

Ombudsman Volunteer Coordinator's Network

NOTES

Who should participate?

This call was intended for new ombudsman volunteer coordinators or those who are just beginning their work with ombudsman volunteers. Those who are just starting volunteer programs were encouraged to participate.

Presenter: Kathie Gately, Arkansas State Ombudsman

Basic info about the Arkansas Volunteer Ombudsman Program

- Developed P&P for program
- Began work on developing training manual – involved all interested parties in developing the manual – helped tremendously because they gave input and received education about the omb prog (family council reps, resident council members on committee)
- Put together criteria for screening volunteers (first part is application, interview, recruit) – instills the importance of the role they are preparing to take on
- SO conducts all of classroom training for volunteers – shares training day with regionals and coordinators
- Requires exam of volunteers (12 NH practicum)

Exciting to be able to go out and gather volunteers – hard part is maintaining volunteers

Retention – letting volunteers know how important their role is; paperwork

- Qtly training at local level – important to volunteer recruitment (they get excited about how well they are training – how good the training is)
- Open statewide qtly trainings to all volunteers (many attend)
- Has an annual volunteer recognition – hands out awards for outstanding volunteers

More important to have active volunteers than sheer numbers of volunteers

Most tremendous success was to take \$ for state level coordinator & develop local level ombudsman coordinators

Last year - 26 volunteer ombudsman classroom trainings

Developed qualifications for Certified Volunteer Ombudsman Instructors – certified to help in conducting classroom training for volunteers

Strong curriculum, building & supporting local coordinators, recognition, so head cheerleader – takes all of these elements to carry out this essential part of the omb prog

Presenter: Judy Hughes, Certified Volunteer Ombudsman Coordinator (CVOC)

I am Judy Hughes and I represent Region VII (Southwest Arkansas) as CVOC and Back-Up Ombudsman. My residence is in Texarkana, AR, a town that is divided right down the state line, with Texarkana, AR on one side and Texarkana, TX on the other side. Texarkana is a part of rural Arkansas that Region VII covers.

Today, I would like to talk with you about my life as a CVOC in rural Arkansas. The towns in my area are spread out, with farmland and open road in between. In some of the smaller towns, many of the people are related or connected in some manner, which means developing a good interview and searching perhaps harder than usual for volunteers for the area nursing homes so as not to cause a conflict of interest.

When I first started as CVOC in Southwest AR, I travelled throughout the area collecting phone books, taking them back to my office and spending a great deal of time going through the yellow pages in search of prospective places where I would be allowed to present the ACVOP. I also visited the Chambers of Commerce in the Southwestern Arkansas towns and talking with as many people as I could as I make my way through the rural towns. One of my best choices of getting the word out is local newspapers. I like to take a copy of what I would like for the newspapers to print so that the information will be printed correctly. As I travel throughout Southwestern Arkansas, I stop by the town newspapers periodically to insure up-to-date information is being printed. Church groups, Veterans of Military Service, and Civic Organizations all lead to recruitment. Region VII has also been fortunate to have newspaper highlights regarding Volunteer Ombudsmen and the program featured. Also, never forget that a properly trained and dedicated volunteer, is an asset to the program not only by his/her contact with the nursing home residents but also can be a wonderful source of getting the word out to friends and people they come in contact with. Region VII has several new volunteers that have been referred to me by my previously trained volunteers.

The most important requirement of a CVO, in my opinion, is to have compassion and a heart for the people who live in nursing homes and the most important requirement of a CVOC is to believe in what he/she is saying-'believe in the program'. You must believe in the program in order for others to believe you. Good support from the State Ombudsman and Regional Ombudsman in your area helps make the program a success. Teamwork is a key prerequisite. I am fortunate to have not only good but excellent support from both Kathie Gately, Arkansas State Ombudsman and Deborah Hanson, Region VII Regional Ombudsman.

Continuing education for the volunteer ombudsmen takes various shapes and is an integral part of the VOP. Quarterly VO Workshops provide the volunteers with up-to-date information about the program and provide the opportunity to share each others' ideas. It is a good idea, if possible, to schedule different places to hold the meetings, so that the same volunteers do not have to travel as far.

State workshops are also held quarterly in Little Rock, AR by the State Ombudsman. The volunteers are also invited to these meetings. Guest speakers and pertinent information for all ombudsmen are a part of the state workshops, making it beneficial for the volunteer ombudsmen to also attend, giving them the opportunity to meet ombudsmen from all over Arkansas and feel an even greater connection to the entire Arkansas Ombudsman Family.

A 'Volunteer Ombudsman Appreciation Banquet' is held annually, being the highlight of the year for ACVO. It is the pleasure of the Arkansas State and Regional Ombudsman, and ACVOC to provide a beautifully and tastefully decorated banquet room and a delicious meal for the enjoyment of the volunteers. Awards honoring the achievements/outstanding accomplishments of the volunteers, the Royce Haigwood Outstanding Volunteer Award (presented to the volunteer ombudsman who has made the most outstanding contribution to the ACVOP for the year), and many door prizes all take place at this annual event.

