

CHAPTER 12 INFORMATION SYSTEMS (NORS)

I. Introduction

Title VII, Section 712(c) of the Older Americans Act requires each State Unit on Aging (SUA), including the California Department of Aging (CDA), to establish a statewide uniform reporting system to collect and analyze data relating to complaints and conditions in long-term care facilities.

To meet this requirement, the federal Administration on Aging (AoA) directed the SUAs to implement a uniform management information system, the National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS). The Office of Management and Budget approved NORS and it became effective in 1995 under an AoA Program Instruction Memo (AoA PI 95-10).

Since 2001, the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) and the local LTCOPs in California have used the OmbudsManager data collection software, supplied by Harmony Information Systems, to collect data and make reports to meet mandatory AoA requirements. In 2006, data entry into NORS became Internet based through Harmony's AgingNetwork.com portal. In 2013, the CDA Information Technology Branch and the OSLTCO developed the Ombudsman Data Integration Network (ODIN). ODIN allows the Coordinators of local LTCOPs to determine who, within their programs, will be able to amend and delete case, activity, and facility data. The OSLTCO has structured ODIN to be used as a case management tool, and not just a repository for NORS data.

II. Legal Authority

FEDERAL Title 42 United States Code section 3058g(c)

STATE Welfare and Institutions Code section 9716

III. Reporting Requirements

Local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) are required to ensure compliance with reporting provisions specific to the Ombudsman Program as stated in the Area Plan Contract Terms and Conditions, Exhibit E.

Local LTCOPs are responsible for entering data into ODIN and ensuring that data is complete for each quarter on or before the following dates:

- Local LTCOPs must report data for July 1 through September 30 by **October 31**.
- Local LTCOPs must report data for October 1 through December 31 by **January 31**.

- Local LTCOPs must report data for January 1 through March 31 by **April 30**.
- Local LTCOPs must report data for April 1 through June 30 by **July 31**.

Each quarter, the OSLTCO Management Services Technician (MST) e-mails the Quarterly ODIN Reporting Form (S301 – Exhibit 12-A) to the local Program Coordinators. Each Coordinator signs the form and returns it to the MST, with a copy to the AAA, stating either that the local program has entered NORS data for that reporting period or providing a specific date when the data will be entered and the reason for the delay. The OSLTCO monitors data periodically throughout the year to ensure that local LTCOPs are appropriately recording Ombudsman complaints and activities. OSLTCO staff is available to provide technical assistance with NORS coding and data entry. Local LTCOPs can also get assistance with questions about ODIN by accessing the ODIN Reference Guide posted on the LTCOP Coordinator Resources Webpage of the CDA Web site www.aging.ca.gov

IV. Data Information Systems Policy

User Registration: The OSLTCO enters paid staff and volunteers into ODIN when new Ombudsmen are certified. Each Coordinator may then decide who he or she wishes to have access to ODIN at either the Key Data Entry level or the Administrative level. Key Data Entry level users can input case and activity information, but they cannot change facility information or delete cases and activities. Administrative level users can reset passwords, and add, review, and delete cases, activities, and facilities. Local LTCOP Coordinators must be sure to deactivate user log-ins and change user passwords when Ombudsman representatives in their programs are decertified.

Data entered into ODIN is reported through the Ombudsman Reporting Tool (ORT) into the statewide report mandated by AoA. Each local LTCOP's NORS report is a valuable tool for the local LTCOP to use in evaluating the services it provides, and supplying information to the AAA for use in preparing its four-year Area Plan and annual updates.

V. Cases and Complaints Collected in NORS

A Complaint is a concern brought to, or initiated by, an Ombudsman representative for investigation and action by or on behalf of one or more residents of a long-term care facility relating to the health, safety, welfare, or rights of a resident. **One or more complaints constitute a case.**

Each inquiry brought to, or initiated by, an Ombudsman representative on behalf of a resident or group of residents involving one or more complaints which requires opening a case; and includes Ombudsman investigation, strategy to resolve, and follow up; is recorded as a case. Each case may have more than

one complaint. However, each problem or complaint will have only one complaint code.

Local LTCOPs record complaints in NORS as **verified** if it is determined after work (interviews, record inspection, observation, etc.) that the circumstances described in the complaint are generally accurate.

