



## A Note from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman:

Across Iowa, residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, along with family members, long-term care ombudsmen, citizen advocates, facility staff and others, will celebrate the individual rights of long-term care residents this October during Residents' Rights Month.

The annual event is sponsored by the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (The Consumer Voice) to celebrate and focus on awareness of dignity, respect and the value of long-term care residents. This year's theme - "CARE Matters" - is designed to highlight the importance of quality care and its impact on the health, happiness and overall well-being of residents living in long-term care facilities.

In keeping with that theme, the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman has decided to produce four short versions of *The Advocate* this month that focus on topics related to residents' rights that begin with the letters C, A, R and E. These special issues will be emailed each Monday in October and will hopefully provide you with an interesting discussion topic for your weekly staff meeting, spark an idea for a Residents' Rights Month activity or just make you stop and reflect for a moment on the crucial role you play in enhancing the quality of life for all the residents you serve.

Enjoy!

Deanna Clingan-Fischer, JD



## "C" is for Choice

During Residents' Rights month, one of the key issues to embrace is making sure individuals have the freedom to make choices concerning their care, routines and day-to-day activities.



According to the introduction to residents' rights in the federal regulations, residents have "a right to a dignified existence, **self-determination** and communication with and access to persons and services inside and outside the facility." This means each resident has the right to exercise choice and have those choices respected.

An example of how respecting a resident's choices is connected to respecting his/her rights can be illustrated by the right to receive services with reasonable accommodation of individual needs and preferences. From the **resident's perspective**, this right means that the facility and staff must allow the resident to direct the patterns of his/her daily life, as well as treatment methods and goals. From the **staff's perspective**, this right means that employees need to think creatively to accommodate residents' preferences and decisions whenever possible, instead of denying a request or offering excuses as to why something cannot be done.

Additionally, the Consumer Voice reminds us that staff have a responsibility to help residents exercise their freedom of choice, even if they personally or professionally disagree with certain decisions. For example, assisting a resident who wants to smoke a cigarette or not interfering when a resident visits with persons whom the staff feel are not appropriate choices of friends. The law challenges facilities to focus on meeting the needs and desires of each individual resident, not on maintaining the customary routines of the institution.

Finally, it is also important to remember that making a choice is not a time-limited event. If a resident says she does not care what clothing she wears that day, the person's choice does not mean that she will never have a clothing preference. But while an individual's choices and preferences may change over time, his/her rights should always be protected and maintained. Understanding how closely one is connected to the other can significantly impact the quality of care and life the resident experiences.

For more information about training staff about accommodating residents' preferences, contact your Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman at (866) 236-1430.

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## Upcoming Events & Learning Opportunities

- The Call for Sessions for the 2016 Governor's Conference on Aging and Disabilities is now open! If you have a proposal that demonstrates innovative and effective methods of engaging with the aging and disability communities, we want to hear from you! Selected individuals will be invited to present at the Governor's Conference on Aging and Disabilities at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines on May 23-26, 2016. This conference, sponsored by the Iowa Department on Aging and the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council and powered by the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD), will highlight the myriad ways Iowa's aging and disability communities are evolving and invite participants to engage in a thoughtful dialogue about the positive impacts of a society committed to independent living. Hurry - the Call for Sessions closes Nov. 9!

> [Learn more](#)

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## Welcome New Volunteer Ombudsmen

Please join us in welcoming the following new members of the Volunteer Ombudsman Program:

- Elaine Cook, Solon Nursing Care Center (Solon)
- Lu Ann Frisch, Windmill Manor (Coralville)
- Theresa O'Brien, Davenport Lutheran Home (Davenport)

- Daria Shahriari, NewAldaya Lifescapes (Cedar Falls)

For more information about the program, visit <https://www.iowaaging.gov/VOP>.

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.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested.

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