporaneously by a representative of the Office in accordance with such procedures; and

(C) Access is necessary in order to investigate a complaint, the resident representative refuses to consent to the access, a representative of the Office has reasonable cause to believe that the resident representative is not acting in the best interests of the resident, and the representative of the Office obtains the approval of the Ombudsman;

(v) Access to the administrative records, policies, and documents, to which the residents have, or the general public has access, of long-term care facilities;

(vi) Access of the Ombudsman to, and, upon request, copies of all licensing and certification records maintained by the State with respect to long-term care facilities; and

(vii) Reaffirmation that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule, 45 CFR part 160 and 45 CFR part 164, subparts A and E, does not preclude release by covered entities of resident private health information or other resident identifying information to the Ombudsman program, including but not limited to residents' medical, social, or other

**FINAL RULE**

<p>records, a list of resident names and room numbers, or information collected in the course of a State or Federal survey or inspection process.</p>	
<p>(3) <i>Disclosure.</i> Policies and procedures regarding disclosure of files, records and other information maintained by the Ombudsman program must include, but not be limited to:</p>	
<p>(i) Provision that the files, records, and information maintained by the Ombudsman program may be disclosed only at the discretion of the Ombudsman or designee of the Ombudsman for such purpose and in accordance with the criteria developed by the Ombudsman, as required by § 1324.13(e);</p> <p>(ii) Prohibition of the disclosure of identifying information of any resident with respect to whom the Ombudsman program maintains files, records, or information, except as otherwise provided by § 1324.19(b)(5) through (8), unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(A) The resident or the resident representative communicates informed consent to the disclosure and the consent is given in writing or through the use of auxiliary aids and services;</li><li>(B) The resident or resident representative communicates informed consent orally, visually, or through the use of auxiliary aids and services and such consent is documented contemporaneously by a representative of the Office in accordance with such procedures; or</li><li>(C) The disclosure is required by court order;</li></ul> <p>(iii) Prohibition of the disclosure of identifying information of any complainant with respect to whom the Ombudsman program maintains files, records, or information, unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(A) The complainant communicates informed consent to the disclosure and the consent is given in writing or through the use of auxiliary aids and services;</li><li>(B) The complainant communicates informed consent orally, visually, or through the use of auxiliary aids and services and such consent is documented contemporaneously by a representative of the</li></ul>	



