

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program?

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program works to improve the quality of care and quality of life for all long-term care consumers. We accomplish this through advocacy for individual recipients of long-term care services and advocacy for public policy to benefit consumers. The Office of the State Ombudsman is made up of 8 regional programs serving long-term care residents across Kansas.

What is a Volunteer Ombudsman?

Volunteer Ombudsmen are volunteer advocates for long-term care consumers, primarily in nursing homes but also assisted living and other adult care homes.

What do Volunteer Ombudsmen do?

Volunteer Ombudsmen provide a voice for the concerns of consumers of long-term care. They make regular visits to facilities to talk with residents, provide information to nursing home residents, family, and staff about the Ombudsman program and residents' rights, handle uncomplicated problems alone, and assist in resolving complicated complaints about the quality of care and quality of life for long-term care consumers with the guidance of an Ombudsman staff member.

What do Volunteer Ombudsmen do on their visits?

A Volunteer Ombudsman makes regular visits to their assigned nursing facility. During those visits, they are asked to visit and engage residents in conversation. During the course of the conversations, the Volunteer Ombudsman inquires about any problems or concerns that the residents may be having regarding care and services provided at the facility. The ultimate goal of Volunteer Ombudsman is to make the residents feel comfortable talking to you. In doing so, you become the essential link between the Ombudsman Office and consumers.

What does the Volunteer Ombudsman do if the resident has a problem?

During visits or conversations with residents, a concern may arise. In your training we will talk about how to investigate and work to resolve concerns or complaints as well as how to document your work. Ombudsman staff is always available to provide consultation or assist with the complaint investigation and/or resolution as needed. Ombudsmen must make sure that they have the resident's permission to help with their concern. In some cases the residents may not want any action taken and the Ombudsman must honor that wish, even after you have explained that you are only there to help.

How can I become an Ombudsman Volunteer?

After the application process, a potential volunteer is screened and must agree to a criminal background check. Each regional ombudsman ensures that their volunteers are adequately trained and comfortable and prepared to enter nursing facilities. Volunteers take part in 30 hours of training which includes facility visits, and a simple certification exam. Once certified, volunteers are assigned to a facility.

How often do I need to go to the facility I am assigned to visit?

We ask our volunteers to visit their facility weekly for approximately 1-3 hours. Many volunteers find it more rewarding to visit their homes more often.

What type of reporting do I need to do and how often do I need to do it?

We ask our volunteers to submit reports on a monthly basis. The monthly report asks you to describe what you did during your visit. In addition, we ask you to report on any concerns or complaints that you have worked on. You can complete these reports on paper forms or if you prefer you can submit them on-line through our website. If there is a serious problem that needs to be handled by an Ombudsman staff member, the regional ombudsman needs to be notified by phone immediately, if possible, and your report should be sent in as soon as possible after the completion of your visit. Reports are critical for a number of reasons, including providing information to help individual residents and providing information about trends that the State Ombudsman can use for policy advocacy.