VI. Documentation

Documentation of case investigation activities is extremely important for accurate reporting and for allowing others who may later become involved in a case to know what steps the Ombudsman representative has already taken. Furthermore, any complaint may become a source of litigation, and clear documentation will be critical.

For each case, at a minimum, local LTCOPs must document the following in the case notes:

1. The basics of the complaint, such as a description of the issue, the date the local LTCOP received the complaint and the time of the first action.
2. The date, time and information from the investigating Ombudsman's initial contact with the complainant.
3. The date, time and information from the investigating Ombudsman's contact with the resident, if the resident is not the complainant.
4. Consent from the resident for the Ombudsman representative to act on the resident's behalf. If the investigation involves accessing records or divulging the identity of the resident to others, the resident or his or her legal representative must sign the consent form (OSLTCO S201), which must be included in the case file.
5. The steps taken by the Ombudsman representative to investigate the complaint.
6. The Ombudsman findings as a result of the investigation. There must be sufficient factual information included in the notes to support a finding that the complaint was either verified or not verified.
7. The conversation with the resident and other pertinent information to support the complaint disposition.

All case notes must be written in an objective, factual manner and not include subjective opinions.

VII. Complaint Categories in NORS

For each complaint there must be only one complaint code listed. The Ombudsman representative must choose the one code which best fits the problem.

- Codes 1 through 102 (Groups A-M) are used for complaints against LTC facilities and their representatives.
- Codes 103 through 116 (Groups N and O) are used for complaints against the State licensing and Medicaid agencies.
- Codes 117 through 128 (Group P) are used for complaints against or involving individuals who are not managers/staff of facilities or of the State's licensing and certification agency (except for code 119, operating without a license).
- Codes 129 through 133 (group Q) are used for complaints about services in settings other than long-term care facilities (as defined by AoA) or for services by outside providers. The local program must code reports of abuse occurring in an Adult Day Health Care center (ADHC), for example, as Q complaints and not as abuse complaints because an ADHC is not a SNF, ICF, or RCFE. **Q codes must be used for complaints in facilities other than SNFs, ICFs, RCFEs, and unlicensed facilities.** The local program should also code complaints about outside agencies that provide services, such as hospice, homemaking, or transportation, in Group Q.

Ombudsman representatives should use categories in Group A "Abuse, Gross Neglect, Exploitation" only for serious complaints of *willful* mistreatment of residents by facility staff, management, other residents, or unknown or outside individuals who have gained access to a resident through negligence or lax security on the part of the facility, or for neglect which is so severe that it constitutes abuse. The local program should only use NORS codes to document allegations of abuse or other complaints that have been reported to the LTCOP and for which Ombudsman involvement and action is required.

Complaints coming in on the SOC 341 report of known or suspected abuse of elder or dependent adults *do not always* meet the AoA definition of abuse used in the Group A codes. If they do not meet the AoA abuse definition, complaints should be coded in the appropriate (non-A) category. Programs can indicate that the complaint came in on an SOC 341 by using the SOC 341 Journal Type in ODIN and attaching a copy of the SOC 341 to case documentation.

The local program may use the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Complaint Form (S306 – Exhibit 12-B) to collect complaint information for entry in ODIN.

VIII. Ombudsman Activities Collected in NORS

In addition to complaint and case data, the AoA requires Ombudsman Programs to collect information about some of the activities performed by Ombudsman representatives. The LTC Ombudsman Activity Log (S304 – Exhibit 12-C) is one tool that local Ombudsman Programs may use to collect this information for entry into ODIN. To record call intake and instances of information and consultation, local Ombudsman Programs may use the Information and Consultation Log (S307A – Exhibit 12-D) and/or the Information and Consultation Tally by Topic (S307B – Exhibit 12-E)

Documenting time spent:

- It is important to enter volunteer time spent on casework and activities so that the OSLTCO can calculate total volunteer time for the AoA report. The local program should enter case-related time, including travel time and time spent on written documentation, in the case record.
- The local program should enter volunteer time that is not connected to a case or a specific NORS activity (for example answering phones, filing, or working on a fund-raising project) into the “Other Volunteer Time” activity.
- The local program should enter staff time, at a minimum, for providing “Technical Assistance to Local Ombudsmen and/or Volunteers” and for “Monitoring/Work on Laws, Regulations, Government Policies and Actions” so that the percentage of staff time spent on these activities is captured.