**FINAL RULE**

<p>Office in accordance with such procedures; or (C) The disclosure is required by court order; (iv) Exclusion of the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office from abuse reporting requirements, including when such reporting would disclose identifying information of a complainant or resident without appropriate consent or court order, except as otherwise provided in § 1324.19(b)(5) through (8); and (v) Adherence to the provisions of paragraph (e)(3) of this section, regardless of the source of the request for information or the source of funding for the services of the Ombudsman program, notwithstanding section 705(a)(6)(c) of the Act.</p>	
<p>(4) <i>Conflicts of interest.</i> Policies and procedures regarding conflicts of interest must establish mechanisms to identify and remove or remedy conflicts of interest as provided in § 1324.21, including: (i) Ensuring that no individual, or member of the immediate family of an individual, involved in the employment or appointment of the Ombudsman is subject to a conflict of interest; (ii) Requiring that other agencies in which the Office or local Ombudsman entities are organizationally located have policies in place to prohibit the employment or appointment of an Ombudsman or representatives of the Office with a conflict that cannot be adequately removed or remedied; (iii) Requiring that the Ombudsman take reasonable steps to refuse, suspend or remove designation of an individual who has a conflict of interest, or who has a member of the immediate family with a conflict of interest, which cannot be adequately removed or remedied; (iv) Establishing the methods by which the Office and/or State agency will periodically review and identify conflicts of the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office; and (v) Establishing the actions the Office and/or State agency will require the Ombudsman or representatives of the Office to take in order to remedy or remove such conflicts.</p>	
<p>(5) <i>Systems advocacy.</i></p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>Policies and procedures related to systems advocacy must assure that the Office is required and has sufficient authority to carry out its responsibility to analyze, comment on, and monitor the development and implementation of Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and other government policies and actions that pertain to long-term care facilities and services and to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents, and to recommend any changes in such laws, regulations, and policies as the Office determines to be appropriate.</p>	
<p>(i) Such procedures must exclude the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office from any State lobbying prohibitions to the extent that such requirements are inconsistent with section 712 of the Act.</p>	
<p>(ii) Nothing in this part shall prohibit the Ombudsman or the State agency or other agency in which the Office is organizationally located from establishing policies which promote consultation regarding the determinations of the Office related to recommended changes in laws, regulations, and policies. However, such a policy shall not require a right to review or pre-approve positions or communications of the Office.</p>	
<p><i>(6) Designation.</i> Policies and procedures related to designation must establish the criteria and process by which the Ombudsman shall designate and refuse, suspend or remove designation of local Ombudsman entities and representatives of the Office.</p> <p>(i) Such criteria should include, but not be limited to, the authority to refuse, suspend or remove designation a local Ombudsman entity or representative of the Office in situations in which an identified conflict of interest cannot be adequately removed or remedied as set forth in § 1324.21.</p> <p>(ii) [Reserved]</p>	
<p><i>(7) Grievance process.</i> Policies and procedures related to grievances must establish a grievance process for the receipt and review of grievances regarding the determinations or actions of the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office.</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(i) Such process shall include an opportunity for reconsideration of the Ombudsman decision to refuse, suspend, or remove designation of a local Ombudsman entity or representative of the Office. Notwithstanding the grievance process, the Ombudsman shall make the final determination to designate or to refuse, suspend, or remove designation of a local Ombudsman entity or representative of the Office.</p> <p>(ii) [Reserved]</p>	
<p>(8) <i>Determinations of the Office.</i> Policies and procedures related to the determinations of the Office must ensure that the Ombudsman, as head of the Office, shall be able to independently make determinations and establish positions of the Office, without necessarily representing the determinations or positions of the State agency or other agency in which the Office is organizationally located, regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Disclosure of information maintained by the Ombudsman program within the limitations set forth in section 712(d) of the Act;</li> <li>(ii) Recommendations to changes in Federal, State and local laws, regulations, policies and actions pertaining to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents; and</li> <li>(iii) Provision of information to public and private agencies, legislators, the media, and other persons, regarding the problems and concerns of residents and recommendations related to the problems and concerns.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>§1324.13 Functions and responsibilities of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman</b></p>	
<p>The Ombudsman, as head of the Office, shall have responsibility for the leadership and management of the Office in coordination with the State agency, and, where applicable, any other agency carrying out the Ombudsman program, as follows.</p>	
<p>(a) <i>Functions.</i> The Ombudsman shall, personally or through representatives of the Office—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Identify, investigate, and resolve complaints that— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Are made by, or on behalf of, residents; and</li> <li>(ii) Relate to action, inaction, or decisions, that may adversely affect</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>the health, safety, welfare, or rights of residents (including the welfare and rights of residents with respect to the appointment and activities of resident representatives) of—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Providers, or representatives of providers, of long-term care;</li> <li>(B) Public agencies; or</li> <li>(C) Health and social service agencies</li> </ul>	
<p>(2) Provide services to protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of the residents;</p>	
<p>(3) Inform residents about means of obtaining services provided by the Ombudsman program;</p>	
<p>(4) Ensure that residents have regular and timely access to the services provided through the Ombudsman program and that residents and complainants receive timely responses from representatives of the Office to requests for information and complaints;</p>	
<p>(5) Represent the interests of residents before governmental agencies, assure that individual residents have access to, and pursue (as the Ombudsman determines as necessary and consistent with resident interests) administrative, legal, and other remedies to protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents;</p>	
<p>(6) Provide administrative and technical assistance to representatives of the Office and agencies hosting local Ombudsman entities;</p>	
<p>(7)(i) Analyze, comment on, and monitor the development and implementation of Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and other governmental policies and actions, that pertain to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of the residents, with respect to the adequacy of long-term care facilities and services in the State;</p> <p>(ii) Recommend any changes in such laws, regulations, policies, and actions as the Office determines to be appropriate; and</p> <p>(iii) Facilitate public comment on the laws, regulations, policies, and actions;</p>	
<p>(iv) Provide leadership to statewide systems advocacy efforts of the Office on behalf of long-term care facility residents, including coordination of systems advocacy efforts carried out by representatives of the Office; and</p> <p>(v) Provide information to public and private agencies, legislators, the media, and other persons, regarding the problems and concerns of residents and recommendations related to the problems and concerns.</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(vi) Such determinations and positions shall be those of the Office and shall not necessarily represent the determinations or positions of the State agency or other agency in which the Office is organizationally located.</p>	
<p>(vii) In carrying out systems advocacy efforts of the Office on behalf of long-term care facility residents and pursuant to the receipt of grant funds under the Act, the provision of information, recommendations of changes of laws to legislators, and recommendations of changes of regulations and policies to government agencies by the Ombudsman or representatives of the Office do not constitute lobbying activities as defined by 45 CFR part 93.</p>	
<p>(8) Coordinate with and promote the development of citizen organizations consistent with the interests of residents; and</p>	
<p>(9) Promote, provide technical support for the development of, and provide ongoing support as requested by resident and family councils to protect the well-being and rights of residents; and</p>	
<p>(b) The Ombudsman shall be the head of a unified statewide program and shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Establish or recommend policies, procedures and standards for administration of the Ombudsman program pursuant to § 1324.11(e);</li> <li>(2) Require representatives of the Office to fulfill the duties set forth in § 1324.19 in accordance with Ombudsman program policies and procedures.</li> </ul>	
<p>(c) <i>Designation.</i> The Ombudsman shall determine designation, and refusal, suspension, or removal of designation, of local Ombudsman entities and representatives of the Office pursuant to section 712(a)(5) of the Act and the policies and procedures set forth in § 1324.11(e)(6).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Where an Ombudsman chooses to designate local Ombudsman entities, the Ombudsman shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Designate local Ombudsman entities to be organizationally located within public or non-profit private entities;</li> <li>(ii) Review and approve plans or contracts governing local Ombudsman entity operations, including, where applicable, through area agency on aging plans, in coordination with the State agency; and</li> <li>(iii) Monitor, on a regular basis, the Ombudsman program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

performance of local Ombudsman entities.

(2) *Training requirements.* The Ombudsman shall establish procedures for training for certification and continuing education of the representatives of the Office, based on model standards established by the Director of the Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs as described in section 201(d) of the Act, in consultation with residents, resident representatives, citizen organizations, long-term care providers, and the State agency, that—

(i) Specify a minimum number of hours of initial training;

(ii) Specify the content of the training, including training relating to Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and policies, with respect to long-term care facilities in the State; investigative and resolution techniques; and such other matters as the Office determines to be appropriate; and

(iii) Specify an annual number of hours of in-service training for all representatives of the Office;

(3) Prohibit any representative of the Office from carrying out the duties described in § 1324.19 unless the representative—

(i) Has received the training required under paragraph (c)(2) of this section or is performing such duties under supervision of the Ombudsman or a designated representative of the Office as part of certification training requirements; and

(ii) Has been approved by the Ombudsman as qualified to carry out the activity on behalf of the Office;

(4) The Ombudsman shall investigate allegations of misconduct by representatives of the Office in the performance of Ombudsman program duties and, as applicable, coordinate such investigations with the State agency in which the Office is organizationally located, agency hosting the local Ombudsman entity and/or the local Ombudsman entity.

