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The National **Long-Term Care**
Ombudsman Resource Center

***THE WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW OF THE
LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM***

What is NORC?

- **Funded by the Administration on Aging/Administration for Community Living grant**
- **Operated by the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) in cooperation with ADvancing States**
- **Provides support, technical assistance, and training for state long-term care ombudsman programs and their program representatives:**
 - Information, consultation, and referral for Ombudsman programs
 - Training and resources for state ombudsman programs and program representatives
 - Promotes awareness of the role of the Ombudsman program
 - Works to improve ombudsman skills, knowledge, and effectiveness in both program management and advocacy

What is the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP)?

- LTCOP representatives are resident-directed advocates.
- LTCOPs advocate for quality of care and quality of life of residents in long-term care (nursing homes, residential care communities, board and care/assisted living, other similar adult care facilities).
- LTCOP provisions in the Older Americans Act (OAA) include:
 - Investigate and resolve complaints
 - Provide information to residents, families, staff (e.g. residents' rights)
 - Advocate for systemic changes to improve residents' care and quality of life.

History of the LTCOP

1972

- Five Nursing Home Ombudsman Demonstration programs established to focus on nursing home resident complaint resolution

1978

- Older Americans Act (OAA) amendments **required all states** to establish an Ombudsman Program
- Program designed to be a **local, community program** utilizing volunteers

1981

- Duties expanded to board and care homes (e.g., residential care communities, assisted living facilities)
- Name changed from Nursing Home Ombudsman Program to Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP)

1987

- LTCOP access to resident records (with resident consent)
- States must prohibit willful interference of official LTCOP duties and/or retaliation against a LTCOP representative, resident or other individual related to LTCOP duties

2015

- Final Regulations for the LTCOP were published in the Federal Register on **February 11, 2015**

2016

- LTCOP Rule was effective **July 1, 2016**
- Older Americans Act was reauthorized

What Does the LTCOP Do?

- Identify, investigate, and resolve complaints made by or on behalf of residents.
- Provide information to residents about long-term care services.
- Provide technical support for the development of resident and family councils.
- Advocate for changes to improve residents' quality of life and care.
- Represent resident interests before governmental agencies.
- Seek legal, administrative, and other remedies to protect residents.
- Ensure residents have regular and timely access to the LTCOP.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Responsibilities

Do not conduct licensing and regulatory inspections or investigations

- LTCOPs are knowledgeable of federal and state regulations and will refer to relevant regulations as they advocate for the highest quality of care and life for residents.
- If necessary, with resident consent, a LTCOP representative will file a complaint with licensing and regulatory.

Are not Adult Protective Services (APS) investigators

- LTCOPs provide information regarding preventing and reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- LTCOPs do not have the same standard of evidence requirement as APS and are not the “official finder of fact.” LTCOPs attempt to resolve complaints to the residents’ satisfaction (including those regarding abuse), not gather evidence to substantiate that abuse occurred.
- If necessary, with resident consent or permission of the State LTCO if the resident can’t consent and does not have a legal representative, the LTCOP representative will file a complaint about alleged abuse.
- APS is not required to provide systems advocacy, but the LTCOP is required to do so by the OAA.

Do not provide direct care for residents

- LTCOPs share information about quality care practices and ways to enhance the quality of life for residents.
- LTCOPs are a resource for staff training and provide information for community resources.

Who Does the LTCOP Serve?

- Individuals, regardless of age, living in long-term care facilities (e.g., nursing homes, residential care communities, assisted living/board and care, similar adult care facilities).
 - In accordance with federal law, facilities must provide the LTCOP with access to residents.
 - In a small number of states, LTCOPs also visit individuals that receive long-term care services in their own home.
- **As resident advocates:**
 - The resident guides LTCOP action.
 - The LTCOP needs resident consent prior to taking any action on a complaint or sharing resident information.
 - The LTCOP seeks to resolve complaints to the residents' satisfaction.
 - The LTCOP represents residents' interests, both individually and systemically.
 - The LTCOP empowers residents and promotes self-advocacy.

Who Represents the LTCOP?*



- **53 State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs**
 - Each state, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C.
 - Program structure varies (e.g., centralized, decentralized)
- **418 local Ombudsman entities**
- **1,381 full-time staff**
- **5,152 certified volunteers donated 250,514 hours of service**
 - All designated representatives of the Office receive training, including volunteers
 - Not all programs work with volunteers

LTCOP Activity Highlights (2020)



Conducted **191,214** visits and **39,984** long-term care facilities received at least one visit.



