

## From the State Long Term Care Ombudsman

*Friends of older Alaskans,*

*I am pleased to present the 2012 Annual Report of the Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman program. Ombudsmen are mandated by state and federal law to advocate for the rights of seniors in Alaska's nursing and assisted living homes. Dedicated staff and volunteers working for resolutions that preserve the dignity and safety of our most vulnerable seniors.*

*In the next ten years, we can expect to see a rapid increase in the number of frail older Alaskans with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias. Ombudsmen will be challenged to meet the growing need for individual and systems advocacy. We hope this report will be useful to you as we strive together to care for the pioneers who built Alaska.*

*Diana Weber  
Long Term Care Ombudsman*



## Recommendations to Alaska Policy Makers

1. Reform Alaska's Power of Attorney law to include protections from the model 2006 Uniform Power of Attorney Act. Intra-familial exploitation, often involving a power of attorney, is the most frequent type of exploitation reported to the state Elder Fraud and Assistance program. Examples of UPOAA protections include a clear statement of an agent's duties, liability of malfeasant agents for damages, and the provision that a third party can refuse to honor a POA when there is suspicion of elder abuse.
2. Increase funding for family caregiver support. Reducing family caregiver stress can delay a senior's entry into expensive long term care.
3. Reduce institutionalization of seniors with dementia and challenging behaviors. Develop and fund a mechanism to provide assessment, targeted behavior plans, minor home modifications, and caregiver training for seniors with dementia and challenging behaviors. Ongoing consultation and support will help stabilize these seniors in the community.

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## State of Alaska Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**July 1, 2011-**  
**June 30, 2012**

*"Sometimes people think when you  
are old your needs and rights don't  
matter anymore, but they do."*

*A volunteer ombudsman*

## ***Our Mission***

***To protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of older Alaskans in long term care facilities.***

***To investigate and resolve complaints made relating to the long term care or residential circumstances of older Alaskans.***



## **Program Highlights**

- Made 294 unannounced facility visits, 77% more than in FY 2009.
- Opened 535 cases for investigation, three times the number of cases in FY 2009.
- Resolved or partially resolved 78% complaints to the satisfaction of the resident or complainant. Only 3% were not resolved; the remaining 19% were referred to a more appropriate agency or required no action.
- Gave information and referrals to 226 members of the public and provided 84 consultations to facilities.
- Presented training on residents' rights to new home administrators, care coordinators, caregivers, facility administrators and community members.

***"What motivates me is the time I spent in a nursing facility and then an assisted living home after a fall. I was totally helpless...I could see the need for advocacy for older people."***

***A volunteer ombudsman***

## **Systems Advocacy**

- Advocated for the successful passage of SB 86, the Governor's bill to strengthen protections for vulnerable Alaskan adults.
- Worked with state court system to develop new protective order forms for victims of financial exploitation.
- Advocated for the successful passage of HB 131, creating a statewide transportation planning body.
- Participated in DHSS Mortality Review Team to identify and investigate problematic care practices.
- Participated in "Circle of Care" meetings with DHSS Adult Protective Services and DHSS Certification and Licensing to improve interagency investigative procedures.