

Guidance to Maryland Ombudsman Staff & Volunteers

Quality Advocacy Visits

Before the visit

Be informed before your visit to help identify areas of focus, particularly if the facility is not visited regularly.

When possible, review the following information:

- Your notes from previous visits (or the notes of other ombudsmen)
- OHCQ survey report (2567)
- The website of the facility
- Information on Nursing Home Compare and Assisted Living website
<http://www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare/search.html>
<http://mhcc.maryland.gov/consumerinfo/longtermcare/AssistedLiving.aspx>
- Recent complaints about facility
- Topics your Local Program would like addressed (i.e., Residents' Rights Month, Bedhold Policy, etc.)
- If the above information isn't readily available, call your Local Program

Be relaxed and help residents relax. Communicate with residents at eye level, take your time, develop rapport, and clearly explain your role. Treat residents respectfully and maintain confidentiality. Be a good listener.

Upon arrival

- Sign in as an ombudsman if the facility wants you to sign in
- Find out if there are any new residents
- Request resident council meeting minutes as appropriate
- Wear your name tag so that your name is visible

During most visits

Some activities will be a part of every visit, depending on the frequency.

- As you are visiting, these are some things to observe:
 - Sensory observations – what you see, smell, hear
 - Staff-to-resident interactions – what is philosophy of care in facility?
 - Resident comfort – positioning in chairs, in & out of bed as desired, hydration
 - Privacy in a homelike environment – hallways clear, noise level, resident-centered
 - Call lights answered and staff respond appropriately to resident requests
 - Have residents been encouraged to personalize their living space?
 - Evidence of Culture Change

- Meet the new residents and introduce them to the ombudsman program and their rights.
 - Explain how to contact an ombudsman if needed
 - Leave information for the resident about the ombudsman program
 - Give the resident the opportunity to tell you about themselves
- Are any residents potential candidates for and interested in returning to the community?
- Spend time with residents who may not have capacity
 - Are residents engaged and interactive?
 - Does staff interact with them in a caring way - use their name, look them in eye, touch & reassure, and converse with them?
- Talk with the resident and family council president about pending issues, facility response, and any assistance the council needs from you including advice, follow-up on pending issues, and a presentation to the council on rights or other topics.
- During meal time, observe the meal – does it match the menu, is help provided to those who need it, are substitutes offered and given in a timely manner, are the residents enjoying the food and the dining experience? If residents are eating in their room are they doing so by choice?
- Observe activities – do they match the calendar, are they appropriate for the participants, are residents engaged, what are the other residents doing, were they given the option to participate?
- Discuss and distribute written information - ombudsman program, residents’ rights, Advancing Excellence, prevention of involuntary discharge, opportunities to return to the community
- Get to know the staff so you’ll learn who will be helpful in resolving problems. Make sure the administrator knows who you are and has information about the Ombudsman Program.
- Only discuss specific resident problems with staff IF you have permission and if you are in a location where the discussion can be private.

Treat staff with respect. Commend staff for good work and improvements that you see. Remember - your role is to work with and for residents to address problems and improve the resident experience.

During regular visits look at these:

- Required postings are “conspicuous”, accurate, and easy to access and read
Evacuation Plans; Most recent survey and statement of deficiencies; Bill of Rights;
Complaint Procedures; NH: Staffing information for each floor or unit; ALF: visiting hours
- License is posted and provider information is accurate – beds, owner, facility name
- In ALFs, request copy of blank resident agreement
- In NHs, request a copy of the admission agreement

After every visit make notes in a timely manner so they accurately reflect the visit. Report your visit to the Local Program.