(5) Policies, procedures, or practices which the Ombudsman determines to be in conflict with the laws, policies, or procedures governing the Ombudsman program shall be sufficient grounds for refusal, suspension, or removal of designation of the representative of the Office and/or the local Ombudsman entity.

(d) *Ombudsman program information.*

**FINAL RULE**

<p>The Ombudsman shall manage the files, records, and other information of the Ombudsman program, whether in physical, electronic, or other formats, including information maintained by representatives of the Office and local Ombudsman entities pertaining to the cases and activities of the Ombudsman program. Such files, records, and other information are the property of the Office. Nothing in this provision shall prohibit a representative of the Office or a local Ombudsman entity from maintaining such information in accordance with Ombudsman program requirements.</p>	
<p>(e) <i>Disclosure.</i> In making determinations regarding the disclosure of files, records and other information maintained by the Ombudsman program, the Ombudsman shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Have the sole authority to make or delegate determinations concerning the disclosure of the files, records, and other information maintained by the Ombudsman program. The Ombudsman shall comply with section 712(d) of the Act in responding to requests for disclosure of files, records, and other information, regardless of the format of such file, record, or other information, the source of the request, and the sources of funding to the Ombudsman program;</li><li>(2) Develop and adhere to criteria to guide the Ombudsman’s discretion in determining whether to disclose the files, records or other information of the Office; and</li><li>(3) Develop and adhere to a process for the appropriate disclosure of information maintained by the Office, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Classification of at least the following types of files, records, and information: medical, social and other records of residents; administrative records, policies, and documents of long-term care facilities; licensing and certification records maintained by the State with respect to long-term care facilities; and data collected in the Ombudsman program reporting system; and</li><li>(ii) Identification of the appropriate individual designee or category of designee, if other than the Ombudsman, authorized to determine the disclosure of specific categories of information in accordance with the criteria described in paragraph (e) of this section.</li></ul></li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(f) <i>Fiscal management.</i> The Ombudsman shall determine the use of the fiscal resources appropriated or otherwise available for the operation of the Office. Where local Ombudsman entities are designated, the Ombudsman shall approve the allocations of Federal and State funds provided to such entities, subject to applicable Federal and State laws and policies. The Ombudsman shall determine that program budgets and expenditures of the Office and local Ombudsman entities are consistent with laws, policies and procedures governing the Ombudsman program.</p>	
<p>(g) <i>Annual report.</i> The Ombudsman shall independently develop and provide final approval of an annual report as set forth in section 712(h)(1) of the Act and as otherwise required by the Assistant Secretary.</p> <p>(1) Such report shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Describe the activities carried out by the Office in the year for which the report is prepared;</li><li>(ii) Contain analysis of Ombudsman program data;</li><li>(iii) Describe evaluation of the problems experienced by, and the complaints made by or on behalf of, residents;</li><li>(iv) Contain policy, regulatory, and/or legislative recommendations for improving quality of the care and life of the residents; protecting the health, safety, welfare, and rights of the residents; and resolving resident complaints and identified problems or barriers;</li><li>(v) Contain analysis of the success of the Ombudsman program, including success in providing services to residents of, assisted living, board and care facilities and other similar adult care facilities; and</li><li>(vi) Describe barriers that prevent the optimal operation of the Ombudsman program.</li></ul> <p>(2) The Ombudsman shall make such report available to the public and submit it to the Assistant Secretary, the chief executive officer of the State, the State legislature, the State agency responsible for licensing or certifying long-term care facilities, and other appropriate governmental entities.</p>	



