

# The Advocate

Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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Issue #11

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## Message from Jeanne

### *NEW OMBUDSMEN*

We are pleased to announce that the new ombudsmen started on September 21<sup>st</sup>! Kim Weaver lives in Sheldon and will serve the northwest corner of the state. Pam Railsback lives in Tiffin and will serve part of southeast Iowa. We welcome Pam and Kim and look forward to being better able to respond to the needs of the people we serve. A map with the new territories is located on the last page of the newsletter. We know that it is a difficult adjustment when the LTC Ombudsmen switch areas and we ask for your patience as we transition into the new areas. All local long-term care ombudsmen can be reached through our hotline, 800-532-3213.

### *HELP US KEEP UP-TO-DATE*

We depend on our volunteers, as local citizens, to keep us posted on happenings in your area. If you know of any organization that would like a fun, interactive presentation on long-term care, please let us know. We would also like to set up our display at health fairs or senior fairs in local communities.

We depend on you to alert us to potential weather related problems in your area. As we move into the winter months, please alert us to ice storms, power or other utility outages so that we can offer our assistance to long-term care residents and their families.

## Residents' Rights Week

Across the country, residents of nursing homes and other LTC facilities – along with family members, ombudsmen, citizen advocates, facility staff and others – will honor the individual rights of LTC residents by celebrating Residents' Rights Week October 7-13. Designated by NCCNHR, National Consumer Voice for Quality LTC, the

week highlights the importance of residents' participation in discussions about improving the quality care in their LTC facilities. There are currently 50,000 Iowans living in approximately 850 nursing homes, assisted living facilities, elder group homes and residential care facilities. "This year we are commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Nursing Home Reform Law, which recognized residents' rights to make individual choices in how they receive care and to form independent resident councils," said Alice H. Hedt, NCCNHR Executive Director. "Services and activities in LTC facilities should be planned with the input of those who live in the facility and experience them. Residents' Rights Week 2007 reminds us that excellence can only be achieved when residents have the opportunity to define quality and to have meaningful input in the day to day decision making in facilities."

Here are some suggestions for the residents and staff at your facility:

- Present awards to people who have promoted Resident Rights
- Play Resident Rights Bingo
- Have a resident art or talent show that focuses on their abilities
- Ask local newspapers to feature stories about residents
- Form an essay contest and encourage staff and residents to write about the importance of resident rights
- Create a collage of photographs that represents how the facility promotes Resident Rights
- Encourage residents to provide an inservice to staff on how Resident Rights promote quality of life and quality of care, etc.
- The opportunities are endless!

## Iowa State Fair

Older Iowan's Day occurs on the first Wednesday of the Iowa State Fair. This day is enjoyable for all; there are performances by older Iowans, displays that offer information to seniors, and a king and queen are crowned for the day. This year the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs focused on providing information during the entire fair about [www.LifeLongLinks.org](http://www.LifeLongLinks.org). We hope to see you out next year on Older Iowans' Day or cool off in the Varied Industries Building at the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs booth.

## Shining Star Award

### **"TOUGH ENOUGH TO CARE" STAR ADVOCATE**



Do you know a resident advocate committee member who deserves special mention? In each newsletter we will recognize someone who has been nominated. Please call or e-mail Katie with your suggestion.

We—the staff of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman-- would like to take this month to recognize all volunteers, both past and present. With almost 3,000 active volunteers, we regret that we don't have the chance to get to know each of you individually. Some days it may seem like no one knows you're there, and you don't feel like you are making a difference. We see you as the heart of our operation. For over 30 years, Resident Advocate Committee Volunteers have been the eyes and ears of the ombudsman's office. We depend on you to keep us informed about your assigned facility. The meeting minutes you submit are read twice—by the staff in the Des Moines office and by the local ombudsman. This office cannot function without your dedication and compassion.

Thank you for all you do for the people living in long-term care facilities. From the staff of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, our hats are off to you.

## Rule Review

A feature that will appear in each newsletter is a nursing home regulation that will be quoted and discussed. Please call Katie if there are certain

topics that you would like to be reviewed. This quarter's topic: Nutrition and Menu Planning.

### Nutrition and Menu Planning.

*Chapter 481-58.24(5)h states "Alternate foods shall be offered to residents who refuse the food served."*

Do you like liver and onions? Well, there are some people who love this meal and others who despise it. It should not be assumed that people who live in nursing homes all like the same foods. If a person living in a nursing home is served a food that they do not like, the rule states that they should be offered an alternate option. If you are visiting a facility during mealtime and notice that a resident is not eating, you could ask the question "why are you not eating your meal". If the answer is because the person does not care for the food, please suggest to staff that an alternate option should be provided. If alternatives are not available and the facility is not willing to reconsider, please contact this office for assistance.

