

CHAPTER 10 ACCESS TO OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM SERVICES

I. Introduction

The Older Americans Act requires Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Programs to ensure that residents, their families, and the general public are able to access Ombudsman Program services. To ensure appropriate access and visibility of the Ombudsman Program, each local office should use the following guidelines when developing its literature, letterhead, community education forums, electronic media, and other communications.

II. Legal Authority

FEDERAL Title 42 United States Code section 3058g(a)(3)(C)

III. Local Program Responsibility

Each local Program Coordinator is expected to take effective steps to increase awareness and visibility of his or her local Program so that LTC residents and their families know how to contact them. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- A. Ensure that the term “Ombudsman Program” or “Ombudsman Services” is included in the local program name.
- B. Identify the location of the local Ombudsman Program office in all printed materials.
- C. Ensure that the address and telephone number of the local program office is included on each ombudsman poster that is displayed in LTC facilities within the local program’s jurisdiction.
- D. Ensure that there is clear signage identifying the local program office that is visible from the street.
- E. Publish the telephone number of the program in directories (in phone books as well as service agency directories).
- F. Post signs and record telephone messages stating days/hours of operation and contact information.
- G. Train staff on ways to promote awareness and visibility of the program at LTC facilities.
- H. Conduct public relations outreach.
- I. Ensure that the CRISISline has appropriate telephone numbers to reach the local Coordinator and other appropriate representatives of the program after hours.

IV. Literature

All Ombudsman Program literature must contain the full name “Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program” or “Long-Term Care Ombudsman Services.” This

includes all literature developed with Ombudsman Program funds. Materials such as print advertisements, public notices, posters, brochures, etc., must have the name “Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program” or “Long-Term Care Ombudsman Services” in bold print, not less than twice the size of any other agency or program name mentioned in the literature. In addition, there shall be a footnote in the document stating:

“The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program receives federal and State funds to advocate for individuals residing in Long-Term Care facilities.”

V. Letterhead

Ombudsman Program business letterhead should include the full name of the local LTC Ombudsman Program.

VI. Community Education Forums

A reference to the mission and purpose of the LTC Ombudsman Program must be made at all community education forums and presentations in which Ombudsman Program staff participates.

The Ombudsman Program’s stated mission is to advocate for dignity, quality of life, and quality of care for all residents in long-term care facilities.

VII. Electronic Media

Program messages for electronic media (radio and television) must mention or display the local Ombudsman Program’s full name at some point in every message. For television, it could be presented as a visual notation or “voice over” statement. The contracting agency name may be used as a sponsor in conjunction with the program name when these conditions are met.

VIII. Service Excellence

In addition to having access to the program, it is important that residents of LTC facilities, their families and friends, and other members of the public receive friendly and professional service. Ombudsman Program Coordinators must ensure that program staff and volunteers (at all levels) make every effort to respond to residents’ needs to the best of their ability. Clients should not be turned away or declined service before a thorough and accurate assessment of their situation is made.

By making appropriate referrals, the Ombudsman Program minimizes incidents of client referral to multiple agencies that cannot assist them.