The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center

Beyond the Data: How to Bring Resident Stories to Life

November 18, 2026

Housekeeping

- Use the **chat feature** to submit comments or respond to questions from speakers or other attendees.
- **Raise your hand** and we will ask you to unmute if you prefer to use audio.
- A link to the **slides** will be posted in the chat box. The **recording and resources** will be posted to the NORC website.

Speakers



Suzanna Sulfstede
DIRECTOR
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
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MANAGING LOCAL OMBUDSMAN
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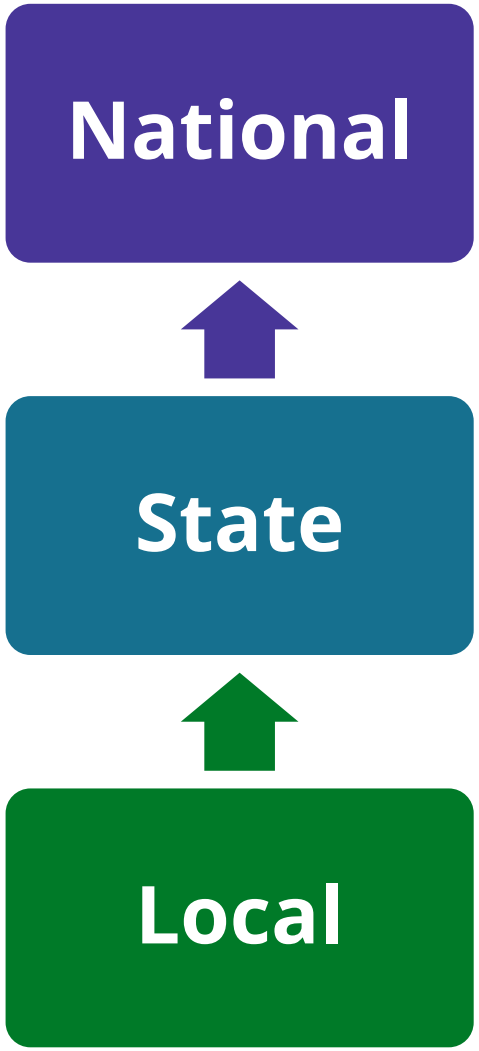


Lisa Hendricks
MANAGING LOCAL OMBUDSMAN
LIFE, Inc., TX LTCOP

National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS)

- NORS is the uniform data collection and reporting system required for use by all State Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs.
- NORS was developed based on reporting requirements in the Older Americans Act and provides a way for programs to capture and report core program activities.
- NORS brings consistency in data collection and reporting nationally for the work of the Ombudsman Program.

How is NORS Data Used?



NORS Requirements vs Program Practices

NORS Requirements

- Defines activities (e.g., case, complaint, complaint codes)
- Describes how to count activities (e.g., visits, I&A, survey participation)
- Goal to standardize reporting across the country (e.g., how to report a complaint, how to *count* a visit – not how to *conduct* a visit)

State Program Policies & Procedures

- Establishes state program practices (e.g., what is a "quality" visit)
- Sets program standards (e.g., frequency of visits, establishes timeframes for responding to complaints)

ACL NORS Tables

https://ltcombudsman.org/nors/

- NORS training materials are based on ACL's NORS Tables
  - Table 1: Case and complaint codes, values, and definitions
  - Table 2: Complaint codes and definitions
  - Table 3: State Program Information

NORS Training and Resources

https://ltcombudsman.org/nors/

- **Part 1:** Case, Complaint, Complainant, and Information and Assistance
- **Part 2:** Complaint Coding
- **Part 3:** Verification, Disposition, Referral, and Closing Cases
- **Part 4:** Ombudsman Program Activities
- **Each Part:**
  - Basic Principles
  - Quiz (fillable PDF)
  - Quiz Answers
- **4-Part Online Course**
  https://consumervoice.talentlms.com/plus/
- **Frequently Asked Questions**
- **Additional Materials**
  - Complaint Code resources
  - Decision Trees (Visits, Complaint vs. I&A)
  - Documenting I&A During Visits
  - NORS Data Management Guide
- **NORS Data**

For More Information

- **NORS Consistency**
  - Watch the NORS! New FAQs and Technical Assistance Office Hour
- **Online NORS Course**
  - Watch the launch webinar recording and review the slides
  - Visit the training center.
  - Read the training center FAQs and then create an account.
  - Contact us for help at ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org.

