
How We Serve Residents

WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN (OLTCO)?

Under the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) every state is required to have an Ombudsman Program that addresses complaints and advocates for improvements in the long-term care system.

The Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman is headed by the State Ombudsman who directs the program statewide. Across Oregon we have volunteers certified to directly serve residents.

WHAT DOES THE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM DO?

The Ombudsman program advocates for residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, residential care facilities, and adult foster homes. We work to resolve problems that residents face and effect change at the local, state, and national levels to improve quality of care. In addition to identifying, investigating, and resolving complaints, OLTCO responsibilities include:

- Educating residents, their family and facility staff about resident rights, good care practices, and similar long-term services.
- Ensuring residents have regular and timely access to ombudsman services.
- Providing technical support for the development of resident and family councils.
- Advocating for changes to improve residents' quality of life and care.
- Representing resident interests before governmental agencies.
- Seeking legal, administrative and other remedies to protect residents.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Who does the Ombudsman program represent?

The Ombudsman program is mandated to represent the resident and assist at his or her direction. The Older Americans Act (OAA) requires the Ombudsman program to have resident consent prior to investigating a complaint. When someone other than the resident files a complaint, the ombudsman must determine, to the extent possible, what the resident wants.

What happens after I bring a concern to the Ombudsman program?

If someone other than a resident contacts the Ombudsman program, the ombudsman will visit the resident to see if the resident has similar concerns. The ombudsman will explain the role of the program, the complaint investigation process, share information about residents' rights, ask about the resident's quality of life, and seek to understand the resident's capacity to make decisions. If the resident wants the ombudsman to act on the problem, the ombudsman will investigate and continue to communicate with the resident throughout the investigation. If the resident cannot provide consent, the ombudsman will work with the resident representative.

What types of complaints does the Ombudsman program investigate?

Ombudsmen handle a variety of complaints about quality of life. Not all complaints are about the care provided by a facility, some complaints are about outside agencies, services or individuals. We can also receive and respond to complaints from individuals other than the resident (family member), but we still need resident permission to investigate or share information.

Do ombudsmen investigate complaints involving allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation?

Yes. The Ombudsman program investigates complaints that "relate to action, inaction or decisions that may adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, or rights of the residents" and that includes complaints about abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Ombudsmen are directed by resident goals and limited by federal disclosure requirements. Therefore, the Ombudsman's role in investigating allegations of abuse is unique and differs from other entities. Ombudsman programs attempt to resolve complaints to the residents' satisfaction.

Is the Ombudsman program required to report allegations of abuse?

There are strict federal requirements regarding disclosure of Ombudsman program information. Resident-identifying information cannot be disclosed without resident consent, the consent of the resident representative, or a court order. Therefore, these disclosure requirements prohibit Ombudsman programs from being mandatory reporters of suspected abuse.