**FINAL RULE**

<p>(h) Through adoption of memoranda of understanding and other means, the Ombudsman shall lead state-level coordination, and support appropriate local Ombudsman entity coordination, between the Ombudsman program and other entities with responsibilities relevant to the health, safety, well-being or rights of residents of long-term care facilities including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Area agency on aging programs;</li> <li>(2) Aging and disability resource centers;</li> <li>(3) Adult protective services programs;</li> <li>(4) Protection and advocacy systems, as designated by the State, and as established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15001 et seq.);</li> <li>(5) Facility and long-term care provider licensure and certification programs;</li> <li>(6) The State Medicaid fraud control unit, as defined in section 1903(q) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396b(q));</li> <li>(7) Victim assistance programs;</li> <li>(8) State and local law enforcement agencies;</li> <li>(9) Courts of competent jurisdiction; and</li> <li>(10) The State legal assistance developer and legal assistance programs, including those provided under section 306(a)(2)(C) of the Act.</li> </ul>	
<p>(i) The Ombudsman shall carry out such other activities as the Assistant Secretary determines to be appropriate.</p>	
<p><b>§1324.15 State agency responsibilities related to the Ombudsman program.</b></p>	
<p>(a) In addition to the responsibilities set forth in part 1321 of this chapter, the State agency shall ensure that the Ombudsman complies with the relevant provisions of the Act and of this rule.</p> <p>(b) The State agency shall ensure, through the development of policies, procedures, and other means, consistent with § 1324.11(e)(2), that the Ombudsman program has sufficient authority and access to facilities, residents, and information needed to fully perform all of the functions, responsibilities, and duties of the Office.</p>	
<p>(c) The State agency shall provide opportunities for training for the</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>Ombudsman and representatives of the Office in order to maintain expertise to serve as effective advocates for residents. The State agency may utilize funds appropriated under Title III and/ or Title VII of the Act designated for direct services in order to provide access to such training opportunities.</p>	
<p>(d) The State agency shall provide personnel supervision and management for the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office who are employees of the State agency. Such management shall include an assessment of whether the Office is performing all of its functions under the Act.</p>	
<p>(e) The State agency shall provide monitoring, as required by § 1321.11(b) of this chapter, including but not limited to fiscal monitoring, where the Office and/or local Ombudsman entity is organizationally located within an agency under contract or other arrangement with the State agency. Such monitoring shall include an assessment of whether the Ombudsman program is performing all of the functions, responsibilities and duties set forth in §§ 1324.13 and 1324.19. The State agency may make reasonable requests of reports, including aggregated data regarding Ombudsman program activities, to meet the requirements of this provision.</p>	
<p>(f) The State agency shall ensure that any review of files, records or other information maintained by the Ombudsman program is consistent with the disclosure limitations set forth in §§ 1324.11(e)(3) and 1324.13(e).</p>	
<p>(g) The State agency shall integrate the goals and objectives of the Office into the State plan and coordinate the goals and objectives of the Office with those of other programs established under Title VII of the Act and other State elder rights, disability rights, and elder justice programs, including, but not limited to, legal assistance programs provided under section 306(a)(2)(C) of the Act, to promote collaborative efforts and diminish duplicative efforts. Where applicable, the State agency shall require inclusion of goals and objectives of local Ombudsman entities into area plans on aging.</p>	
<p>(h) The State agency shall provide elder rights leadership. In so doing, it shall require the coordination of Ombudsman program services with, the</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>activities of other programs authorized by Title VII of the Act as well as other State and local entities with responsibilities relevant to the health, safety, well-being or rights of older adults, including residents of long-term care facilities as set forth in § 1324.13(h).</p>	
<p>(i) Interference, retaliation and reprisals. The State agency shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Ensure that it has mechanisms to prohibit and investigate allegations of interference, retaliation and reprisals:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) by a long-term care facility, other entity, or individual with respect to any resident, employee, or other person for filing a complaint with, providing information to, or otherwise cooperating with any representative of the Office; or</li><li>(ii) by a long-term care facility, other entity or individual against the Ombudsman or representatives of the Office for fulfillment of the functions, responsibilities, or duties enumerated at §§ 1324.13 and 1324.19; and</li></ul></li><li>(2) Provide for appropriate sanctions with respect to interference, retaliation and reprisals.</li></ul>	
<p>(j) Legal counsel.</p> <p>(1) The State agency shall ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Legal counsel for the Ombudsman program is adequate, available, has competencies relevant to the legal needs of the program and of residents, and is without conflict of interest (as defined by the State ethical standards governing the legal profession), in order to—<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(A) Provide consultation and representation as needed in order for the Ombudsman program to protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents; and</li><li>(B) Provide consultation and/or representation as needed to assist the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office in the performance of their official functions, responsibilities, and duties, including, but not limited to, complaint resolution and systems advocacy;</li></ul></li><li>(ii) The Ombudsman and representatives of the Office assist residents in seeking administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies. In so doing, the Ombudsman shall coordinate with the legal services developer, legal services providers,</li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>and victim assistance services to promote the availability of legal counsel to residents; and</p> <p>(iii) Legal representation, arranged by or with the approval of the Ombudsman, is provided to the Ombudsman or any representative of the Office against whom suit or other legal action is brought or threatened to be brought in connection with the performance of the official duties.</p> <p>(2) Such legal counsel may be provided by one or more entities, depending on the nature of the competencies and services needed and as necessary to avoid conflicts of interest (as defined by the State ethical standards governing the legal profession). However, at a minimum, the Office shall have access to an attorney knowledgeable about the Federal and State laws protecting the rights of residents and governing long- term care facilities.</p> <p>(3) Legal representation of the Ombudsman program by the Ombudsman or representative of the Office who is a licensed attorney shall not by itself constitute sufficiently adequate legal counsel.</p> <p>(4) The communications between the Ombudsman and legal counsel are subject to attorney-client privilege.</p>	
<p>(k) The State agency shall require the Office to:</p> <p>(1) Develop and provide final approval of an annual report as set forth in section 712(h)(1) of the Act and § 1324.13(g) and as otherwise required by the Assistant Secretary.</p>	
<p>(2) Analyze, comment on, and monitor the development and implementation of Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and other government policies and actions that pertain to long-term care facilities and services, and to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents, in the State, and recommend any changes in such laws, regulations, and policies as the Office determines to be appropriate</p>	
