

Kentucky COVID-19 Impact Statements

March 2021

State Ombudsman Sherry Culp asked her district staff to explain in a narrative how covid impacted them and their work.

Baptism by fire

- “Due to Covid-19 restrictions, as a new ombudsman, I have not been able to enter the facilities in order to connect and get to know the residents and facility staff. All complaints have been dealt with by phone. I feel that some complaints would be better resolved if in person visits were allowed. Also, the lack of facility visits causes me concern for the residents that might be afraid or unable to reach out.”
- “I have been unable to visit nursing homes and shadow other ombudsmen. I have had to learn the program a different way. I feel that it has been hard to connect with those who are outside our program but who we work with.”

Communication & Visitation

- “I think one of the largest challenge’s had to be technology. This year was a year where we learned to embrace virtual everything.”
- “As resident advocates we thrive in the facilities; interacting with residents one on one and although our role hasn’t changed, how we navigate our work has. Technology is wonderful, but it’s been incredibly difficult participating in care conferences over the phone and “visiting” with residents through zoom or a window.”
 - “No matter how hard one tries, it is never the same as being on site.”
 - “It is difficult to be an ombudsman and not have the ability to go inside facilities. The majority of residents are not tech savvy and can't email and don't have cell phones. They do not see well or hear well. If we are restricted from visits, then we really cannot do our job as expected.”

Loss & Fear

- “Without direct contact, I know---I just know---that I had residents who suffered abuse and neglect. Some had severe dementia. Some were scared to report it. They suffered for a year in silence. I will never be okay with that.”

- “Oh how difficult it was to tell a daughter “No” to face to face visitations. A daughter/son most reverent question- *Why can't I hug my Mom/Dad?* To me that was my hardest challenge.”
- “I worried about my residents, but I also worried so much about my family.”

Time

- “Unfortunately, during COVID, our work has increased, and it has taken longer to resolve concerns, or respond to callers. No longer are we able to handle group concerns within a 2-hr visit. Now we are faced with individual calls being placed to residents, family members, and staff. We continue to experience barriers with antiquated phone systems that sometimes take about ½ hr to reach someone. It can sometimes take several days to work on one issue, which previously could’ve been resolved in a matter of minutes.”

Future

- “I think this experience will allow us to be prepared should we have to face any type of pandemic in the future.”
- “In the future I plan to keep a resident directory with their personal cell phone numbers (for residents that wish to be contacted).”
- “I have learned that putting my picture on information for residents helps them identify me as someone to call if they have concerns or questions.”

“Most of all I’m looking forward to the day I can again HUG the residents I get to serve.”