

# **CERTIFIED LONG -TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN**

## ***The Role***

The mission of a certified volunteer in the Washington State Long- Term Care Ombudsman Program is to promote and protect the rights, dignity, safety, and quality of life of residents in long- term care facilities. As advocates, Long -Term Care Ombudsmen assist residents to address and resolve issues to their satisfaction. In promoting communication between parties who may disagree, ombudsmen support both resident rights as well as the sincere effort of providers who wish to deliver high quality care in their facilities.

## ***Qualifications***

Include good communication and mediating skills, dedication to community service, ability to analyze complex issues, and ability to confront challenging obstacles in order to achieve a resolution to problems. Must be at least 18 years of age and be committed to improving the quality of life and care in long- term care facilities.

## ***Specific Duties***

- Spend an average of four hours each week at assigned long-term care facility or facilities
- Visit with residents, identifying complaints and concerns
- Educate residents about their rights, community services available to them, laws, regulations and standards governing LTC facilities
- Monitor facilities for the implementation of residents' rights
- Encourage self -advocacy and interaction between residents, staff and community including resident councils and family support groups
- When a complaint is received by or on behalf of a resident:
  1. Determine the facts of the complaint
  2. Determine if the complaint was/was not verified
  3. Work with the resident and provider to resolve the problem(s)
- Acceptance and adherence to the Volunteer Ombudsman Code of Ethics and Standards
- Work cooperatively with residents, the Regional Ombudsman and LTC providers
- Attend monthly in-service training sessions
- Submit monthly activity reports

## ***Training and Benefits***

After the successful completion of a 38 hour training program volunteer ombudsmen are certified by the Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Monthly in-service meetings are offered throughout the county. Mileage is paid at the current \$.405 a mile rate.

## ***Hours***

A LTC Ombudsman may visit a facility anytime during normal business hours, or at other times as the situation requires

## ***Time Commitment***

A commitment for at least a year

## ***Restrictions/Conflict of Interest***

A person may not become an Ombudsman if there exists a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest arises when an individual's interest may compromise his/her ability to be objective and neutral.

1. A person or member of the person's immediate family may not have a financial, fiduciary, or ownership interest in a long-term facility
2. A person may not be currently employed in a long-term facility nor can not have worked for a long-term care facility or organization within the last three years
3. A person may not be assigned or work in any facility in which he/she or a family member resides
4. A person may not be assigned nor work in a LTC facility in which the person or an immediate family member has been employed within the last three years
5. A person shall not use this position for financial benefit, either direct, indirect, or implied
6. A person shall not conduct or engage in political or religious activities at the LTC facility to which he/she is assigned

"A strong Ombudsman Program protects residents' rights. The ombudsman assists in monitoring other real and potential problems that residents help identify such as a shortage of nursing staff and discrimination against residents on Medicaid. Ombudsmen are the community support which assure the institutionalized elderly and the disabled the highest quality of care."

*-Janet Tulloch, nursing home resident and author of "A Home is Not a Home"*

"Ombudsman can fulfill a vital role in ending the isolation of the elderly. Many of these individuals have no families or friends to draw upon for support and assistance. More than three quarters of the women over age 75 in nursing homes have no husbands to visit them or to assure that their needs are being met. For some, the ombudsman may be the only outside visitor or resource they have to call upon if they have a problem."

*-Julie Trocchio, Fmr. Director, Delivery of Services, American Health Care Assoc.*

"At this very moment...we can be assured that scores of local and state ombudsmen (both paid and volunteers) are with long-term care residents and/or their family members, helping them resolve some of the diverse, often complicated problems which concern them. The ombudsman program has contributed greatly to the health, welfare and civil rights of long-term care residents and; therefore to nursing home reform."

*-Elma L. Holder, Fmr. Executive Director, National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform*

"...This program is often the one avenue (the institutionalized elderly) possess to assure that their needs and concerns are addressed - that they are provided quality care - and that they are afforded full rights and privileges under law."

*-Congressman Mario Biaggi, Fmr. Chairman, Select Committee on Aging*