



What is an Ombudsman?

The Office of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman often finds that residents have not heard of an ombudsman and have no idea what an ombudsman does; there are times nursing staff struggle with this too.

The focus of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Office is to advocate for the rights and wishes of residents and tenants in long-term care. In fact, resident's rights are guaranteed by the federal 1987 Nursing Home Reform Law. This law requires nursing facilities to promote and protect the rights of each resident and places a strong emphasis on individual dignity and self-determination. Iowa has incorporated these rights into state law for residential care and nursing facility residents, assisted living and elder group home tenants.

These rights include:

- Being treated with respect and dignity
- Being free from chemical and physical restraints
- Managing their own finances
- Being free to voice grievances without fear of retaliation
- Being able to associate and communicate privately with any person of their choice
- Being able to send and receive personal mail
- Being able to apply for State and Federal assistance without discrimination
- Being fully informed prior to admission of their rights, services available, and all charges
- Being given advance notice of a transfer or discharge

The Long-Term Ombudsman helps residents, tenants, and their families and friends understand and exercise these guaranteed rights. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman's responsibilities are outlined in Title VII of the Older Americans Act and include:

- Identifying, investigating, and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of resident/tenants
- Providing information to resident/tenants about long-term care services
- Representing the interests of residents/tenants
- Educating and informing consumers and the general public regarding issues and concerns related to long term care
- Providing technical support for the development of resident and family councils to protect the well-being and rights of residents, AND advocating for changes to improve residents' quality of life and care

The Long-Term Care Ombudsmen offer in-services on residents' rights to educate residents, family, facility staff, or a combination of audiences on how to exercise those rights.

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman also places volunteers in long-term care facilities through a Volunteer Ombudsman Program (VOP). VOP volunteers serve as the eyes and ears of residents by conducting monitoring visits to assigned long-term care facilities.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program may be reached through the state office or through one of the Local Ombudsmen by calling 1-866-236-1430.