<p>(3) Provide such information as the Office determines to be necessary to public and private agencies, legislators, the media, and other persons, regarding the problems and concerns of individuals residing in long-term care facilities; and recommendations related to such problems and concerns; and</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(4) Establish procedures for the training of the representatives of the Office, as set forth in § 1324.13(c)(2).</p>	
<p>(5) Coordinate Ombudsman program services with entities with responsibilities relevant to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents of long-term care facilities, as set forth in § 1324.13(h).</p>	
<p><b>§1324.17 Responsibilities of agencies hosting local Ombudsman entities.</b></p>	
<p>(a) The agency in which a local Ombudsman entity is organizationally located shall be responsible for the personnel management, but not the programmatic oversight, of representatives, including employee and volunteer representatives, of the Office.</p> <p>(b) The agency in which a local Ombudsman entity is organizationally located shall not have personnel policies or practices which prohibit the representatives of the Office from performing the duties, or from adhering to the access, confidentiality and disclosure requirements of section 712 of the Act, as implemented through this rule and the policies and procedures of the Office.</p> <p>(1) Policies, procedures and practices, including personnel management practices of the host agency, which the Ombudsman determines conflict with the laws or policies governing the Ombudsman program shall be sufficient grounds for the refusal, suspension, or removal of the designation of local Ombudsman entity by the Ombudsman.</p> <p>(2) Nothing in this provision shall prohibit the host agency from requiring that the representatives of the Office adhere to the personnel policies and procedures of the agency which are otherwise lawful.</p>	
<p><b>§1324.19 Duties of the representatives of the Office.</b></p>	
<p>In carrying out the duties of the Office, the Ombudsman may designate an entity as a local Ombudsman entity and may designate an employee or volunteer of the local Ombudsman entity as a representative of the Office. Representatives of the Office may also be designated employees</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>or volunteers within the Office.</p> <p>(a) <i>Duties.</i> An individual so designated as a representative of the Office shall, in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the Office and the State agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Identify, investigate, and resolve complaints made by or on behalf of residents that relate to action, inaction, or decisions, that may adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, or rights of the residents;</li><li>(2) Provide services to protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents;</li><li>(3) Ensure that residents in the service area of the local Ombudsman entity have regular and timely access to the services provided through the Ombudsman program and that residents and complainants receive timely responses to requests for information and complaints;</li><li>(4) Represent the interests of residents before government agencies and assure that individual residents have access to, and pursue (as the representative of the Office determines necessary and consistent with resident interest) administrative, legal, and other remedies to protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of the residents;</li><li>(5)(i) Review, and if necessary, comment on any existing and proposed laws, regulations, and other government policies and actions, that pertain to the rights and well-being of residents; and (ii) Facilitate the ability of the public to comment on the laws, regulations, policies, and actions;</li><li>(6) Promote, provide technical support for the development of, and provide ongoing support as requested by resident and family councils; and</li><li>(7) Carry out other activities that the Ombudsman determines to be appropriate.</li></ul>	
<p>(b) Complaint processing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) With respect to identifying, investigating and resolving complaints, and regardless of the source of the complaint (i.e. complainant), the Ombudsman and the representatives of the Office serve the resident of a long-term care facility. The Ombudsman or representative of the Office shall investigate a complaint, including but not limited to a complaint related to abuse, neglect, or exploitation, for the purposes</li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>of resolving the complaint to the resident’s satisfaction and of protecting the health, welfare, and rights of the resident. The Ombudsman or representative of the Office may identify, investigate and resolve a complaint impacting multiple residents or all residents of a facility.</p>	
<p>(2) Regardless of the source of the complaint (i.e. the complainant), including when the source is the Ombudsman or representative of the Office, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office must support and maximize resident participation in the process of resolving the complaint as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) The Ombudsman or representative of Office shall offer privacy to the resident for the purpose of confidentially providing information and hearing, investigating and resolving complaints.</li><li>(ii) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office shall personally discuss the complaint with the resident (and, if the resident is unable to communicate informed consent, the resident’s representative) in order to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(A) Determine the perspective of the resident (or resident representative, where applicable) of the complaint;</li><li>(B) Request the resident (or resident representative, where applicable) to communicate informed consent in order to investigate the complaint;</li><li>(C) Determine the wishes of the resident (or resident representative, where applicable) with respect to resolution of the complaint, including whether the allegations are to be reported and, if so, whether Ombudsman or representative of the Office may disclose resident identifying information or other relevant information to the facility and/or appropriate agencies. Such report and disclosure shall be consistent with paragraph (b)(3) of this section;</li><li>(D) Advise the resident (and resident representative, where applicable) of the resident’s rights;</li><li>(E) Work with the resident (or resident representative, where applicable) to develop a plan of action for resolution of the complaint;</li></ul></li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(F) Investigate the complaint to determine whether the complaint can be verified; and</p> <p>(G) Determine whether the complaint is resolved to the satisfaction of the resident (or resident representative, where applicable).</p> <p>(iii) Where the resident is unable to communicate informed consent, and has no resident representative, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office shall:</p> <p>(A) Take appropriate steps to investigate and work to resolve the complaint in order to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of the resident; and</p> <p>(B) Determine whether the complaint was resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.</p> <p>(iv) In determining whether to rely upon a resident representative to communicate or make determinations on behalf of the resident related to complaint processing, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office shall ascertain the extent of the authority that has been granted to the resident representative under court order (in the case of a guardian or conservator), by power of attorney or other document by which the resident has granted authority to the representative, or under other applicable State or Federal law.</p>	
<p>(3) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office may provide information regarding the complaint to another agency in order for such agency to substantiate the facts for regulatory, protective services, law enforcement, or other purposes so long as the Ombudsman or representative of the Office adheres to the disclosure requirements of section 712(d) of the Act and the procedures set forth in § 1324.11(e)(3).</p> <p>(i) Where the goals of a resident or resident representative are for regulatory, protective services or law enforcement action, and the Ombudsman or representative of the Office determines that the resident or resident representative has communicated informed consent to the Office, the Office must assist the resident or resident representative in contacting the appropriate agency and/ or disclose the information for which the resident has provided consent to the appropriate agency for such purposes.</p>	



