

Term Care Ombudsman

August 2002

Ombudsman Associate Curriculum, Chapter 5

CASES TO DISCUSS

Is it within your authority to handle these complaints as they are presented? What right addresses the situation? Can you educate the client or family to handle it? Do you have permission from the resident to work on resolving the complaint. If so, whom would you talk to on the staff? Are there other possible implications?

1. After knocking, you enter the client's room. She appears to be uncomfortable and is holding her stomach. When you ask her if anything is wrong she says, "My stomach is sour. All I need is a little Mylanta. But the aide said she didn't think I was allowed to have any."
2. I am supposed to get \$40.00 Personal Needs Allowance since I am a Medicaid resident. My son handles all my finances and he never gives me the \$40.00. I would like to go out shopping with the other residents but what's the use? I don't have any money.
3. Before I came here, I received my husband's VA government check monthly. Now my daughter-in-law, who has power of attorney won't give me my check. I don't know who to talk to about this.
4. Any serious health problem that I have had has always happened at night. But here no one checks on us at night and if the problem is really serious I might not be able to reach the call light button.
5. My family is always complaining about how much it costs to live here but I never get to see the bill that the nursing home sends out to my family. I worry that I am being billed for services that I'm not getting. Sometimes I worry so much I can't sleep at night.
6. My new roommate snores so loud that I can't sleep. I've complained to the nurse but she hasn't done anything about it. Can you get her out of my room?

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7. You observe a large bruise on the nose of one of the residents that you often visit. When you asked where it came from, she said that it was from her glasses which are broken and don't fit her very well. She has difficulty seeing without her glasses.
8. I pushed my call light twenty minutes ago to have someone push my wheelchair to the community room for the concert. Can you push me down to the community room?
9. When I went into the hospital, I gave my brother power of attorney over my finances. When I came to this nursing home my brother and sister-in-law emptied out my account. I'm almost well enough to go back home but now I don't have any savings to pay for rent. Can you help me get my money back?
10. I love to read but my glasses aren't a bit of help. Can you help me get to the doctors?
11. I'm in a lot of pain since I came back from the hospital but I haven't had a bit of pain medication and no one seems to know what I should be getting. Please, please find out what is going on? I can hardly stand it.
12. I don't know what has happened to my clothes. These are not my underwear that I have on. They are so tight I can hardly breathe and my white sweater is missing.
13. I observed that the nursing home has stopped printing menus. Everyone gets the same food. There are no choices. Many people don't like the food and eat very little.
14. I'm a large man and need a custom built wheelchair. Medicare bought me one when I came here but I haven't seen it in about a month. The wheelchair they give me to use is too small for me.
15. I get so tired by the end of the day that I want to go to bed right after dinner. No one will put me to bed. Why can't I go to bed when I want to?

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16. My water pitcher gets filled at the beginning of each shift but we don't get very much ice and a short time later the water is warm and unappetizing.
17. My mother needs to be fed. Since she arrived three months ago, she has lost a lot of weight. I can't be here at meal times and I wonder if the staff is feeding her. Every time I visit she complains about being hungry. What can I do?
18. My roommate is not in good health and her curtain is always closed. She has the bed nearer the window and with the curtain closed, I can't see out at all. Can you get the nurse to leave the curtain open or transfer her to another room?
19. My wife has MS. She's not very old and would like to stay as active as possible but the activities people only have projects that appeal to older people. Can't they find something to do for a person her age?
20. My family was told upon admission that my mother's sheets would be changed every day. We mark the bed sheets and have discovered the sheets sometimes aren't changed from one week to the next. Recently she has become incontinent and we worry about her getting bedsores and lying in a wet, dirty bed.
21. My mother tried and tried to get someone to help her to the bathroom but no one answered her call light so she got up herself and tried to walk to the bathroom. Before she seated herself on the commode, she had an accident. When I visited later that day, the floor was still wet and stained yellow.
22. My mother has Alzheimer's and is in a wheelchair. Sometimes she forgets that she can't walk and she tries to get up. I want her restrained so she won't fall. Will you talk to the staff?