## Expecting Excellence – RAC Training

We had a record number of volunteers attend this year's training session! Over 200 more volunteers joined us for this year's training! It was an exciting year...this year was the first year that the local LTC Ombudsman conducted the training. Each Local LTC Ombudsman commented on how they truly enjoyed getting to know the volunteers in their areas. Thank you to everyone who attended. At your request, the topic for discussion next year will be Alzheimer's disease and dementia. If your committee has any topics you would like more information about feel free to contact our office.

## Elder Law Seminars

Do you or the residents that you advocate for have legal questions, but don't know where to turn for information? There will be a series of FREE seminars for Older Iowans and their caregivers. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, you can learn about Medicaid and other programs that will help pay nursing home costs and other expenses. On October 16<sup>th</sup>, you will learn how to put your legal affairs in order in case you become incapacitated or pass away. On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, you can learn how to avoid problems

with creditors, identity thieves and others who might abuse you. All three seminars will take place over the Iowa Communications Network different sites across Iowa. If you interested in finding more information about these seminars, please call the department at 800-532-3213. Feel free to pass this information along to residents and their family members!

## Question & Answer Session

*Q:* How do you start a conversation if you or the person you visit is shy and you don't know each other very well?

*A:* First visits can be especially awkward if you, or the resident (or both) feel shy. One way to start a conversation is to identify a personal item in the room and comment on it. That photo, knick-knack, or stuffed animal will almost always have some special meaning or importance to its owner. As she or he talks about it, you may become familiar with the person you hope to advocate for. Sincere compliments are always a great conversation starter.

*Q:* How do you handle a situation when the person you visit with wants to do all of the talking?

*A:* A person who enjoys talking may have been born with this personality trait and receives satisfaction from having an advocate who is a great listener. This stream of talk usually makes it possible for you to learn quite a bit about the person's present interests, physical state, and emotional or material needs. Reminiscing enables the person to celebrate his or her life. Your gift to this kind of person is to be the audience.

*Q:* Are there things RAC members can do so that they are not coming across as being condescending or patronizing?

*A:* You can prevent this by being respectful. That means recognizing that the resident is simply another human being, just like you. Treat them as you want or expect to be treated by another. Encourage residents to share their talents, histories, and life experiences with you. Remember that the look on your face and your tone of voice can mean more than the words you use.

*Q:* Is it okay for RAC members to touch residents during a visit?...and what type of touch is appropriate?

*A:* In early visits, limit touching to what you would do with any other recent acquaintance. When you arrive and leave, it is acceptable to smile, shake hands and express pleasure. As your relationship develops, it may be okay for a hug. If both people are fully comfortable, it would be considered appropriate. If you are uncomfortable with the way that a resident touches you, explain to the person that you are uncomfortable and discuss your personal boundaries with him or her.

*Q:* How can you redirect a conversation when a resident is repeating themselves? Are there ways to turn it into a two-way conversation?

*A:* Several reasons could account for a person's repeating a phrase, a single thought or a series of sentences again and again on the same visit. If the person is repeating an entire story on each visit you make, or repeats it several times within one visit, the story may have special emotional importance for them. You can try asking open-ended questions or using a pause in the person's recitation to change the topic. If a person asks the same question again and again, or repeats a phrase with no recognition of saying it before, they may have an early stage of dementia. In this situation, help the person feel comfortable by giving simple, uncomplicated responses or encourage conversation on a different topic.

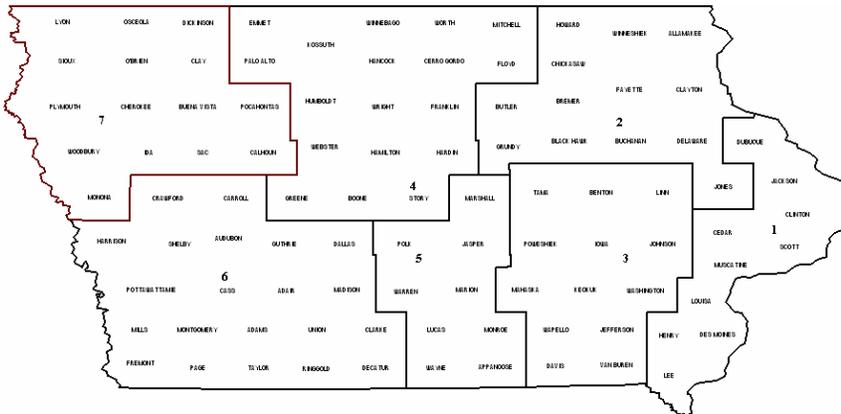
*Q:* What is a good way to avoid ending a visit without the resident feeling that you are abandoning them?

*A:* The best way to minimize the disappointment when ending the visit is to prepare the person for your departure. Let them know as soon as you arrive about how long you will be able to stay and what time you will be leaving. A few minutes before you leave, say something that alerts the person to how much longer you will be able to stay and begin talking about how much you are looking forward to your next visit together. Feel free to call our office for additional support or guidance on any of these issues!

# OFFICE INFORMATION

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a unit within the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs. All members of this unit can be reached at 800-532-3213 or at the direct phone numbers listed here.

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