**FINAL RULE**

<p>(ii) Where the goals of a resident or resident representative can be served by disclosing information to a facility representative and/or referrals to an entity other than those referenced in paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section, and the Ombudsman or representative of the Office determines that the resident or resident representative has communicated informed consent to the Ombudsman program, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office may assist the resident or resident representative in contacting the appropriate facility representative or the entity, provide information on how a resident or representative may obtain contact information of such facility representatives or entities, and/or disclose the information for which the resident has provided consent to an appropriate facility representative or entity, consistent with Ombudsman program procedures.</p> <p>(iii) In order to comply with the wishes of the resident, (or, in the case where the resident is unable to communicate informed consent, the wishes of the resident representative), the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office shall not report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of a resident when a resident or resident representative has not communicated informed consent to such report except as set forth in paragraphs (b)(5) through (7) of this section, notwithstanding State laws to the contrary</p>	
<p>(4) For purposes of paragraphs (b)(1) through (3) of this section, communication of informed consent may be made in writing, including through the use of auxiliary aids and services. Alternatively, communication may be made orally or visually, including through the use of auxiliary aids and services, and such consent must be documented contemporaneously by the Ombudsman or a representative of the Office, in accordance with the procedures of the Office;</p>	
<p>(5) For purposes of paragraphs (b)(1) paragraph (3) of this section, if a resident is unable to communicate his or her informed consent, or perspective on the extent to which the matter has been satisfactorily resolved, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office may rely on the communication of informed consent and/or perspective regarding the resolution of the complaint of a resident representative so long as the</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>Ombudsman or representative of the Office has no reasonable cause to believe that the resident representative is not acting in the best interests of the resident.</p>	
<p>(6) For purposes of paragraphs (b)(1) through (3) of this section, the procedures for disclosure, as required by § 1324.11(e)(3), shall provide that the Ombudsman or representative of the Office may refer the matter and disclose resident-identifying information to the appropriate agency or agencies for regulatory oversight; protective services; access to administrative, legal, or other remedies; and/or law enforcement action in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) The resident is unable to communicate informed consent to the Ombudsman or representative of the Office;</li><li>(ii) The resident has no resident representative;</li><li>(iii) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office has reasonable cause to believe that an action, inaction or decision may adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, or rights of the resident;</li><li>(iv) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office has no evidence indicating that the resident would not wish a referral to be made;</li><li>(v) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office has reasonable cause to believe that it is in the best interest of the resident to make a referral; and</li><li>(vi) The representative of the Office obtains the approval of the Ombudsman or otherwise follows the policies and procedures of the Office described in paragraph (b)(9) of this section.</li></ul>	
<p>(7) For purposes of paragraphs (b)(1) through (3) of this section, the procedures for disclosure, as required by § 1324.11(e)(3), shall provide that, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office may refer the matter and disclose resident-identifying information to the appropriate agency or agencies for regulatory oversight; protective services; access to administrative, legal, or other remedies; and/or law enforcement action in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) The resident is unable to communicate informed consent to the Ombudsman or representative of the Office and has no resident representative, or the Ombudsman or representative of the Office has reasonable cause to believe that the resident representative has taken an action, inaction or decision that may adversely affect the health,</li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>safety, welfare, or rights of the resident;</p> <p>(ii) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office has no evidence indicating that the resident would not wish a referral to be made;</p> <p>(iii) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office has reasonable cause to believe that it is in the best interest of the resident to make a referral; and</p> <p>(iv) The representative of the Ombudsman obtains the approval of the Ombudsman.</p>	
<p>(8) The procedures for disclosure, as required by § 1324.11(e)(3), shall provide that, if the Ombudsman or representative of the Office personally witnesses suspected abuse, gross neglect, or exploitation of a resident, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office shall seek communication of informed consent from such resident to disclose resident-identifying information to appropriate agencies;</p> <p>(i) Where such resident is able to communicate informed consent, or has a resident representative available to provide informed consent, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office shall follow the direction of the resident or resident representative as set forth paragraphs (b)(1) through (3) of this section; and</p> <p>(ii) Where the resident is unable to communicate informed consent, and has no resident representative available to provide informed consent, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office shall open a case with the Ombudsman or representative of the Office as the complainant, follow the Ombudsman program’s complaint resolution procedures, and shall refer the matter and disclose identifying information of the resident to the management of the facility in which the resident resides and/or to the appropriate agency or agencies for substantiation of abuse, gross neglect or exploitation in the following circumstances:</p> <p>(A) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office has no evidence indicating that the resident would not wish a referral to be made;</p> <p>(B) The Ombudsman or representative of the Office has reasonable cause to believe that disclosure would be in the best interest of the resident; and</p> <p>(C) The representative of the Office obtains the approval of the Ombudsman or otherwise follows the policies and procedures of the</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>Office described in paragraph (b)(9) of this section. (iii) In addition, the Ombudsman or representative of the Office, following the policies and procedures of the Office described in paragraph (b)(9) of this section, may report the suspected abuse, gross neglect, or exploitation to other appropriate agencies for regulatory oversight; protective services; access to administrative, legal, or other remedies; and/or law enforcement action.</p>	
<p>(9) Prior to disclosing resident- identifying information pursuant to paragraph (b)(6) or (8) of this section, a representative of the Office must obtain approval by the Ombudsman or, alternatively, follow policies and procedures of the Office which provide for such disclosure. (i) Where the policies and procedures require Ombudsman approval, they shall include a time frame in which the Ombudsman is required to communicate approval or disapproval in order to assure that the representative of the Office has the ability to promptly take actions to protect the health, safety, welfare or rights of residents. (ii) Where the policies and procedures do not require Ombudsman approval prior to disclosure, they shall require that the representative of the Office promptly notify the Ombudsman of any disclosure of resident-identifying information under the circumstances set forth in paragraph (b)(6) or (8) of this section. (iii) Disclosure of resident-identifying information under paragraph (b)(7) of this section shall require Ombudsman approval.</p>	
<p><b>§1324.21 Conflicts of Interest</b></p>	
<p>The State agency and the Ombudsman shall consider both the organizational and individual conflicts of interest that may impact the effectiveness and credibility of the work of the Office. In so doing, both the State agency and the Ombudsman shall be responsible to identify actual and potential conflicts and, where a conflict has been identified, to remove or remedy such conflict as set forth in paragraphs (b) and (d) of this section.</p>	
<p>(a) Identification of organizational conflicts. In identifying conflicts of interest pursuant to section 712(f) of the Act, the State agency and the Ombudsman shall consider the organizational</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

