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Ohio seeks volunteers to advocate for nursing home, assisted living residents *Long-term care ombudsman volunteers are “empathy in action”*

Columbus, Ohio – During National Volunteer Week, April 17-23, the Ohio Department of Aging and the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman celebrate “Empathy in Action” and recognize the priceless contributions of ombudsman volunteers. They invite all Ohioans to contribute their time and empathy toward helping residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and group homes. Visit www.stepup.ohio.gov to learn more and volunteer.

“Volunteering truly is empathy in action,” said Ursel J. McElroy, director of the department.

“Ombudsman volunteers take that to a higher level by serving as the eyes, ears, and voices for long-term care consumers. They are needed now more than ever.”

“Ombudsmen are resident-directed advocates who improve the quality of life and care for long-term care consumers,” added Erin Pettegrew, deputy state long-term care ombudsman. “Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ombudsman volunteers have been visiting residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, educating them about their rights, and addressing their care concerns.”

The pandemic greatly altered the way services and supports were provided to long-term care consumers. The state of Ohio and the long-term care ombudsmen are committed to ensuring that all Ohioans have access to quality care in the settings they choose. The ombudsman program and its volunteers help make this a reality.

Ombudsman volunteers work with nursing home and assisted living residents, family members, and facility staff and leadership to help resolve care issues. While COVID-19 has made it more important that consumers have an advocate there for them when they need it, the pandemic has also diminished Ohio’s team of ombudsman volunteers.

Ohio’s 100,000 nursing home and assisted living residents need empathetic advocates looking out for their interests. Ombudsman volunteers regularly visit facilities and speak with residents about their care. Volunteers are linked to their regional ombudsman program and provide services at facilities in their own communities. They receive comprehensive training and support from paid ombudsman staff.

For more information about the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, including how they can help you or a loved one, visit www.ombudsman.ohio.gov or call 1-800-282-1206. Follow the Ombudsman’s office on [Facebook](#) during National Volunteer Week for stories of ombudsman volunteers in action.

[MORE]

About ODA – The Ohio Department of Aging serves and advocates for the needs of Ohioans age 60 and older, as well as their families, caregivers and communities. Programs include home and community based long-term supports and services, as well as initiatives to promote health and wellness throughout the lifespan. Visit www.aging.ohio.gov.

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