

# Working with Families

## Tips for Effective Communication and Navigating Challenging Situations

### OVERVIEW

As a representative of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program (LTCOP) your role is to be the resident's advocate and follow resident direction. However, there will be times when you work with a resident's representative (a family member and/or legal representative), such as:

- When **a resident cannot communicate consent or express their wishes** and a family member is the legal representative and/or complainant.
- Relatives often have a lifelong **understanding of the resident** (e.g., values, preferences, social history, concerns, significant events in her life, and more). In some cases, such information can shed light on what's causing a problem and assist in crafting a solution, especially **when a resident cannot communicate**.
- The **resident needs or wants family support**. For example, a resident may not feel comfortable taking action without encouragement or support from key family members. Making sure that family is involved may be essential for complaint resolution on behalf of a resident.

These resources are designed to provide tips, examples, and strategies to enhance your skills in working with family members (or resident representatives) of residents in long-term care. The information provided builds upon what you've already learned in your initial certification training. In addition to the advocacy and program management considerations in these resources, consult your supervisor and/or State Ombudsman and follow your state program's policies and procedures, as applicable. The following three briefs are part of this technical assistance series:

1. Key Communication Techniques
2. Ombudsman Program Communication with Family Members
3. Navigating Challenging Situations with Family Members