

THE ADVOCATE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE RESIDENT IN PROBLEM SOLVING

Be an advocate—don't ignore a bad situation or an older person in need. The problem won't go away. If you feel uncomfortable or incompetent in a certain area, find a resource person. If you need assistance in an area of complaint, **call your supervisor**.

Have the residents' permission to act on their behalf. Make sure they understand what it is you will be doing for them and that they have helped you decide how to best address the problem. In other words, let them help resolve their own problems.

Accept and value the residents and their wishes. This will require, at times, that you set aside your own values.

Respect the residents' right to privacy and confidentiality. This cannot be over-emphasized. Any violation could preclude problem solving or trust and is a violation of federal and state law and Ombudsman Program policy.

Be self-aware. Know your own strengths and weaknesses. Will you hurt or help the residents? Know when to call your supervisor for help. Don't feel like you have to solve all the problems yourself.

Have certain knowledge and skills and be willing to learn the system, the structure of the agency you are trying to access, the points of entry contact persons, and programs involved. Be familiar with community resources and maintain working relationships and contacts. Practice communicating, which includes listening, interviewing and planning.

Be willing and able to see both sides of the situation—to be objective. It is imperative to be able to see the "common ground" on which to build the resolution to the problem.

Be able to look back and objectively evaluate your advocacy.

Be persistent and yet tactful. Separate your feelings from the issue and the people from the problem.

Work yourself out of a job. Encourage the resident's to advocate for themselves. Get them involved so that next time they may be able to handle it themselves. Empower the residents!