

Documenting Information & Assistance (I&A) Provided During Visits

The purpose of this technical assistance resource is to clarify when and how to document instances of I&A provided during facility visits. This resource is based on National Ombudsman Reporting Systems (NORS) requirements, conversations with State Ombudsmen, and Administration for Community Living (ACL) approval.

NORS Definition, Example and Reporting Tips for Information & Assistance

An instance of **information & assistance (I&A)** is providing information to an individual or facility staff “about issues impacting residents (e.g., resident rights, care issues, services) and/or providing assistance to access services without opening a case and working to resolve a complaint.”

Information & assistance “may be provided through various means, including but not limited to **telephone**, by written correspondence such as **e-mail**, or **in person**.”

Source: [NORS Table 3](#)

Does providing Information & Assistance (not related to a complaint) during a visit count as an instance of I&A?

Yes, instances of I&A may be provided in person, which includes during facility visits.

Isn't providing information during a visit just part of a visit?

Yes, speaking with residents and facility staff and providing information is part of a [visiting](#) a facility, **and** you should count all activities conducted during the visit, including instances of I&A provided in person. Visits are critical to ensuring regular and timely resident access to Ombudsman program services and introducing yourself and sharing information about the program during the visits is an important part of ensuring access.

What counts as I&A during facility visits?

Providing information about anything that may impact residents (e.g., care issues, residents' rights, services) and/or providing assistance to access services (not related to a complaint) to an individual (e.g., resident, family member, visitor) or facility staff counts as an instance of I&A.

NORS **does not** state that instances of I&A only “count” when representatives respond to questions, nor does NORS require a specific length of time for the conversation, or define the level of detail, or type, of the information provided.

Therefore, providing information about the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program when speaking with an individual or facility staff **is** sharing information that may impact residents (i.e., residents' right to access the LTCOP, Ombudsman program services) and **does count** as an instance of I&A.

What does NOT count as I&A during visits?

- Conversations about the weather, inquiring about weekend plans, or other “**small talk**” that does not impart any information that may impact residents or provide assistance to access services.
- **Information provided related to a complaint.** If you provide information and assistance during the complaint process, document that activity in the case notes.
 - For example, during the investigation of a complaint regarding dining, you provide information to facility staff about culture change practices related to dining. You would include this in the case notes about the complaint, not a separate instance of I&A.
- If you attend a Resident or Family Council meeting and provide information during that meeting, that activity counts as **Resident or Family Council participation**, not as an instance of I&A. See NORS Table 3, NORS Part 4 Training, and NORS FAQs for [more information](#) about participating in councils.

Scenarios – Is it I&A?

1. During a facility visit, you say hello to a resident in the hallway. You and the resident talk about the unseasonably warm weather and her grandchildren. After chatting, you move along the hall to continue your visit.

Is this an instance of I&A? No. You did not provide any information about issues impacting residents or assistance, this does not meet the definition of an instance of I&A.

2. During a visit you sit down with a resident in the dining room. Lunch service finished shortly before you arrived, so you ask the resident about the meal and overall dining experience. The resident shares that she is happy with the food and her care. You respond that you are pleased to hear she is happy as she has the right to receive good care and

quality food. You share information about the Ombudsman program and her right to access program services if she needs to in the future.

Is this an instance of I&A? Yes. You provided information about the Ombudsman program and her rights to good care, quality food, and Ombudsman program services.

3. During a visit, you enter the activity room and see three residents at a table visiting with each other. You approach the three residents and introduce yourself, explain the role of the Ombudsman program, and pass out your program brochure to each of them.

Is this an instance of I&A? Yes. You provided information about the Ombudsman program as well as your program's contact information if they need to contact you in between visits. Although there were three residents present, this is one instance of information and assistance, not three, as you provided information once to three residents at the same time.

Reminders

- NORS does not require "topics" for instances of I&A. However, states may require representatives to collect information NORS does not require, such as I&A topics.
- NORS provides definitions for activities and describes how to count activities. State program policies and procedures establish program practices and program standards. States may establish standards for program activities, such as "quality I&A" and "quality visits."
- NORS does not count "contacts," such as number of "contacts" during a visit. However, state policies and procedures, and/or state and/or local funding requirements may collect the number of contacts. Follow your program requirements.

Resources

Access the following resources on the [NORC website](https://norc.hhs.gov/).

- Part 1 – Case, Complaint, Complainant AND Information and Assistance
- Is it a Complaint or Information & Assistance (I&A)? Decision Tree
- NORS FAQs



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