Questions?



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- Review NORS Training materials https://ltcombudsman.org/nors/
- Review NORS FAQs https://ltcombudsman.org/nors/
- Refer to your state program policies and procedures
- Ask your supervisor
- Ask your State Ombudsman
- Ask Us! ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org

From Heart to Page:

Crafting Stories That Move People



Objectives

- Understand the importance of writing a compelling story
- Review story basics
- Learn how writing stories correlates to case documentation
- Gain confidence in crafting narratives to share resident stories/case work
- Practice and have fun!



Why is it important to write a compelling story?

Stories are memorable. They also:

- Educate people about the role of ombudsman
- Put a face to the work that we do
- Provide a human connection that helps lawmakers, funders, and potential volunteers understand why our work matters

Story Basics – The Purpose

Choose the right story, one people can connect with.

When and where can you share a story?

- Legislative meeting
- Volunteer recruitment event
- Funding/grant opportunity
- Community awareness event
- Staff training
- Media interview

Know your audience — what resonates with one legislator may not with another.

Are the demographics of the audience important?

Story Basics – The Structure

1. Stories should have a defined beginning, middle and end, centered around a **clear, impactful message or lesson**.

2. **Present a challenge** the ombudsman was presented with. What happened, why it mattered, and how it affected the resident's health, dignity and rights.

3. The turning point — **how did the ombudsman help to find the solution**. What steps did the ombudsman take to address the concern?

4. The outcome — **what changed, why did it matter**, and how was the resident's life better as a result?

And ask yourself: **will this story still be powerful to the audience if they don't know who the person is?**

Story Basics – The Length

Elected officials often have very limited time.

“When does the audience lose interest?”

Too long and you lose the listener. Too short and it might not mean enough for the listener to become engaged.

Recommended structure

- The Introduction (2 – 3 sentences)
- The problem (3 – 4 sentences)
- Ombudsman action (2 – 3 sentences)
- Policy takeaway (1 – 2 sentences)

Total: about 150 – 250 words.

Correlation of preparing narratives and entering case work into your ombudsman database



Additional tips

Use AI, but keep names and other identifying details out of your prompts

After you write a story, have multiple sets of eyes on it that can see it from different perspectives

“Know” your story before telling it.

Practice.
Practice.
Practice.

Meet Tom

Tom* is a nursing home resident in his late 70s who was facing discharge to a homeless shelter because the facility said he owed approximately $9,000. When the ombudsman investigated, she discovered that Tom's nephew had been receiving the resident's Social Security check but had not paid the facility for two months. Tom didn't even know that a discharge notice had been issued and that he was at risk of being discharged. Tom told the ombudsman he did not want his nephew managing his money any longer. He wanted his Social Security check sent directly to the facility so his bill could be paid but had been told that wasn't an option.

With his permission, the ombudsman worked with the resident and the facility to address the situation. The facility helped Tom submit the necessary paperwork to Social Security, and several weeks later, the facility began receiving his payment. Once the payment issue was resolved, the ombudsman was able to get the discharge notice rescinded, which means that resident is now safe and able to remain at the facility.

*Name changed to protect privacy

Writing the Beginning

- Start strong. When writing a story, make the first lines impactful with a compelling hook.
- Details make stories memorable.
  - “Most mornings, she waited 45 minutes before getting help to the bathroom.”
  - “His wheelchair sat broken in a corner of the room for over two weeks.”



Writing the Middle

- Think of this as your casework journal entry.
- This is where the story gets really good. Build up the story to make an impact.
- Provide pertinent information: how, when, why, and where and also use sensory details, descriptive language and dialogue to create a visual picture, rather than just stating facts.
- Keep it easy to understand and follow.
- Avoid unnecessary details that could confuse the message.



Writing the Ending

- This is the “resolution” of your case.
- Bring it all together and wrap it up.
- What impact did the ombudsman’s work have on the resident’s quality of life or care? How did things improve for the resident?
- Example: “After the issue was resolved, Mrs. Johnson told the ombudsman, ‘I finally feel like someone is listening.’”



Time to Share Stories

Questions?

Thank You!

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The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center

Connect with us!

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- The National LTC Ombudsman Resource Center
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