

The Advocate

Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

April 2008

Issue #13

National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week is being celebrated this year from April 27th – May 3rd. This year's theme is "Volunteers Plant the Seeds of Kindness". On behalf of all of the Ombudsman Unit and all of the people who live in nursing homes, we would like to say THANK YOU to all of our volunteers. We currently have over 2600 volunteers across the state and we could not do our jobs without you. We think this quote says it all: "Volunteers are unpaid not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

Conference Scholarships

This is a reminder that we have scholarships available for volunteers to attend the 2008 Governor's Conference on Aging in Des Moines. The conference is being held on May 19th and 20th and the theme this year is *The Art of Dynamic Aging – Paint Your Own Picture*. The theme is based on the idea that normal aging is a creative and an individual process. Older persons are a vital and thriving group who will continue to change Iowa's landscape. The conference will feature over 55 educational workshops which will cover a variety of topics related to the experience of aging. If you are interested in a scholarship to attend this conference, please contact Tonya.

Application Process

As of the last day in March, we have 50 new volunteers for this year! We thought this might be a good time to remind you about the process for new volunteers. If your committee has an interested person, they must complete an application and send the application to our office. The application will be reviewed by this office and pre-screened for any conflicts of interest. If there is no conflict, the application will likely be approved and the person will be sent a letter of approval, a

RAC manual, and other valuable information. In the packet of information will be new member orientation times. Each new member is required to go through the 1.5 hours of orientation before becoming an official volunteer for this office. The orientation is over the telephone and the new members are provided a toll-free number to call. After they have completed the orientation, we send the new member a completion letter, a nametag and 2 RAC rosters – one to keep and one to take to the facility to post. If you have any questions or comments about this, feel free to call our office and ask for Tonya.

Envelopes

We have had several calls from volunteers recently asking about our envelopes. Every committee should have a secretary that prepares the meeting minute summary each quarter and then sends the summary to our office. This office can provide you with pre-paid envelopes to send those minutes in. If your committee is using the pre-paid envelopes that we provide, the address on the envelope will say:

Elder Affairs
LTC Ombudsman
State Capitol
1015 E Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309-9656

***** THIS IS NOT THE ADDRESS FOR OUR OFFICE!!!**** Only use this address if you are using the pre-paid envelopes. If your committee needs more of these envelopes, feel free to call our office and we will gladly send them to you in the mail.

If you choose to send anything to our office without using the pre-paid envelopes, our address is:
Iowa Department of Elder Affairs
Jessie M. Parker Building
510 East 12th Street, Suite 2
Des Moines, IA 50319

Economic Stimulus Package

As you all know, Congress enacted an economic stimulus package to help spur a slowing economy. Did you know that around 20.5 million Americans who rely primarily on Social Security or VA income qualify for a stimulus payment? Persons who do not generally file tax returns but have income such as Social Security, certain Railroad Retirement or Veterans Administration benefits may qualify. ***This includes people who live in nursing homes and residential care facilities.***

Older persons (and younger persons with disabilities) who had at least \$3000 in gross qualifying income during 2007, qualify! However, they must file a 2007 tax return. If the senior's primary income is Social Security, they should file a 1040A no later than 10/15/08. A person does not have to file for an extension if only filing a 1040A. Low-income seniors will generally receive \$300 if single or \$600 if married and filing a joint return.

Receiving a stimulus payment under the package does not affect eligibility or the amount of federal need-based services. Specifically, the payment does not count as income in the month that it is received. For nursing home residents, the Stimulus Payment belongs to the resident and is "invisible" to the facility and Medicaid. However, it is counted as a resource (asset) 60 days after the month it was received. This means that nursing home residents need to spend their stimulus package within 60 days or it will count as an asset/resource.

In March 2008, IRS mailed packets of information to Americans who did not file taxes last year and who had Social Security and/or VA income in 2007. The IRS packet contained a blank 1040A form, a template 1040A form, an explanatory pamphlet.

If you or a resident needs help with the Economic Stimulus Package, the following free resources are available:

VITA – The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program helps taxpayers with low or moderate income. Call 800-906-9887 to find the nearest VITA site.

AARP Tax Guide – AARP provides free tax help to people 60 and older at a number of Iowa sites. To find an AARP Tax Aide site, call 888-227-7669 or visit the AARP website at www.aarp.org.

Legal Hotline for Older Iowans – If you or a resident that you visit is over the age of 60 and

have general questions, you can contact the Legal Hotline for Older Iowans at 800-992-8161.

Area Agency on Aging – AAA's are able to refer older Iowans to local services. Please call our office if looking for your local AAA's contact information.

There are a few tips to avoid scams and fraud. IRS does not go door-to-door, they do not make out-bound calls and they never ask for credit card info.

The next time you are visiting the facility your assigned facility, you could ask the following questions:

- Are residents and their responsible parties being informed about the Economic Stimulus Package?
- Is there a staff member to help residents fill out the forms if there is no family available?
- Does the staff know about the free services available to help residents?

Please help our office spread the word to residents, family and facility staff about this package. If you or any residents and their families have questions, feel free to have them call our office for help.