conflicts that may impact the effectiveness and credibility of the work of the Office. Organizational conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, placement of the Office, or requiring that an Ombudsman or representative of the Office perform conflicting activities, in an organization that:

- (1) Is responsible for licensing, surveying, or certifying long-term care facilities;
- (2) Is an association (or an affiliate of such an association) of long-term care facilities, or of any other residential facilities for older individuals or individuals with disabilities;
- (3) Has any ownership or investment interest (represented by equity, debt, or other financial relationship) in, or receives grants or donations from, a long-term care facility;
- (4) Has governing board members with any ownership, investment or employment interest in long-term care facilities;
- (5) Provides long-term care to residents of long-term care facilities, including the provision of personnel for long-term care facilities or the operation of programs which control access to or services for long-term care facilities;
- (6) Provides long-term care coordination or case management for residents of long-term care facilities;
- (7) Sets reimbursement rates for long-term care facilities;
- (8) Provides adult protective services;
- (9) Is responsible for eligibility determinations regarding Medicaid or other public benefits for residents of long-term care facilities;
- (10) Conducts preadmission screening for long-term care facility placements;
- (11) Makes decisions regarding admission or discharge of individuals to or from long-term care facilities; or
- (12) Provides guardianship, conservatorship or other fiduciary or surrogate decision-making services for residents of long-term care facilities

(b) *Removing or remedying organizational conflicts.*

The State agency and the Ombudsman shall identify and take steps to remove or remedy conflicts of interest between the Office and the State agency or other agency carrying out the Ombudsman program.

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(1) The Ombudsman shall identify organizational conflicts of interest in the Ombudsman program and describe steps taken to remove or remedy conflicts within the annual report submitted to the Assistant Secretary through the National Ombudsman Reporting System.</p>	
<p>(2) Where the Office is located within or otherwise organizationally attached to the State agency, the State agency shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Take reasonable steps to avoid internal conflicts of interest;</li><li>(ii) Establish a process for review and identification of internal conflicts;</li><li>(iii) Take steps to remove or remedy conflicts;</li><li>(iv) Ensure that no individual, or member of the immediate family of an individual, involved in the designating, appointing, otherwise selecting or terminating the Ombudsman is subject to a conflict of interest; and</li><li>(v) Assure that the Ombudsman has disclosed such conflicts and described steps taken to remove or remedy conflicts within the annual report submitted to the Assistant Secretary through the National Ombudsman Reporting System.</li></ul>	
<p>(3) Where a State agency is unable to adequately remove or remedy a conflict, it shall carry out the Ombudsman program by contract or other arrangement with a public agency or nonprofit private organization, pursuant to section 712(a)(4) of the Act. The State agency may not enter into a contract or other arrangement to carry out the Ombudsman program if the other entity, and may not operate the Office directly if it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Is responsible for licensing, surveying, or certifying long-term care facilities;</li><li>(ii) Is an association (or an affiliate of such an association) of long-term care facilities, or of any other residential facilities for older individuals or individuals with disabilities; or</li><li>(iii) Has any ownership, operational, or investment interest (represented by equity, debt, or other financial relationship) in a long-term care facility.</li></ul>	
<p>(4) Where the State agency carries out the Ombudsman program by contract or other arrangement with a public agency or nonprofit private organization, pursuant to section 712(a)(4) of the Act, the State agency shall:</p>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(i) Prior to contracting or making another arrangement, take reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest in such agency or organization which is to carry out the Ombudsman program and to avoid conflicts of interest in the State agency's oversight of the contract or arrangement;</p> <p>(ii) Establish a process for periodic review and identification of conflicts;</p> <p>(iii) Establish criteria for approval of steps taken by the agency or organization to remedy or remove conflicts;</p> <p>(iv) Require that such agency or organization have a process in place to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(A) Take reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest, and</li><li>(B) Disclose identified conflicts and steps taken to remove or remedy conflicts to the State agency for review and approval.</li></ul>	
<p>(5) Where an agency or organization carrying out the Ombudsman program by contract or other arrangement develops a conflict and is unable to adequately remove or remedy a conflict, the State agency shall either operate the Ombudsman program directly or by contract or other arrangement with another public agency or nonprofit private organization. The State agency shall not enter into such contract or other arrangement with an agency or organization which is responsible for licensing or certifying long-term care facilities in the state or is an association (or affiliate of such an association) of long-term care facilities.</p>	
<p>(6) Where local Ombudsman entities provide Ombudsman services, the Ombudsman shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Prior to designating or renewing designation, take reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest in any agency which may host a local Ombudsman entity.</li><li>(ii) Establish a process for periodic review and identification of conflicts of interest with the local Ombudsman entity in any agencies hosting a local Ombudsman entity,</li><li>(iii) Require that such agencies disclose identified conflicts of interest with the local Ombudsman entity and steps taken to remove or remedy conflicts within such agency to the Ombudsman,</li><li>(iv) Establish criteria for approval of steps taken to remedy or remove conflicts in such agencies, and</li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(v) Establish a process for review of and criteria for approval of plans to remove or remedy conflicts with the local Ombudsman entity in such agencies.</p>	
<p>(7) Failure of an agency hosting a local Ombudsman entity to disclose a conflict to the Office or inability to adequately remove or remedy a conflict shall constitute grounds for refusal, suspension or removal of designation of the local Ombudsman entity by the Ombudsman.</p>	
<p>(c) <i>Identifying individual conflicts of interest.</i> (1) In identifying conflicts of interest pursuant to section 712(f) of the Act, the State agency and the Ombudsman shall consider individual conflicts that may impact the effectiveness and credibility of the work of the Office.</p>	
<p>(2) Individual conflicts of interest for an Ombudsman, representatives of the Office, and members of their immediate family include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Direct involvement in the licensing or certification of a long-term care facility;</li><li>(ii) Ownership, operational, or investment interest (represented by equity, debt, or other financial relationship) in an existing or proposed long-term care facility;</li><li>(iii) Employment of an individual by, or participation in the management of, a long-term care facility in the service area or by the owner or operator of any long-term care facility in the service area;</li><li>(iv) Receipt of, or right to receive, directly or indirectly, remuneration (in cash or in kind) under a compensation arrangement with an owner or operator of a long-term care facility;</li><li>(v) Accepting gifts or gratuities of significant value from a long-term care facility or its management, a resident or a resident representative of a long-term care facility in which the Ombudsman or representative of the Office provides services (except where there is a personal relationship with a resident or resident representative which is separate from the individual’s role as Ombudsman or representative of the Office);</li><li>(vi) Accepting money or any other consideration from anyone other than the Office, or an entity approved by the Ombudsman, for the performance of an act in the regular course of the duties of the</li></ul>	



