

Tennessee Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program 2015-16 Annual Report



A report from the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Tennessee Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

The Long Term Care Ombudsman program is a federally funded state-wide program, authorized by the Older Americans Act and housed in the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability. The program consists of a State Long Term Care Ombudsman, 11 District Long Term Care Ombudsman (who are assigned to the Nine Area Agency on Aging and Disability districts across the state), and over 200 volunteers.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program is responsible for advocating for the rights of those residing in licensed nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and homes for the aged. The primary responsibility of this program is to resolve complaints that impact the health, safety and welfare of residents of long-term care facilities, as well as educating residents of their rights. The Ombudsman's advocacy role takes two forms: 1) to receive and resolve individual complaints and issues by, or on behalf of, these residents; and 2) to pursue resident advocacy in the long-term care system, its laws, policies, regulations, and administration through public education, consensus building, and policy or legislative action .

The services of the Ombudsman are free, confidential and state-wide. The program accepts complaints/concerns from anyone including, but not limited to, the residents of any nursing home, assisted living or residential home for the aged, family members or friends of a nursing home resident, the nursing home administrator, employees of the facility, or any other concerned citizen. This program will also assist individuals and families interested in or considering long term care placement.

In Tennessee, there are 326 licensed nursing homes with 38,507 beds and a total of 687 identified long term care facilities with approximately 56,288 beds. To serve the citizens of Tennessee who reside in these facilities, there are ten full-time salaried District Long-Term Care Ombudsmen and one part-time District Long-Term Care Ombudsman who train and oversee a number of certified volunteer ombudsman representatives (VORs). The District Ombudsmen are located across the State of Tennessee and provide a much needed service for the elderly in the State. An important program goal is to provide a regular presence in each of the state's nursing homes, assisted care living facilities, and board and care homes through regular visits, complaint resolution, and VOR recruitment and training.

A report from the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

The Ombudsman Program also helps those in the general community who need information or assistance regarding long-term care issues. Many residents and their families contact the Ombudsman Program for guidance and information regarding long-term care facilities, determining how to pay for such services or to request assistance on how to initiate the process of getting into a long term care facility.

Ombudsmen investigate and work diligently to resolve complaints made by or on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities. A resident's wishes guide the ombudsman's actions to resolve a complaint. Ombudsmen protect resident and complainant confidentiality. Verification is determined by an ombudsman through interviews, record inspection or observation, and signifies that the circumstances described in the complaint existed and are generally accurate.

Ombudsman also provide in-service education and consultations to residents, families, the community and long-term care providers; advocacy on behalf of residents; and support during facility closures.

Program Highlights

October 1, 2015-September 30, 2016

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Accomplishments

Accomplishments	2015-16
Cases Opened	1303 <i>(30% increase from FFY14-15)</i>
Complaints Received	1801 <i>(28% increase from FFY14-15)</i>
Number of Hours Donated by Volunteers	7529 <i>(17% increase from FFY14-15)</i>
Resident Councils & Family Councils Attended	135 <i>(17% increase from FFY14-15)</i>

Mission of the Tennessee Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

The mission of the Tennessee Long-term Care Ombudsman Program is to improve the quality of life and care for individuals living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities by providing prompt complaint resolution services and promoting systemic change on behalf of residents' interests.

A report from the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

FFY 2015-16 Program Overview

Number of Cases Opened	1303
Number of Complaints Received	1801
Number of Complaints Verified	1801
Number of Cases Closed	1206
Total Complaints Received regarding Nursing Facilities	1314
Total Complaints Received regarding Assisted Living Homes, Board and Care Homes, and Homes for the Aged	282
Total Complaints Received regarding Other Care Settings	2

The Top Three Complaints of Long Term Care Residents

- Involuntary Discharge
- Shortage of staff
- Failure to respond to requests for assistance (care issues)

Recommendations to Improve the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

- Strengthen the existing District Ombudsman and Volunteer (VOR) programs.
- Increase education to residents, families and facilities about the services available through the Long Term Care Ombudsman program.
- Increase the visibility and awareness of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program throughout the State.

Link for Additional Information

Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability: <https://www.tn.gov/aging/>