2008 Resident Advocate Training

In February, we sent out the schedule for 2008 RAC Training. The program this year is called "Ideas you will never forget about Alzheimer's disease." Each training session is two hours long and will provide volunteers with information and ideas on how to interact with people who have dementia or Alzheimer's disease. The session will also give volunteers updates about the Ombudsman's Office and the Resident Advocate Committee program. At each training, there will be updated forms, brochures, etc. for volunteers' use in 2008. We ask that you call or e-mail to register for the training in your area at least two weeks in advance. To register, please call Shirley at 800-532-3213. You can also e-mail Tonya at tonya.amos@iowa.gov. If e-mailing, please put "RAC Training" in the subject line. If you call and need to leave a message, or if e-mailing you MUST include the name of each person who will attend, the phone number for each person who will attend, the name and the town of the facility where you volunteer and the location where you choose to attend this program.

You can review the training schedule at our website:
www.iowa.gov/elderaffairs/advocacy/rac.html. If you have any questions about the training, please call Tonya at 800-532-3213.

Rule Review

Please call Tonya if there are certain topics that you would like to be reviewed in our "Rules Review" column. This quarter's topic: Call Lights.

Nursing Care.

Chapter 481-58.18(4) states "The facility shall provide prompt response from qualified staff for the resident's use of the nurse call system. (Prompt response being considered as no longer than 15 minutes).

If you have to use the bathroom, do you just get up and go...or do you wait 15 minutes and then make your way to the restroom? Most of us have the luxury of being able to walk to/from the bathroom. However, imagine living in a nursing facility, and being dependent on others for your care. How long could you wait before it was too late? As advocates for residents, it is difficult to try to resolve the problem of slow call light response. If a resident is telling you that their call light is not being answered, or that it takes too long for it to be answered, try getting more details.

- What time did this happen? If the person is not able to give an exact time, try asking if it was morning, afternoon, night, during the week, weekends, during meal time, etc. Does this person have a clock in their room that they can easily read during the day or night?
- Does this happen when a certain person is working? Do you know that person's name? What do they look like? What shift do they work?
- How long ago did this happen? Was it yesterday, a week ago, a year ago?

Finding out details is essential in problem solving. After you find out more details, make sure you have permission from the resident to proceed with the investigation. Ask questions such as:

- Is it okay if I check this out this problem for you?
- Would it be all right if I talked to the staff about this?
- How would you like this situation to be resolved?

If you do have permission to proceed, have all of the details ready while you speak to the facility staff. Try not to be accusatory, but be an informant and an advocate for the resident. If you and the facility staff can not come up with a resolution, please feel free to call our office and we can assist you.

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 Tonya with your suggestion.

This quarter's STAR ADVOCATE is.....

Lynn Fawcett

Lynn Fawcett is a member of the Resident Advocate Committee for Green Hills Health Care Center in Ames. She has been a member of the committee for 3 years. Lynn is dedicated to the idea of quality care and person directed care for each person who lives at Green Hills. Recently, a family member was visiting their loved one from out of town. The family member had some concerns and wanted to speak to a long-term care ombudsman, but did not have a phone. Lynn loaned her cell phone to the family member so that a phone call could be made to this office right away. We want to thank Lynn for her time and dedication to Iowa's seniors!

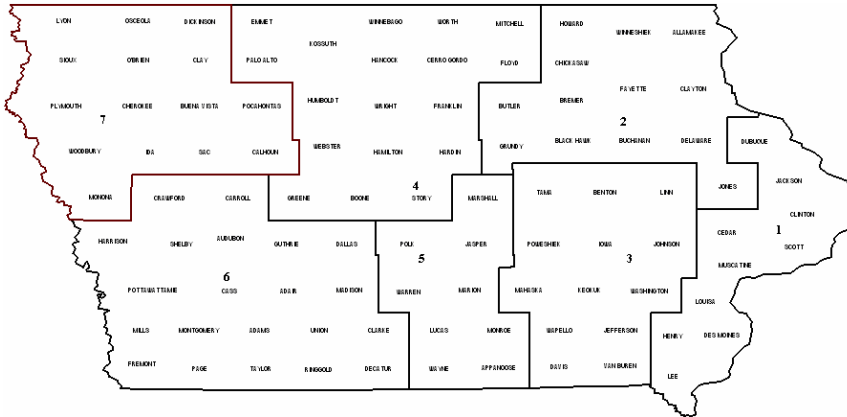
Survey

Over the last few months, this office has been compiling information on the RAC program. Now, we would like you to get involved. In this newsletter, you will find a survey that we are asking all of our volunteers to complete. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey and then send it back to our office by 5/16/08. You may send the survey back in a pre-paid envelope (ask your secretary or chairperson) or in your own envelope, if you choose. If you prefer to have this survey sent to you via e-mail, please contact Tonya at tonya.amos@iowa.gov. Thank you in advance for filling out this survey – the information will be used as we continually try to provide the best service possible to people living in long-term care facilities.

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.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Districts



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