



## INSTRUCTIONAL BRIEF: The Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool for Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

---

*This brief provides an overview of the Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool and an introduction to the newly created Mini-Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool (Mini-Tool).*

### **What is the Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool?**

The tool provides Local Long-Term Care Ombudsmen (LLTCO) with an instrument for conducting a self-assessment of their local program. Information and recommendations from several State and Local LTCO, NORC staff and consultants, AoA staff and resources such as the 1995 Institute of Medicine report were used to determine 13 components deemed fundamental to having a strong, effective ombudsman program. The elements within each component (indicators) used to assess the program are considered to be exemplary practices that programs should strive to achieve.<sup>1</sup>

This document is designed as a self-evaluation tool for the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, including local Ombudsman entities. Its use will identify strengths and weaknesses in the ombudsman program infrastructure and operations and can assist with program planning and development. It is a comprehensive listing of all areas of ombudsman work; and few, if any states will fully meet all of the indicators listed. Therefore we suggest that it be used as a quality improvement tool to identify areas in which improvements (including increased resources) are needed rather than used as an external audit tool.

Becky Kurtz, Director, Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs, U.S. Administration on Aging.

### **Why should I use this tool?**

The tool provides a comprehensive overview of the essential components of a local long-term care ombudsman program using a simple self-assessment process. The 13 components in this tool are: Program Access, Program Management, Complaint Handling, Education/Information and Assistance, Training, Systems Advocacy, Program Integrity, Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, Legal Resources, Fiscal Resources, Relationships with Agencies/Entities/Individuals/Citizen Groups/Others, and Accountability. The tool clearly identifies the applicable Older Americans Act (OAA) provisions for each component and provides documents emphasizing the importance of the components in Appendix I. The indicators for each component address critical elements of a local program in order to highlight program strengths and areas in need of improvement.

“We found the tool helpful in pointing out areas where we need to grow. I would certainly recommend other programs use this tool, if for no other reason, it allows us to pause for thought about what we are doing, and ways that perhaps we have become complacent.” Shannon Gimbel, Ombudsman Program Manager (CO)

---

<sup>1</sup> Grant, Robyn. 2004. A Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool for State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs.

## **What is the Mini-Tool?**

The Mini-Tool is a condensed version of the original instrument that allows for a quick, initial assessment of a local program to identify areas for improvement and areas of strength. Once those program areas are identified, the user can move on to the comprehensive evaluation tool for an in-depth assessment of each component.

## **Who completes the Mini-Tool?**

To determine local program strengths and weaknesses and prioritize areas for further analysis with the original tool, the Local Ombudsman could complete the Mini-Tool independently *or* share the Mini-Tool with their local office staff and/or volunteer ombudsmen to complete and then discuss as a team. New Local Ombudsmen could use the Mini-Tool as a brief review of the core dimensions of a Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and/or review the tool with his or her State Ombudsman.

State Ombudsmen can evaluate their statewide program using the Mini-Tool and comprehensive Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool created for State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs.

## **How do I use the Mini-Tool?**

### Components/Indicators

The Mini-Tool uses the same 13 components as the original Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool. The indicators are from the original instrument as well; however, the Mini-Tool only lists three indicators from each component in order for Local Ombudsmen to quickly evaluate major aspects of their program.

### Rating Scale/Component Score

The rating scale replicates the original instrument and uses a scale from 1 to 5 (“1” means “never” and “5” means “always”). The LLTCO selects the rating that best describes their program for each indicator. If the LLTCO feels that the indicator as it applies to his or her program is better answered with a “yes” or “no,” he/she selects “1” for “no” and “5” for “yes.” The total score for each component is then determined. Each component should be scored separately in order to prioritize areas for improvement. There are page numbers at the end of each component so the user can go directly to the corresponding component in the comprehensive self-evaluation tool for in-depth analysis of those specific areas. An example of one component is below.

Please Note: These tools are not intended to compare one program to another or be used to evaluate a program or individual ombudsman; therefore, there is no “passing score,” nor any “national average.”

<b>I. Program Access</b>	1. The local ombudsmen and certified volunteers have large print business cards that identify them as being with the local ombudsman program.	1	2	3	4	5
	2. The local program initiates opportunities in the community to educate others about its services (e.g. at trainings, presentations, or discussions organized by other organizations/agencies; at service clubs or meetings of religious organizations, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
	3. Complaints are received from a variety of sources including: residents, families/friends, non-relative guardian/legal representative, governmental and non-governmental agencies, facility staff and ombudsman observation.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>TOTAL:</b> _____						
<b><i>For the complete Program Access component refer to pg. 11 of the Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool</i></b>						

## **I've Completed the Mini- Tool, Now What?**

After completing the Mini-Tool a Local Ombudsman could choose one component- perhaps the one with the lowest score- to analyze further using the comprehensive tool. Then he/she could develop an action plan to address their program's weaknesses related to that component. After a period of time spent implementing the action plan, the Local Ombudsman could rate the indicators for that component on the original Self-Evaluation Tool again and compare the scores. If the Local Ombudsman was satisfied with the improvement in that area of program responsibility, then he/she could analyze another component determined a priority area after his/her initial use of the mini-tool. Alternatively, the Local Ombudsman could continue to work on this component if he/she believed that sufficient progress has not been made. The Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool is not intended to be used as a one-time self-assessment, rather the tool can be used over time to analyze a program for *continuous* improvement.

### ***Completing the Self-Evaluation Tool can help Local Ombudsmen:***

- Develop an action plan tailored to address the particular needs of his/her local program
- Set goals/priorities for the local program
- Establish benchmarks for the local program
- Meet the requirements of the Older Americans Act
- Identify ombudsman program best practices
- Identify training needs
- Gain a greater understanding of the ombudsman program if the Local Ombudsman is new
- Prepare for a program audit or evaluation

Grant, Robyn. 2004. A Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool for State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs.

## **Resources**

### **A Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool for Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs**

[http://www.ltombudsman.org/sites/default/files/norc/Local-PE-Tool-Final\\_1.pdf](http://www.ltombudsman.org/sites/default/files/norc/Local-PE-Tool-Final_1.pdf)

### **A Self-Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Tool for State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs**

[http://www.ltombudsman.org/sites/default/files/norc/State-PE-Tool-FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://www.ltombudsman.org/sites/default/files/norc/State-PE-Tool-FINAL_0.pdf)

### **NORC (National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center) Compendium on Recruitment, Training and Retention**

<http://www.ltombudsman.org/library/ombudsman-compendium>

### **NORC (National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center) Ombudsman Curriculum**

<http://www.ltombudsman.org/ombudsman-support/training#Curriculum>

### **Real People, Real Problems: An Evaluation of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs of the Older Americans Act. Institute of Medicine (IOM).**

<http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=NI000028>

### **Resources for Ombudsman Program Management, Program Promotion, Ombudsman Training, Systemic Advocacy and Volunteer Management**

<http://www.ltombudsman.org/ombudsman-support>

## **Questions?**

If you have questions about how to use the tool or how to complete it and work with the results, please contact: The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center at: 202-332-2275 or [ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org](mailto:ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org).