An 'Annual Ombudsman Retreat' is held in Little Rock, hosting both interesting and interesting knowledgeable speakers. At the 2006 Retreat, we felt especially honored to view the film directed by our own Arkansas State Ombudsman, Kathie J. Gately. Other than being informative and educational, the Retreat gives all ombudsmen the chance to relax, share ideas, and get to know each other better - from the State Ombudsman to the Regional Ombudsmen to Back-Up Ombudsmen to CVOC to CVO. When the weather permits, s'mores and hot cocoa are enjoyed around a roaring campfire and, when weather does not permit, a wonderful time is still had by all in front of a cozy fireplace.

The wheels do not stop turning at this point. Now it is the duty of the CVOC to keep the volunteers interested in the program, letting them know they are never alone in their endeavors and that their efforts are appreciated. Frequent contact with the CVOC is essential. Continue to let the volunteers know what an important role they play in making the program successful and what a difference their hard work is making to help improve the 'quality of care' and 'quality of life' for the residents. Some suggestions might include remembering the volunteers' birthday and offering congratulations if they have done something that is special to them, even the birth of a new child or grandchild, if the information is shared with you. I send newsletters to my volunteers so that they are kept informed of the happenings within our 'Ombudsman Family'. Never forget - Without our Volunteer Ombudsmen, the CVOP would not be possible.

Presenter: Dale Watson, South Carolina State Ombudsman

General Information about the Volunteer Program in South Carolina

- Has been operating for just a little over a year
- SC is a very rural state – 46 counties that are very spread out
- The Volunteer Program is not fully funded yet – have about 4 volunteer coordinators throughout the state so we are not quite statewide yet
- Have struggled in some areas trying to get facilities to come on board with the idea of volunteer ombudsmen
- One set-back has been that the State Volunteer Coordinator had to resign in this first year so the State Ombudsman had to go back to the books to redesign & streamline some of their processes
- As a State Ombudsman Program, we are trying to make sure that there is a strong foundation placed in each area of the state to support this volunteer ombudsman program

Presenter: Kate Tebben, LTC Ombudsman & Volunteer Ombudsman Coordinator

- I am fairly new to the program (started in Aug. 2006); when I started we had only 2 volunteers (now up to 11 with 4-5 preparing for training)
- In SC, facilities have to opt into participating in the volunteer ombudsman program before a volunteer can be assigned to the facility (this is unique to SC and adds an additional recruitment dimension)
- Has had difficulties in recruiting both volunteers and facilities
- Charleston area has both urban and rural areas – has general and specific rural suggestions

Recruitment Strategies:

- Newspaper article has been one of the best successes so far – uses a short article that was on the front page of a health and science section – a lot of people from different areas of the region called
- Have had a lot of success with television news stations – one channel has a volunteer spotlight news program that they do – had a volunteer highlighted on this special
- Have a local daytime show that features different things going on in the area – have put the volunteer program on this program as well
- Had SC Lieutenant Governor do a shadow of a volunteer ombudsman – as a recruitment angle (to air on tv news)

Suggestions for getting started with recruitment:

- Go out and do your research - find out what types of groups are in the areas that you cover (AARP, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, other service clubs – ask them if you can come and speak about the program)
- Another good way is to speak with church groups; may let you put short excerpt in local bulletin or monthly newsletter

- Additionally, has found some success in posting info at library branches – ask to speak at meetings or put flyers out

Other ideas:

- Some rural areas have senior centers that offer a good way to get the word out about the program & the volunteer opportunity - seniors at the centers may have time and transportation to volunteer; also the senior center has people coming in to volunteer who may be interested in additional volunteer opportunities
- Recreation centers are kind of the same way – good potential for volunteer base

Tracking your recruitment efforts:

- biggest thing is to keep track of what you do – where you post, send or present things & track who calls about being interested in a program
- keep a list of every place you visit & when a volunteer calls ask where they found out about the program

Keep track of all potential volunteers & where you met them and what you talked about together

- Helps to recall personal details in follow-up conversations or correspondence

Questions/Answers

Carol Dupin (KY) – **Q: It sounds like your State Ombudsman Offices provide the training for volunteers is this correct?**

Kate (SC) – A: Yes, as a local volunteer coordinator, I handle the recruitment & coordinate with the state for training; I think it validates the program to see someone from the state level

Dale (SC) – A: The bulk of work is done by the volunteer coordinators in each region.

Kathie (AR) – A: We do the established training protocols and procedures at the state level because we wanted consistency across the state. We wanted to know that no matter where you went in the state the training would be the same.

Henry Eaton (TX) – **Q: How often do you send newsletters out?**

Kate (SC) – A: About once a month. We just started with this – will also be sending to facilities as well as volunteers.

Henry Eaton (TX) – **Q: SC – you mentioned that you streamlined your training – how did you do this?**

Dale (SC) – A: We sat down with local ombudsmen and identified core modules for the program and use just the essentials in basic training. We figure we can provide additional training in our continuing education efforts.

