



## **A note from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman:**

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." This quotation, attributed to Aesop (the ancient author of many common fables such as "The Tortoise and the Hare"), is the mantra of the Volunteer Ombudsman Program as we celebrate National Volunteer Month this April.

The Volunteer Ombudsman Program has served long-term care residents in the state of Iowa since our first volunteer began in September 2013. Volunteer Ombudsmen are trained, certified representatives of the Office of the State Long-Term Ombudsman who are assigned to a nursing facility in Iowa. Volunteers agree to serve for at least three hours each month and have a variety of responsibilities, including meeting with residents and resident representatives to educate them about their rights, making general observations about a facility's physical and cultural environment and working in cooperation with residents and staff to communicate and resolve residents' concerns.

In 2015, 131 Volunteer Ombudsmen served in 122 long-term care facilities across Iowa.



Together, they completed 2,456 facility visits amounting to 3,849 volunteer hours (a figure that does not include time spent commuting to facilities, completing reports or participating in continuing education). Since the value of a volunteer hour in Iowa is estimated to be worth \$21.75, we calculate that Volunteer Ombudsmen contributed more than \$83,715 to the State of Iowa in 2015 to improve the quality of life and care for long-term care residents.

Some remarkable accomplishments by Volunteer Ombudsmen include the following:

- One Volunteer Ombudsman encouraged her facility to host a Veteran's Day recognition program, where current members of the armed forces attended in uniform to thank residents who are veterans during a special ceremony.
- Multiple Volunteer Ombudsmen have assisted residents and families during a facility closure and have asked to be reassigned to the facility that residents were relocated to in an effort to ease the transition for those individuals. Their reassurance to residents and families before, during and after the closure reduced stress for residents who were able to see a familiar face throughout the process.
- Another Volunteer Ombudsman worked with the resident council to help a facility implement an anonymous suggestion box for residents and families to use. The suggestion boxes were painted by residents at an activity and the suggestions received will be brought forward during future council meetings.

To recognize all of our Volunteer Ombudsmen, the VOP will host regional meetings around the state this month. Additionally, some volunteers will be nominated for a Governor's Volunteer Award while others, such as the Volunteer Ombudsmen in the service area of the United Way of East Central Iowa, will be recognized on a local level during annual Volunteer Month celebrations.

We are extremely proud of our volunteers, and we hope those of you who have the opportunity to work with them value their service as well. Should you cross paths with one of them in a facility this month, consider thanking them for their dedication to residents (a verbal thank you is more than enough since the VOP has a strict no-gift policy) and it would make their day to hear your positive feedback.

The Volunteer Ombudsman Program continues to welcome new applicants to the program, as many more are needed. Although individuals currently employed in a long-term care facility are not eligible due to a conflict of interest, we encourage all others to apply. For more information, please visit [www.iowaging.gov/vop](http://www.iowaging.gov/vop).

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## **CMS issues memo to LTCs regarding electronic staffing data reporting requirement**

On March 18, CMS issued a memorandum to long-term care providers regarding the mandatory reporting of direct care staffing information, including information for agency and contract staff, that goes into effect July 1, 2016.

As part of a new provision to the Affordable Care Act, facilities will be required to electronically submit staffing information through the Payroll-Based Journal (PBJ) in accordance with CMS specifications. This memo includes instructions about how to register and submit data and provides links to the revised and final PBJ policy manual postings and related information.

In preparation for the transition, CMS strongly encourages facilities to submit data during the voluntary reporting period that ends June 30. This will allow providers to test their processes and ensure compliance before mandatory reporting begins. > [Read the Memorandum](#)

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## Upcoming Events & Educational Opportunities



### **Pre-Conference Intensives for LTC professionals (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.)**

**Oral Health:** Delta Dental of Iowa is pleased to sponsor a special Oral Health pre-conference intensive at the Iowa Governor's Conference on Aging & Disabilities this May. The event is designed for long-term care professionals (CEUs provided) and will highlight nationwide initiatives to increase access to oral health care for older adults and people with disabilities. The intensive will also look at how new applied research and technology have the promise to provide more efficient and effective treatment to populations with significant barriers to oral health care, including long-term care residents.

**Elder Law:** The OSLTCO has teamed up with the Iowa State Bar Association to present a pre-conference intensive on Elder Law. As America's population continues to age over the next several decades, attorneys and other professionals can expect to see more legal questions arise regarding capacity, impairment, planning for incapacity and rights. This intensive will seek to create a learning environment in which topics such as capacity, competency, powers of attorney, guardianship, elder abuse, Medicaid and rights for long-term care residents are presented and discussed.

The pre-conference intensives are included with the cost of registration for the conference, which takes place May 23-26 at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines. > [Register](#)

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The mission of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals residing in long-term care by investigating complaints, seeking resolutions to problems and providing advocacy, with the goal of enhancing quality of life and care.