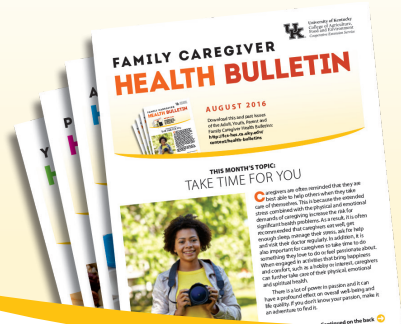


FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



OCTOBER 2018

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMEN



As a provision of the Older Americans Act, administered by the federal Administration on Aging, the ombudsman program started in 1972 and operates in all 50 states. Ombudsmen are an important resource because they work to resolve problems for residents in long-care facilities and help enhance overall well-being and life quality, especially for those who cannot speak for themselves and/or for those who do not have friends or family who act as advocates.

While much of the care residents receive in long-term care facilities is good, cases of physical and psychological abuse and neglect are not uncommon. To protect the residents, Ombudsmen, who are trained volunteers, regularly

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Ombudsmen regularly visit and observe facilities, monitor conditions, document reports and help resolve concerns.

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visit and observe facilities, monitor conditions, document reports and help resolve concerns. As a result of their efforts, they are able to make changes at the local, state and national levels.

Kentucky has over 80 trained volunteer ombudsmen who serve residents of long-term care in all 120 counties. According to the Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), additional responsibilities of the ombudsmen include:

- "Identifying, investigating and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of residents"
- "Providing information to residents about long-term care services"
- "Representing the interest of residents before governmental agencies and seeking administrative, legal and other remedies to protect residents"
- "Analyzing, commenting on and recommending changes in laws and regulations pertaining to the health, safety, welfare and rights of residents"
- "Educating and informing consumers and the general public about long-term care issues and concerns and facilitating public comment on laws, regulations, policies and actions"
- "Promoting development of citizen organizations to participate in the program"
- "Providing technical support to develop resident and family councils that protect the well-being and rights of residents"
- "Advocating for changes to improve residents' quality of life and care"

What to do when there is a problem?

When there is a problem within long-term care services, DAIL recommends that you first try seeking resolution and improvement with the provider. If such problems persist and cannot be resolved, an ombudsman should be contacted. An ombudsman will keep your complaint confidential and consult with you before taking any actions. After a complaint is registered, an ombudsman will:



- Maintain confidentiality (unless ordered otherwise by a court)
- Investigate the complaint
- Verify and document reports
- Share findings with the party who documented the complaint
- Explain options for resolution
- Find solutions
- Take action only with resident and/or family's authorization
- Follow-up to monitor effectiveness and to see if additional problems arise

To find an ombudsman near you, contact DAIL at (859) 277-9215 or go to the website and click on the regional map to locate contact information for the ombudsman in your district (<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dail/Pages/ltc-ombudsman.aspx>). Funded by federal, state and local resources, the Ombudsman program offers services for free.

REFERENCE:

DAIL. (2018). Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Retrieved August 20, 2018 from <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dail/Pages/ltc-ombudsman.aspx>

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Written by: Amy F. Kostelic, Ph.D.
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com

