

# Risk Management Strategies for Current Volunteer Ombudsmen **Iowa**



# Background

- Iowa has a centralized volunteer program
  - One Volunteer Program Coordinator
    - AmeriCorps VISTA members serve as additional volunteer mgrs.
  - Eight Local/Regional Ombudsmen
    - Serve as subject matter experts for volunteers, provide facility orientation, attend training and continuing education events, refer complaints and follow-up monitoring to volunteers
- New volunteers are certified for 1 year, assigned to one facility; then 2-yr certification with more than one facility (if desired)

# Risk Management Strategies

- Volunteer Ombudsman Program (VOP)
  - Monthly report review
  - Peer Groups
  - Annual Coordinator shadowing
  - Formal complaint form
  - Decertification / termination

# Monthly Report Review

- Volunteers submit facility reports monthly
  - 1) Data collection
    - Hours, visits, residents, councils, concerns, etc.
  - 2) Monitoring
    - Why was a report not submitted?
    - What issues are occurring in facility?
    - What does the volunteer need from us?
  - 3) Staff response

# Peer Groups

- Experienced VO designated as facilitator
  - This individual also serves on VOP Advisory Council
- Facilitator receives training from program
  - Organizing meetings
  - Presiding effectively
  - Delivering learning component developed by staff
- Minutes and attendance sent back to program

# Peer Group Goals

- Create a support network for area volunteers
- Strengthen communication
- Provide more in-person continuing education
  - Decrease dependence on program staff
- Create a sense of community and engagement among volunteers

# Annual Coordinator Shadowing

- Q: What's going on out there?
- Random sample of volunteers chosen
  - ¼ experienced (1+ years)
  - 2 per region (16 total)
- Coordinator schedules a day to visit at their facility and shadow the volunteer as they do their thing
  - Summer/Fall
  - Results compiled and shared with all; informs where training needs to be emphasized

# Formal Complaint Form

- To be used for serious grievances against volunteer
- Primarily for facility use, but also families, residents, and ourselves
  - Cannot be anonymous
- Holds everyone accountable
- Triggers an investigation which includes notifying the volunteer
  - Corrective action plan
  - Follow up with complainant



# Decertification / Termination

- When the best thing for all involved is to part ways
  - Inform the volunteer verbally; have a “witness” to document the conversation
    - Document everything and keep it on file
      - Emails, notes, forms, reports, evaluations, etc.
    - Keep it to the point; The decision is already made
  - Formal letter of decertification sent and copied to all parties (including facility)
  - Return of materials



Office of the State Long-Term Care  
**OMBUDSMAN**

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