For NORS purposes, Ombudsman representatives report the following activities:

1. **Training for Ombudsman Staff and Volunteers:** The person conducting or arranging the training reports this as an activity. Record each session (count the 36-hour certification training as 1 session), the number of hours, the total number of attendees, and the topic. A query of ODIN data will determine the three most frequent topics to include in the annual report to the AoA.
2. **Technical Assistance Provided to Local Ombudsmen and/or Volunteers:** Record all staff time spent providing technical assistance. Technical assistance includes time spent answering questions, discussing procedures, and mentoring local Ombudsman representatives, as well as time spent preparing for and delivering training to Ombudsman staff and volunteers. A query of ODIN data will calculate technical assistance time as a percentage of total FTEs for the program.
3. **Training for Facility Staff:** A training session is a planned event for a group of staff people, not to be confused with a one-to-one or small group on-site consultation occurring during the course of a facility visit. Enter

each training session provided, the number of participants, the time spent, and the training topic. A query of ODIN data will calculate the three most frequent topics for the annual AoA report.

4. **Consultation to Facilities:** Enter each instance of providing information and technical assistance to facility staff, the time spent, and the topic of the consultation. Ombudsman representatives may provide consultation to facilities in person, over the telephone, through e-mail, or by other means. To populate the AoA report, a query of ODIN will determine the three most frequent topics.
5. **Information and Consultation to Individuals:** Enter each instance of providing information and consultation to *anyone other than facility staff*, the time spent, and the consultation topic. Ombudsman representatives may provide information and consultation in person, over the telephone, through e-mail, or by other means. A query of ODIN data will determine the three most frequent topics to include in the annual report to the AoA.
6. **Facility Coverage:** Enter each visit to a SNF, ICF (but *not* ICF/DD), or RCFE that is not in response to a complaint under the activity type, "Facility Coverage." Include the name of the facility and the time spent. An Ombudsman representative may identify complaints while visiting the facility, but if the original purpose of the visit was to show Ombudsman presence, talk to residents, observe conditions in the facility, and not to respond to a complaint, then the local program should count the visit as "Facility Coverage." To populate the AoA report, a query of ODIN data will calculate separately the number of SNFs/ICFs and the number of RCFEs that were visited at least once a quarter during the year, not in response to a complaint. Note that this is a count of *facilities* and not a count of the total number of facility coverage visits.
7. **Participation in Facility Surveys:** Record each licensing survey in which the local Ombudsman Program participates, the name of the facility, and the time spent. If the program participates in more than one part of the survey, or if more than one Ombudsman representative participates in a survey, the activity is still counted as one instance of survey participation.
8. **Work with Resident Councils:** Enter each resident council meeting attended by an Ombudsman representative and the time spent. If more than one Ombudsman representative attends a meeting, count as one meeting.
9. **Work with Family Councils:** Enter each family council meeting attended by an Ombudsman representative and the time spent. If more than one Ombudsman representative attends a meeting, count as one meeting.
10. **Community Education:** Record each presentation an Ombudsman representative gives and each meeting an Ombudsman representative

attends with community groups, senior centers, etc. Record the time spent on these activities.

11. **Work with Media:** Record each media interview given and each press release, along with the topic and the time spent. Count a single press release given to multiple outlets as one press release. A query of ODIN data will determine the three most frequent topics to be used in the AoA report.

12. **Monitoring/Work on Laws, Regulations, Government Policies and Actions:** Record all staff time spent working with other agencies and individuals, both inside and outside of government, on laws, regulations, policies and actions to improve the health, safety, welfare, and rights of long-term care residents. In populating the annual report to the AoA, the OSLTCO uses a query of ODIN data to calculate time spent on this activity as a percentage of total staff FTEs in the program.

Ombudsman representatives can find more detailed information about NORS reports and coding on the Coordinator Resources Webpage of the CDA Website at www.aging.ca.gov and on the National Ombudsman Resource Center Website at www.ltombudsman.org/ombudsman-support/training. The ODIN Reference Guide is also on the Coordinator Resources Webpage.