Donald Huskey (IL) – Comment: Reference to SC – it seems like it is optional for licensed facilities in state to have volunteers to come into the facility? Is there any look at a regulation change to address this?

Q: Any unique ideas with retention of volunteers?

Dale (SC) – Response to comment: Historically tried for several years to get volunteer program off the ground. It was a consensus that with the industry this is how they would start the program; met with quite a bit of resistance to the program starting out.

Judy (AR) – A: Makes sure that she stays in touch with volunteers weekly to make sure that they know she cares about them; tries to have interesting trainings and get together, asks for input in newsletters, sends cards for different occasions

- Volunteers need to feel needed so keep in close touch (face to face contact is important)

Kate (SC) – A: Sends summary of hours contributed to volunteers and points out summaries of issues/problems that volunteers have helped to solve. Helps them see how they have made a contribution to residents.

Kathie (AR) – A: Also, I think it helps for volunteers to know that they can contact the state office at any time if they are feeling frustrated. She shares her contact information with volunteers so they can call her at anytime.

Willie Austin (VA) – **Q: How do you fund things that you mention that add to the recognition of volunteers like the appreciation banquet & how do you fund state and quarterly meetings?**

Kathie (AR) – A: Every state gets Title IIIB Older Americans Act funding – these funds can be used for recognition – it is up to the State Ombudsman how these funds are allocated. In Arkansas we provide grants to different AAAs to support volunteer coordinators – provides travel reimbursement for volunteers, recognition funding, etc.

Sherilynn Moe (MN) – **Q: Are your volunteer coordinators paid or volunteers? How many do you have and how do you pay them?**

Kathie (AR) – A: Arkansas now has 8 volunteer coordinators who are paid employees – get paid for 20 hrs per week; also volunteer some of their time to participate in continuing training, etc.

Eileen Bennett (MD) – **Q: In remarks about training somebody mentioned about not reinventing the wheel – anyone using the core curriculum developed by the NORC?**

Dale (SC) – A: Yes, we took core pieces from the curriculum & the new visitor’s manual.

Kathie (AR) – A: Our training materials are very similar to those in the core curriculum. The manual was developed in 1999.

Cheryl Barber (KY) – **Q: Has a question concerning offering different levels of training for certified volunteers – is anyone trying this?**

Dale (SC) – A: We have opted to just do one level of volunteer.

Kathie (AR) – A: We have just one level - when you think about it anytime an individual goes into a resident’s room and starts asking questions – they are beginning an investigation.

Cheryl Barber (KY) – Comment: We’ve just found a good source for affordable door prize ideas – web site for volunteer trinkets www.positivepromotions.com

Laura Smith (UT) – Comment: In Utah, have 2 levels of volunteers, finding it to be very effective; all volunteer staff when they come into the program have to start out as a volunteer (doing walk-thrus and building rapport w/ residents; paying attention to care they are receiving and do intakes for complaints & call into office) after being in non-certified role then volunteers can go through certification training and move into that position

- This is helping with retention & allowing them to work more with college students – they use non-certified position for service learning (shorter period of time committment)

Lois Hitchcock (MI) – Comment: We recently got permission from our state to take volunteers into nursing homes without complaint component (uses volunteers as observers – live in the city; city guides program); closer way of keeping track of what is happening to residents in nursing homes

Vicki Grace (NY) – Q: From a rural area and only offers training once a year (loses potential volunteers for that reason) – any suggestions?

Dale (SC) – A: This is one of the reasons we streamlined training down to core training modules; state ombudsmen travels to volunteer area for training.

Kate (SC) – A: Wonders if you might be able to find a group of good volunteers to see if you can train them to go out & provide part of the training.

- **Many people will volunteer to provide training for a small group**

Ruthie FortKamp (OH) – Q: Do you require volunteers to do any reporting?

Kathie (AR) – A: Yes.

Judy (AR) – A: I do a lot of praising & encouraging of people to submit paperwork; reminds volunteers when she speaks with them

Kate (SC) – A: We provide postage for mailing materials to encourage people to send paperwork.

Willie Austin (VA) – **Q: Are you using your websites as recruiting tools?**

Kathie (AR) – A: Yes we are using the website – there's a drop down application; have had quite a few responses from state site; gets many e-mails

Sara Hunt (MI), NORC Consultant – **Comment: In response to the person who mentioned they only offer training once a year – all of the curriculum modules on resource center website have materials that can be used for self-study;** reminds everyone that Dr. Wayne Nelson who has done a lot of research related to ombudsman volunteers and training strongly cautions ombudsmen to minimize the use of outside speakers so that you can control for the perspectives that are being presented (to limit confusion and work on consistency)- this offers some time trade offs to think about

Laura Smith (UT) – Comment: partnered with AARP UT to fund travel and accommodations for people who need to be trained & certified – has made a huge difference for rural areas

Dale (SC) – Comment: We only have 5 paid vol coor's across state – partnering w/ AARP to try to find unpaid volunteer coor in area (Omb to train them to serve as volunteer recruiter for county or region)