**FINAL RULE**

<p>Ombudsman or the representatives of the Office without Ombudsman approval; (vii) Serving as guardian, conservator or in another fiduciary or surrogate decision-making capacity for a resident of a long-term care facility in which the Ombudsman or representative of the Office provides services; and (viii) Serving residents of a facility in which an immediate family member resides.</p>	
<p>(d) Removing or remedying individual conflicts. (1) The State agency or Ombudsman shall develop and implement policies and procedures, pursuant to § 1324.11(e)(4), to ensure that no Ombudsman or representatives of the Office are required or permitted to hold positions or perform duties that would constitute a conflict of interest as set forth in § 1324.21(c). This rule does not prohibit a State agency or Ombudsman from having policies or procedures that exceed these requirements.</p>	
<p>(2) When considering the employment or appointment of an individual as the Ombudsman or as a representative of the Office, the State agency or other employing or appointing entity shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Take reasonable steps to avoid employing or appointing an individual who has an unremedied conflict of interest or who has a member of the immediate family with an unremedied conflict of interest;</li><li>(ii) Take reasonable steps to avoid assigning an individual to perform duties which would constitute an unremedied conflict of interest;</li><li>(iii) Establish a process for periodic review and identification of conflicts of the Ombudsman and representatives of the Office, and</li><li>(iv) Take steps to remove or remedy conflicts.</li></ul>	

**FINAL RULE**

<p>(3) In no circumstance shall the entity, which appoints or employs the Ombudsman, appoint or employ an individual as the Ombudsman who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Has direct involvement in the licensing or certification of a long-term care facility;</li> <li>(ii) Has an ownership or investment interest (represented by equity, debt, or other financial relationship) in a long-term care facility. Divestment within a reasonable period may be considered an adequate remedy to this conflict;</li> <li>(iii) Has been employed by or participating in the management of a long-term care facility within the previous twelve months.</li> <li>(iv) Receives, or has the right to receive, directly or indirectly, remuneration (in cash or in kind) under a compensation arrangement with an owner or operator of a long-term care facility.</li> </ul> <p>(4) In no circumstance shall the State agency, other agency which carries out the Office, or an agency hosting a local Ombudsman entity appoint or employ an individual, nor shall the Ombudsman designate an individual, as a representative of the Office who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Has direct involvement in the licensing or certification of a long-term care facility;</li> <li>(ii) Has an ownership or investment interest (represented by equity, debt, or other financial relationship) in a long-term care facility. Divestment within a reasonable period may be considered an adequate remedy to this conflict;</li> <li>(iii) Receives, directly or indirectly, remuneration (in cash or in kind) under a compensation arrangement with an owner or operator of a long-term care facility; or</li> <li>(iv) Is employed by, or participating in the management of, a long-term care facility.</li> </ul>	
<p>(A) An agency which appoints or employs representatives of the Office shall make efforts to avoid appointing or employing an individual as a representative of the Office who has been employed by or participating in the management of a long-term care facility within the previous twelve months</p>	
<p>(B) Where such individual is appointed or employed, the agency shall take steps to remedy the conflict.</p>	

**FINAL RULE**