

## What Does an Ombudsman Do?

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Long-term care ombudsmen are advocates for residents of nursing homes, board and care homes and assisted living facilities. Ombudsmen provide information about how to find a facility and what to do to get quality care. They are trained to resolve problems. If you want, the ombudsman can assist you with complaints. However, unless you give the ombudsman permission to share your concerns, these matters are kept confidential. Under the federal Older Americans Act, every state is required to have an Ombudsman Program that addresses complaints and advocates for improvements in the long-term care system.

The ombudsman program is administered by the Administration on Aging (AoA). The network has 8,700 volunteers certified to handle complaints and more than 1,300 paid staff. Most state ombudsman programs are housed in their State Unit on Aging. Nationally, in 2008 the ombudsman program investigated over 271,000 complaints made by 182,506 individuals and provided information on long-term care to another 327,000 people.

Visit the AoA website for more information.

Whether through individual contact with residents or systemic advocacy, ombudsmen make a difference in the lives of residents in long-term care facilities everyday.

### **A Long-Term Care Ombudsman:**

- Resolves complaints made by or for residents of long-term care facilities
- Educates consumers and long-term care providers about residents' rights and good care practices

- Promotes community involvement through volunteer opportunities
- Provides information to the public on nursing homes and other long-term care facilities and services, resident's rights and legislative and policy issues
- Advocates for residents' rights and quality care in nursing homes, personal care, residential care and other long-term care facilities
- Promotes the development of citizen organizations, family councils and resident councils
- Long-term care ombudsmen efforts are summarized in the National Ombudsman Reporting System to include the number of facilities visited, the types of complaints handled and the kinds of complaints filed with ombudsmen. Data has been collected since 1996 and gives a good picture of the extent of ombudsman activities nationally and in every state.