

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMEN

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CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMEN

The State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (STLCO) has the authority to certify community ombudsmen and “shall require such community ombudsmen to receive appropriate training as determined and approved by the Department.” Georgia law was amended in 1995 to require that “such training shall include an internship of at least seven working days in a nursing home and at least three working days in a personal care home.”

I. CERTIFICATION TRAINING

A. Required Training Topics

Required training for candidates for Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) certification includes, but is not limited to, the following topics and content areas:

1. Processes of aging
2. Characteristics of long-term care residents
3. State and federal long-term care regulatory system
4. History and overview of long-term care facilities
5. Long-term care reimbursement systems
6. Residents’ rights
7. Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
 - i. History of program
 - ii. Federal and state statutes
 - iii. Policies and procedures, including:
 - Duties and responsibilities
 - Confidentiality
 - Conflict of interest
8. Communication and interviewing skills
9. Complaint investigation skills and procedures
10. Reporting and record-keeping
11. Aging network – LTCO role

These topics may be presented, at the discretion of the SLTCO, in a combination of classroom, long-term care facility or other appropriate settings. The SLTCO will provide this training for staff LTCOs and may delegate the training of volunteer LTCOs to community LTCO coordinators.

B. On-site Training in Long-Term Care Facilities

As required by Georgia law, the certification process includes on-site training of seven days in a nursing facility (NF) and three days in a personal care home (PCH). The SLTCO or a designee will be responsible for coordination and scheduling training activities with NF and PCH providers. On-site training will take place under the direct supervision of the SLTCO or

designee and will occur in a classroom format supervised by the SLTCO or designee, or in directed observation and study assignments.

1. Training in nursing facilities—seven (7) days

a. General requirements for all LTCO trainees

All trainees (including staff and volunteers) will receive on-site training For seven days in NFs. On-site training activities in NFs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Preliminary assigned readings on NF issues and regulations
- (2) Initial orientation with SLTCO or designee including training on:
 - Residents' rights to confidentiality and privacy, and
 - Trainee role during facility training
- (3) Introduction to facility and administrative philosophy by administrator
- (4) Presentations by department heads, such as:
 - Administration
 - Social services
 - Nursing
 - Dietary
 - Activities
 - Rehabilitative services
 - Billing and reimbursement
 - Laundry and housekeeping
- (5) Observation of the following:
 - Departmental activities
 - Resident care planning
 - Resident council meeting (when available)
 - Staff provision of services to and interaction with residents
- (6) Interviews with residents
- (7) Submission by trainee to the State Long-term Care Ombudsman Program (SLTCOP) of written reports on activities and observations while in the facility.

b. Staff LTCO requirement—ORS nursing facility inspection survey—three (3) days

Staff LTCO are required to fulfill three days of the seven-day NF on-site requirement by accompanying an Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) survey team during an annual NF survey. Staff LTCOs are required to:

- (1) Observe, as permitted by the survey team and residents, all aspects of the survey process, including the exit conference.

- (2) Observe a complaint investigation by the survey team where done in conjunction with the survey; and
- (3) Submit to the SLTCOP a written report on observations of the trainee during the survey process.

c. Exception for volunteer LTCOs

Volunteer LTCOs are not required to accompany an ORS survey team but are required to meet the seven day requirement for on-site training in a NF (except as specified in I.B.3, below).

2. Training in personal care homes—three (3) days

a. General requirements for all LTCO trainees

All trainees will receive on-site training for three days in PCHs. On-site training activities in PCHs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Preliminary assigned readings regarding PCH issues and regulations
- (2) Initial orientation with SLTCO or designee, including training on:
 - Residents' rights to confidentiality and privacy; and
 - Trainee role during facility training
- (3) Introduction to facility and administrative philosophy by provider/manager
- (4) Observation of the following:
 - Daily routine of residents
 - Resident interactions with staff and with other residents
 - Services provided
- (5) Interviews with residents
- (6) Submission by trainee to the SLTCOP of written report on activities and observations while in facility.

b. Staff LTCO requirement—ORS personal care home complaint investigation—one (1) day

Staff LTCO are required to fulfill one day of the three-day NF on-site requirement by observing an ORS complaint investigation in a PCH. (If scheduling this activity impedes timely completion of the certification process, the community LTCO coordinator or the trainee may request the SLTCO to approve a substitute activity). Staff LTCOs are required to:

- (1) Observe all aspects of the complaint investigation process, and
- (2) Submit to the SLTCOP a written report on activities and observations while in the facility

c. Exception for Volunteer LTCOs

Volunteer LTCOs are not required to observe an ORS complaint investigation but are required to meet the three-day requirement for on-site training in a PCH (except as specified in I.B.3, below).