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23. I was injured in a motorcycle accident and cannot move from the waist down. I told the aides not to try to transfer me into a wheelchair with the Hoyer lift unless they have help but they keep insisting that they can do it alone. I'm a big guy. I've been dropped twice. Will you talk to the aides? They won't listen to me.
24. You observe that a resident has sores on her arms and legs. When you inquire the resident says that she has always had very sensitive skin. She used to use special lotion every day to keep her skin from getting dry and itchy but now there is no one to apply it. The resident says that the aide doesn't have the time. The condition seems to get worse each time you visit and you've noticed that the resident is scratching her arms and legs till they bleed.
25. You overhear an aide yelling at one of the residents when you come for your visit. She is telling her that if she doesn't stop pressing her call light button that the aide will just ignore her. What do you do? What if the resident insists that the aide was just joking?
26. You notice that a woman from your church has just been admitted. During your next visit, she asks if you would arrange for her to go to services.
27. I love a nice ripe banana for my breakfast. The doctor says I should eat one every day however the bananas I get are usually green and I can't eat it. Could you have the dietician get me ripe bananas.
28. My daughter sent me an audiotape of spiritual music about two weeks ago and I have never received it. Would you track it down for me?
29. My father's hearing seems to have deteriorated significantly since he was admitted to the nursing home. We think he needs a hearing aide but the facility has been dragging its feet on getting him to an audiologist.
30. A resident's wife tells you that the staff has been after her to have a feeding tube inserted in her husband's stomach. He has Alzheimer's and

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has had a stroke. He cannot swallow well and the nurses say he is a candidate for pneumonia. She is his guardian and knows he would not want a tube inserted.

31. The social worker stops you in the hall and says she believes that a family member is exploiting a nursing home resident.
32. Could you help me make an appointment to see my gynecologist? I've been raped by an aide who works third shift. I know that I have been bleeding vaginally but the other aides and nursing staffs are ignoring it.
33. The wife of an Alzheimer's resident complains to you that her husband has been having sex with another Alzheimer's resident. She knows he doesn't know what he is doing but the nursing home says they can't watch him every minute.
34. A resident who is paralyzed on one side from stroke complains that whenever the second shift comes in to re-position her, they turn her over "like a slab of meat."
35. You observe that an aide is pushing a frail, elderly resident down the hall to the shower with only a Depends placed carefully across his lap.
36. I brought my favorite chair from home when I was admitted and was encouraged by the facility to bring whatever I wanted to make my room feel homelike. The nursing home was recently sold and the new owners are redecorating. When I went home for a holiday visit, I returned to find my favorite chair was missing. Management had determined that it did not fit in with the new décor so it was disposed of.
37. A staff member pulls you aside and shares with you that an agency nurse on the night shift gave the wrong medication to a resident. The resident is now in the hospital and the family was told that the resident had a heart attack.

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38. I love bratwurst but lately all we get to eat is some kind of sausage. We never get a choice. When we finally get our food, it is cold and unappetizing.
39. I'm so thirsty. Could you get me a drink of water and hold the cup to my mouth?
40. An aide comes to my room about once a month and gives me a haircut. I look like one of the three stooges and to make matters worse, they charge me \$10.00 a cut. Is that right?
41. I know the staff has meetings to talk about my care but they never invite me. They only invite my daughter. Don't I have a say in how I'm being treated?
42. The presidential elections are coming up. I would love to vote but I don't think I will be able to get out to the polls.
43. When I get a bed bath, I feel like I'm putting on a show. The privacy curtain is left open and sometimes the door is left open too.
44. My father had a beer with his dinner every night of his adult life. I would like him to be able to continue that practice but I'm getting a lot of resistance from the staff. Isn't he entitled to his beer?
45. The nurse has my cigarettes and won't let me keep them in my room. If I want a smoke, I have to get them from her and can only smoke on the front porch. In winter it is cold out there.
46. I got sent to the emergency room last week after a fall and it took the staff two days to call my daughter and let her know what happened. Is that right?
47. My mother's behavior has gotten worse. She is hitting the other dementia residents and staff with her cane. I notice every time I come that she is restricted to her room. The staff says it is for the safety of the residents. Are they allowed to do that?

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48. My wife and I have been married for more than fifty years. Sometimes when I visit we would like some privacy for "snuggle time" but the facility says they don't have space for that.
49. The nursing home says I have to leave. They say that my kids haven't paid the bill. I don't want to leave. I've made friends here and the staff is friendly and takes care of me. What am I going to do?
50. I hate weekends. One night I woke up and found the weekend aide going through my drawers. She helped herself to the chocolates my daughter brought me and heavens knows what else. But she is the only one to take me to the bathroom at night. So please don't tell anyone. I don't want to make trouble.