Walking the Fine Line

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I keep a close watch on this heart of mine.
I keep my eyes wide open all the time.
I keep the ends out for the tie that binds
Because you're mine, I walk the line.

“I Walk the Line.”
Walking the Fine Line Between…
Residents & Staff
At times you must feel like...
THE QUESTION IS:

In my role as ombudsman, how do I stay resident-centered and try to create a win/win situation for all?
How do I…

- Walk the fine line between residents and staff in a way that increases their trust in an ombudsman?
- Present myself, so residents understand I am here to advocate on their behalf?
- Develop relationships with staff that leads to improvement in the quality of life and care for residents without crossing a boundary.
It is our challenge not only to talk the talk, but to walk the walk…

With *residents*, it is our charge to be:

- Courteous and respectful
- A good listener
- Patient and understanding
- Trustworthy with confidential information
- Helpful
Not only with residents, but with staff as well…

With *staff*, it is our charge to be:

- Courteous and respectful
- A good listener
- Patient and understanding
- Trustworthy with confidential information
- Helpful
How do we do this?
By Developing Appropriate Relationships with…

- The Administrator
- Staff: Department Heads and Direct Care Workers
- Residents & Family Members
The Bottom Line…

Good relationships help us succeed in promoting resident rights, quality of life and quality of care.
BE CAREFUL Not To Become PRO-FACILTY

Residents are watching
If you become Pro-Facility it diminishes…

- Trust in relationships with residents and family members
- Objectivity in identifying problems
- Effectiveness
- Goals of the ombudsman program
On the other hand… be careful not to bulldoze your way in. It may:

- Limit your capacity to achieve results.
- Put others on the defensive.
- Create a power struggle and go nowhere.
To find the right balance...

Leave the “I’m going to get you for something!”
attitude at the door.

At the same time, don’t get desensitized to issues that are present.
It’s a Fine Line to Walk with…

• The Administrator

• Staff: Department Heads and Direct Care Workers

• Residents & Family Members
Developing a Relationship with the Administrator
To develop an “ombudsman appropriate” relationship with the administrator...
Maintain your appropriate position!
1 – Establish--or Re-establish--Your Role as Ombudsman

- Set a meeting if necessary
  (your Regional Coordinator can assist)
- Acknowledge the difficulty of their job
- Emphasize we have some common goals
- Let them know you can:
  - Help them settle many problems before they go to regulatory, which provides a faster response and a solution for resident concerns
  - Help promote a win / win situation for one resident and the whole community of residents
  - Be a third party voice to support resident needs and rights
  - Provide feedback to help improve residents’ quality of life and care
2 – Daily Protocol

• Establish—or reestablish—who your primary point of contact is in the facility

• Touch base when you arrive and before you leave — whether you have a concern or not

• **Praise their “positives!”**

• Remind you are available to attend care plans, resident councils, provide conflict resolution, etc., with resident permission.

• Never pass an opportunity to remind them that you are there **to help.**
3 - When Reporting a Problem or Concern ...

- Acknowledge the difficulty of the issue at hand (especially when the issue is particularly challenging)
- Be diplomatic, courteous and tactful
- Accountability: Ask the person to let you know when the issue is resolved so you can verify with the resident that the issue is receiving appropriate attention
- **Follow up** with the resident and the Administrator
You may have to remind them again, about a problem!

Lion...?  
...What Lion?
4 – Once an Issue is Settled…

Acknowledge the success

- **Thank the administrator!**
  - …for their quick or steadfast response
  - …for their efforts
  - …for allowing you to assist in the problem
  - …for putting the resident first

- Let them know how happy the resident or family is with the outcome.

- Encourage them to call anytime they need your assistance.
Developing a Relationship with Department Heads and Direct Care Workers
1 – Establish Your Role

- Ask the administrator if you may speak at their next staff in-service to explain your role as ombudsman… *(your Regional Coordinator can assist)*

- At the in-service, explain our approach to resolving concerns and identify the ombudsman’s role

### 3 Ways to Bring Concerns

1. **Report problem to the responsible staff or Admin**
2. **Contact the ombudsman at 1-800-252-2412 (Texas)**
3. **Report to Consumer Rights and Services Hotline at 1-800-458-9858 (Texas)**
2 – Interaction with Staff

• Make time to explain the ombudsman role
• Call staff by their name
• Let them know it is your job to bring resident concerns to their attention
• Focus on resident needs
• Avoid correcting a direct care worker; speak to their supervisor or if a systemic issue, ask to provide in-service training
• Remain courteous, even if staff is rude
MOST IMPORTANTLY: Take every opportunity to praise work well done -- **directly to staff**!

Acknowledge how difficult their job is and praise them for their compassion, gentle care, passion, efforts or attentiveness!
Praise! Praise! Praise!

- Let food service workers/director know when residents are pleased with a particular meal.
- Let housekeeping/maintenance workers know when you notice work well done—the floors shining nicely, or the beds neatly made.
- Let the activity director know when you hear that residents enjoyed a special activity.

Staff: I really like the way you…
Report “Good Works” to Administrators

- Let the worker know you are reporting his/her superior work efforts; so... find out the worker’s name.
- Report to superiors when residents’ praise the effort of particular staff. Ask the resident if she minds you sharing their praise.
- Commend the administrator for successfully leading staff to strive for excellence in caring for residents.
Developing Relationships with Residents and Family
1 - Introductions

- Introduce yourself to every resident and family member
- Explain your role as ombudsman – you are there to:
  - Help solve concerns or problems
  - Advocate for residents rights and promote quality care
  - Listen, provide information and speak on the resident’s behalf, if needed
  - Specifically:
    - Bring resident and family member concerns/complaints (with permission) to the staff’s attention, and to seek resolution; and
    - Attend care plan meetings and resident/family council meetings, when invited.

Hello. My name is…
I am your ombudsman
2 – Do’s and Don’ts

- Do spend time with residents to establish a level of trust.
- Do relay to residents their rights and available services.
- Do report to residents, the status of their complaints.
- Do validate resident’s concerns.
- Do support resident’s decisions—even if they are “bad” decisions.

- Don’t enter a room without knocking.
- Don’t engage in a power struggle or dispute.
- Don’t appear Pro-Facility.
- Don’t break confidentiality.
- Don’t forget that your professional role is not “friendship.”
Remain Calm… even if it seems hopeless…
Call your Regional Coordinator for support or assistance in any situation
3 - Remind Residents that...

• You will check on them often to see if they have any concerns that need attention

• You keep all conversations confidential

• They have the right to contact you, their ombudsman, and to ask staff for help to call

• They can contact you by calling the telephone number on the poster located in the facility, or give them a calling card
GOOD TIMES !!!
Thank you for being an encourager!
In Conclusion…

Walking the fine line between residents and staff… takes patience, courage and understanding…

It involves the ability to balance and maintain relationships in a way that avoids power struggles while acknowledging the efforts of everyone involved

Thank you for serving as a resident advocate !!!