3. Training for LTCO volunteers serving one type of facility.

Volunteer LTCOs who serve only one type of facility—either NFs or PCHs—must complete one day of on-site training in the type of facility not served. For example, a volunteer LTCO who serves NFs only, must complete seven days of on-site training in a NF and one day of on-site training in a PCH.)

C. Certification Examinations

1. Written examination

The STLCO provides to the trainee a written “take home” examination. The examination is designed to assess the trainee’s ability to apply the complaint investigation process to sample cases by:

- a. Identifying issues involved
- b. Applying relevant statutes/regulations
- c. Developing a plan of action that demonstrates:
 - (1) An awareness of the appropriate LTCO role
 - (2) Appropriate resolution strategies and rationales.

The trainee must complete and return the written examination within 2 months of its receipt. The written examination will be evaluated by the SLTCO staff on a pass/fail basis. If the trainee does not receive a “pass” rating, the SLTCO may identify additional work to be done on the exam or other activities or training needed to obtain a pass rating. Trainees may submit the written examination no more than three times.

2. Oral examination

When all other certification activities have been satisfactorily completed, the oral examination will be administered by the SLTCOP staff.

- a. The purpose of this examination is to evaluate the following:

- (1) Knowledge of LTCO policies and procedures and federal and state enabling statutes,
 - (2) Demonstration of the skills necessary to provide adequate services to long-term care residents, and
 - (3) Knowledge of relevant laws and regulations necessary to fulfill job responsibilities.
- b. The examination process is as follows:
- (1) The examination will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis. If the trainee receives a “pass” evaluation, she/he will be certified as a community ombudsman. If the trainee does not receive a “pass” evaluation, the SLTCO may identify activities or training needed to improve competency in areas which the SLTCO has found deficient.
 - (2) The trainee will be notified of his/her certification status within five working days of the examination.
 - (3) Each trainee who has not received a “pass” evaluation on the oral examination may request no more than two additional oral examinations.

II. OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF CERTIFICATION

At the time that the trainee is certified, the SLTCO will issue an identification card “which shall be presented upon request by community ombudsmen whenever needed to carry out the purposes of this article.”

III. CERTIFICATION CONTINUATION REQUIREMENTS

A. Requirements for Maintaining Certification

1. Compliance with LTCO policies and procedures

In order to maintain certification, the community ombudsman must comply with the requirements of the LTCO policies and procedures.

2. Program affiliation

In order to maintain certification, the community ombudsman must remain affiliated with a designated community LTCOP.

3. Continuing education requirements

a. LTCO staff – 35 hours per year

- i) Each staff LTCO shall attend a minimum of 35 hours of in-service training annually.
- ii) Each staff LTCO shall attend all state-wide trainings provided by the SLTCOP, which will count toward the fulfillment of the 35-hour

requirement. Any circumstance that prevents attendance at required trainings must be approved in advance by the SLTCO.

Note: If the SLTCOP does not provide 35 hours of training in a calendar year or if a staff LTCO is unable to attend a training provided by the SLTCOP, the remainder of the training requirement may be satisfied through other training related to ombudsman duties and approved by the SLTCO.

b. LTCO volunteers – 20 hours per year

- i) Each volunteer LTCO shall receive a minimum of 20 hours of in-service training annually.
- ii) Each volunteer LTCO shall attend, when possible, one statewide LTCO training provided by the SLTCOP. Attendance at in-service training programs provided or arranged for by the community LTCOP with which the volunteer is affiliated may fulfill this requirement either in whole or in part. The SLTCO shall approve such volunteer training programs.

B. Re-Certification

In order to continue to carry out his/her duties, each community ombudsman must be re-certified every two years by the SLTCO “as continuing to meet the Department’s standards as community ombudsman.” Certification and re-certification records are maintained by the SLTCO. Upon re-certification, the SLTCO issues to the LTCO a new LTCO identification card.

C. De-designation

If a community ombudsman fails to meet these requirements to maintain certification, the SLTCO may initiate de-designation proceedings as set forth in the LTCO policies and procedures.