

Synchronicity Among Local and State Ombudsmen

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(P) Synchronicity

- Events unlikely to occur by chance occurring at the same time
- With communication, support, coordination we can synchronize messages and have a stronger, more successful advocacy program

We lost our way

- In Texas, we are so busy solving individual complaints, that we often set aside opportunities for systemic advocacy

(P) Introduction (10 minutes)

Why this session was developed – to describe the positive impact we've experienced in Texas as a result of synchronizing our messages and opening new lines of communication

- With long-term care ombudsman workload at an all time high, and scarce resources, we need to work together

(P) Primary resources used:

1. Esprit de Corps: Cultivating Unity in the Statewide LTC Ombudsman Program, a session report from 1999 from a local ombudsman perspective that highlights:
 - How we can better serve residents?
 - What barriers to a successful program?
 - How to give a local ombudsman a sense of being a part of the statewide program?

(P) Primary resources continued

2. Strengthening the Connection Between State and Local LTC Ombudsmen, a recently revised NORC paper based on Esprit de Corps and the NALLTCO Tips for SLTCO. This paper provides guidance for SLTCO.
 - “An office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program functions as a whole, statewide, unified, integrated program delivering a range of individual, systemic, and educational efforts.”
 - To SLTCO: Building a strong, unified ombudsman program is a process, one that starts in our first months on the job and continues throughout our term as SLTCO.
 - SLTCO roles: advocate, leader, mentor, cheerleader

(S) Communication (10 min)

1. TA: tools to reference and consultation

- Tools: communicate clear expectations of the state office, policy and procedures, reporting guidelines (OM desk reference)
- Consultation: Potential complaints against an ombudsman (e.g. Metroplex); Referrals to elected officials, visits to elected officials' offices; Guidance on challenging cases, ANE reporting

(P) Communication

2. Program Management

- Support; example: getting SLTCO support in writing for tricky decisions like volunteer terminations, conflicts of interest
- Personnel:
 - (S) Hiring and firing, certification
 - AAA directors' mistrust of state ombudsman—helping AAAs understand the role and importance of the ombudsman program
- Big vs. little programs
 - Approach to continuing education
 - State office time allotted to programs, recognition of successes (newsletter as example)

(S) Support (5-7 min)

- Complaints against an ombudsman
- Big complaints in a facility, complaints referred to regulatory, requests for reinvestigations (e.g. Westridge—preparing for backlash or repercussions)
- Example: Legal representation
- Visiting facilities together (S and P)
 - Volunteers
 - Program monitoring (local and state)
 - In addition to monitoring, routine visits
- Statewide training
 - Local programs hosting
 - Provide training that is asked for
 - Different avenues for training (webinars, regional)

(S) Connecting local to statewide program (5 min)

Example: Look for strengths, assign local ombudsman as a statewide representative on workgroups and task forces, also describe how Cathy translated one experience into a statewide training session for local ombudsmen

OAA reauthorization

- AoA Listening Forum, sharing the testimony from Ruth, Suza and Patty, talking about the experience of selecting a volunteer, communicating b/w state and local ombudsman, the experience of testifying at the listening forum.

(P) Coordination

Create a culture of feedback, encourage local programs to work together and help one another, be available during a crisis; Provider communications and travel—keep locals in the loop, establish a protocol for responding to complaints about the local ombudsman or volunteer, don't undermine local work

- Disaster coordination and recovery
 - in times of crisis, this is an opportunity to support on a whole new level:
 - Help during closure
 - Response to disaster (e.g. Hurricane Ike)
- Quarterly meetings b/w ombudsmen and regulatory
- Training
 - Statewide training – networking lunch, cliques, learning circles, socializing dinners
 - Regional training, joint training

(P) Coordination

Lesson learned: Figure out what is negotiable and what is not

- Example: Get local ombudsman input on policy and procedures manual
- Example: Input from program volunteers on volunteer report

(S) NALLTCO Tips to State
Ombudsmen (handout)

(P) Texas SLTCO Tips to Local Ombudsmen

- Give SLTCO a chance to earn your respect – a new “boss” is scary to everyone
- Tell SLTCO what you need; don’t forget to advocate for yourself
- Try to understand the role and challenges of a SLTCO – we may ask you to help
- Appreciate diversity among local programs and state ombudsman programs

(S) Table Top Exercises

- (S) Introduce
- 5-6 tables (10 minutes to ponder)
- 2 minutes each to report (10 minutes) with S and P offering feedback/insights as appropriate

10 minutes for questions and
other discussion