Attended **10,737** Resident Council Meetings and **1,208** Family Council Meetings



8,232 community education sessions



2,121 trainings for LTC facility staff



261,989 consultations to LTC facility staff



381,724 information and consultation to individuals (residents, family members, others)

LTCOP Complaint Investigations

- **LTCOP representatives:**

- Investigate individual complaints and address concerns that impact several or all residents in a facility.
- Can address general concerns they personally observe during a visit (e.g. odors, concerns about the environment, staff not knocking on resident doors before entering).
- Cannot share information without resident consent.
- Investigate to gather the facts, but the main goal is to resolve the issue to the residents' satisfaction.
- Call upon others to fulfill their responsibilities to residents.
- Represent resident needs by working for legislative and regulatory changes (e.g., coordinated systems advocacy lead by the State Ombudsman).

National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS) Complaint Data (2020)

- Nationwide, in 2020 the LTCOP investigated and worked to resolve 153,324 complaints.
- LTCOPs handle a variety of complaints about quality of life and care.
- Not all complaints are about the care provided by a facility, some complaints are about outside agencies, services, or individuals.
- LTCO can receive and respond to complaints from individuals other than the resident (e.g., family member), but LTCO still need resident permission to investigate or share information.*

**If the resident cannot provide consent, the LTCO will work with the resident's legal representative or follow their state procedure if the resident doesn't have a legal representative.*

Top 10 Nursing Home Complaints (2020)

1	Discharge or eviction
2	Response to requests for assistance
3	Physical abuse
4	Dignity and respect
5	Personal property
6	Medications
7	Symptoms unattended
8	Personal hygiene
9	Other rights and preferences
10	Care planning

Top 10 Residential Care Communities (2020)

1	Discharge or eviction
2	Medications
3	Dignity and respect
4	Physical abuse
5	Food services
6	Other rights and preferences
7	Personal property
8	Housekeeping, laundry and pest abatement
9	Billing and charges
10	Administrative oversight

Get to Know the LTCOP

- Contact the LTCOP if you know a resident that may benefit from a visit with a LTCOP representative.
- Contact the LTCOP if you, or someone you know, needs information about long-term care services and supports.
- Share information about the LTCOP with residents, family members, and your colleagues.
- Visit the NORC website for information to share with residents:
<http://www.ltcombudsman.org/>.

How to Contact the LTCOP

- Nursing homes are required to post contact information for the LTCOP and some states require residential care communities to post information about the LTCOP.
- Visit the NORC website to locate your state LTCOP:
<http://www.ltcombudsman.org/>

Locate an Ombudsman

Find an Ombudsman, Citizen Advocacy Group (CAG), or other long-term care resources in your state or territory. Citizen Advocacy Groups are concerned citizens who advocate for quality long-term care, services and supports and quality of life for residents and consumers in their locality, state or region.

[Learn more about ombudsmen →](#)



RESOURCES

How NORC Supports Ombudsman Programs

- **Resource Center**

- Training (webinars, in-person)
- Resources (quarterly *Ombudsman Outlook*, reference guides)
- Technical assistance (TA) – TA FAQ page http://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/ta
- Information to share with consumers (e.g., facts sheets regarding financial exploitation, resident-to-resident mistreatment)
- Ombudsman program examples
- On-Demand Training Center <https://consumervoice.mrooms.net/>

- **Work with LTCOP Associations**

- **Information, not advocacy**

- Information regarding policy, regulations and requirements

The image shows two overlapping screenshots from the NORC website. The top screenshot is the 'Ombudsman Outlook' newsletter header, featuring a green envelope icon and the title 'Ombudsman Outlook: News, Resources, and Tips'. It is dated Friday, June 29, 2018, Volume 4, Issue 4. The main article is 'Ombudsman Program Advocacy Regarding Abuse in Long-Term Care Facilities'. The bottom screenshot is the 'LTCOP REFERENCE GUIDE' titled 'RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM'. It includes an 'OVERVIEW' section discussing the Older Americans Act (OAA) and the LTCOP's role, and 'KEY POINTS' starting with 'What is abuse?'. Both screenshots include the NORC logo and social media icons.

NORC Website

www.ltcombudsman.org

Home News About ▾ New ombudsman? Library ▾ Events ▾ Support ▾ Issues State Ombudsman ▾

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Specialized Information for:

Nursing Homes Assisted Living/Board & Care Home and Community Based Services

NEW Initial Certification Training Curriculum for Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

Learn more

COVID-19 Updates

Learn about the most recent information and resources.

Stay informed >>

Locate an Ombudsman program, volunteer opportunities, and help near you ▶ Visit our map

New ombudsman?

Library

- Federal Laws and Regulations
- Government Reports
- LTCOP Research

Events

Support

- COVID-19
- NORC Webinars
- NORS
- Program Management
- Program Promotion
- Ombudsman Program Examples
- Systems Advocacy
- Technical Assistance FAQs
- Training
- Volunteer Management

Issues

- More than 20 issue pages (e.g., abuse, antipsychotic medications, dementia care, emergency preparedness)

Site Map: <http://ltcombudsman.org/about/site-map>



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Connect with us:

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