

Volunteer Risk Management Considerations for Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (LTCOPs) Worksheet

Volunteer LTCO increase resident access to the LTCOP, expand LTCO program services, bring a variety of skills and experiences to the LTCO role, strengthen the connection between LTCO programs and the local community where they serve, and enhance the quality of life and care for LTC residents and consumers. Volunteer LTCO are invaluable, but due to the unique role and responsibilities of the LTCO program there are potential risks that need to be addressed.

This worksheet provides key points to consider regarding risk management for LTCOPs. The chart highlights areas of risk and tips to reducing risk to help LTCOPs evaluate their programs to identify potential risk, review current program practices, and develop recommendations for improvements. The information below is from the *Supporting Volunteer LTC Ombudsmen and Minimizing Risk* webinar provided by the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC) and is meant to be provide a brief overview so it is not all inclusive, see footnotes for links to more information and resources.¹

What is Risk?²

Risk: anything that threatens the ability of a nonprofit to accomplish its mission.

Risk management: a discipline that enables people and organizations to cope with uncertainty by taking steps to protect its vital assets and resources.

Minimizing Risk	Current Practice (e.g., screening, training, forms, policies and procedures)	Recommendation
Areas of Risk <i>As representatives of the LTCOP, volunteer LTCO:</i>		
Have access to residents, facilities, and others.		
Obtain personal, confidential information.		
Represent the state LTCOP and local ombudsman entity (if applicable).		
Directly impact program performance and outcomes.		
Have a significant degree of independence.		
Actions could harm the LTCOP and individuals it serves (e.g., inappropriate disclosure of		

¹ Concept for worksheet from Rhonda DeBough, Volunteer Coordinator, MN LTCOP and content from Supporting Volunteer LTCO and Minimizing Risk webinar http://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/volunteer/calls-webinars#1.

² Risk and risk management definition from Nonprofit Risk Management Center www.nonprofitrisk.org.

information, provide misinformation).		
May act outside of their role and responsibilities.		
Drive to their assigned facility and other LTCOP activities.		
Are often personally impacted by their LTCO work, both positively and negatively (e.g., can experience burnout/compassion fatigue).		
<i>To Reduce Risk Establish Connection, Communication, and Control</i>		
Establish Connection		
Provide a warm welcome with staff and peers.		
Regular, personal contact improves trust and solidifies shared values.		
Mentoring and shadowing.		
Enhance Communication		
Reduce isolation in order to prevent an “us vs. them” attitude and a fear that they are “missing out.”		
Provide prompt responses.		
Find communication method that works best for individual volunteers (e.g., ask in application or training if they prefer email vs. phone).		
Improve Control		
Set priorities and share them (e.g., priorities for the LTCOP and expectations for volunteers).		
Establish clear responsibilities for results.		
<i>Risk Management Plans Include:</i>		
Clear Policies and Procedures		
a. Volunteer handbook		
b. Grievance policy		
c. Process for volunteers not adhering to policies and procedures or not performing their duties.		

Written Materials with Volunteer Signatures		
a. Acknowledgment form (e.g., lists responsibilities and role of LTCO)		
b. Code of Ethics		
System to Manage Volunteer Documentation and Monitor Activities		
a. Document receipt of screening and training materials		
b. Track initial training process		
c. Record continuing education hours and other requirements		
d. Volunteer evaluation of their training		
e. Annual volunteer survey of their experience as a volunteer		
f. Annual volunteer evaluation		
g. Document any necessary coaching/performance counseling		
h. Exit interview when volunteer leaves program		