



Volunteer Ombudsman Newsletter

Listen, empower, and serve as a voice for Iowa's long-term care residents

Welcome New Volunteers!

Harriet Waters

Park Place at Henry County Health Center
Mount Pleasant

Becky Karas

Blair House
Burlington

Peggy Dreckman

Hillcrest Healthcare Center
Hawarden

Pat Koch

Hillcrest Healthcare Center
Hawarden

Suzanne Menke

Fort Madison Health Center
Fort Madison

Danette Schutjer

IOOF Home & Community Therapy Center
Mason City

Betty Webb

Tru Rehab
Grinnell

Helen Bombei-Dobbins

Manor House Care Center
Sigourney

Elaine Ernst

Cedar Falls Healthcare Center
Cedar Falls

Marilyn Spangler

Manorcare
Davenport

Mary Dick

Elm Heights
Shenandoah

Voter Rights!

In anticipation of the upcoming elections, the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman has developed two informational guides: the first is a [fact sheet](#) (pictured below) regarding the right to vote and a brief outline of the process for requesting and submitting an absentee ballot; the second is a form titled "[Voting Information Sheet](#)" that may be used by a facility to assist residents in exercising their right to vote.

Voting Fact Sheet | August 2014

ABSENTEE VOTING

In Iowa, there are special procedures for individuals residing in hospitals or health care facilities who would like to vote using an absentee ballot.

Request an absentee ballot. The form to request the ballot is available on the Secretary of State's website (www.sos.iowa.gov) or by calling (515) 281-5204 to request that the form to be sent via U.S. Mail.

The request must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the election. If an individual is admitted to a facility or hospital between Friday and election day, she/he may contact the county auditor to request an absentee ballot.

Voting. A bipartisan team of election officials must deliver the absentee ballot. The voter will be notified when the team will be delivering the ballot. If the voter will not be available, she/he may arrange for another time that will be more convenient.

The team members will deliver the absentee ballot and wait while it is marked. They will return the ballot to the county auditor.

Every citizen has the right to vote.

Under both the United States and Iowa Constitutions, every adult citizen may vote unless that person has been either (1) declared mentally incompetent to vote; or (2) convicted of an infamous crime.

What does it mean to be "mentally incompetent"?

A person is mentally incompetent to vote if he or she *lacks sufficient capacity to comprehend and exercise the right to vote.*

Who determines competency?

The court will usually make this determination during a commitment hearing or at the time of granting guardianship.

EVERY CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES... SHALL BE ENTITLED TO VOTE AT ALL ELECTIONS... IOWA CONST., ART. II, SEC. 1

Once a guardian is appointed, is the ward automatically presumed to be mentally incompetent to vote?

NO! Just because an individual has a guardian does NOT mean he or she is unable to vote.

Rather, the judge is required to make a separate determination regarding competency to vote at the time of granting guardianship.

Should you suspect that someone has completed a voter registration form or an absentee ballot on behalf of a voter and without the voter's request or outside of the presence of the voter, you should immediately contact the Secretary of State's Voter Fraud Hotline and report your concerns.

How does someone register to vote?

Complete a voter registration form. The form is available on the Secretary of State's website, or by calling (515) 281-5204 to request that the form be sent via U.S. Mail.

Sign the completed form. If a voter is not physically able to sign, she/he may use a mark or stamp she/he regularly uses or may ask someone to sign for her/him. A person including a guardian or agent may only sign for the voter at the request of and in the presence of the voter.

If this form is sent at least 10 days before a primary or general election or 11 days before any other election, the county auditor will send a voter registration card within two weeks

Same-Day Voter Registration

Voters may also register on Election Day. The voter will need to show proof of residency and proof of identity. A current driver's license is the best method. If the voter does not have a current driver's license, she/he may provide a photo ID and one of the following: utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check,

Suspected Voter Fraud

1-866-505-VOTE or 1-866-767-8683

Continuing Education

Introducing Peer Groups!

As the VOP grows we are working to strengthen our community of volunteers around the state of Iowa. One way we hope to do this is by starting numerous Peer Groups, each made up of Volunteer Ombudsmen around a specific region of Iowa.

Goals of Peer Groups:

- Create a support group of Volunteer Ombudsmen serving at different facilities in the same county/general area around the state of Iowa.
- Peer Groups will strengthen the chain of communication between Volunteer Ombudsmen, Volunteer Ombudsman Coordinators, Local Long-Term Ombudsmen, and the State Long-Term Ombudsman.
- Provide free and interactive continuing education opportunities for Volunteers.

To make Peer Groups a reality we are looking for Volunteer Ombudsmen willing to facilitate a group within their area. In most cases, there are a handful of other volunteers in your county or bordering counties. Please contact Sarah Hinzman with any questions or if you are interested in becoming a group facilitator at 515-657-1479 or sarah.hinzman2@iowa.gov. We would like to provide some virtual training to selected facilitators in September and have peer groups begin meeting in October.

To qualify as a Peer Group Facilitator, a volunteer should:

- Have at least six months experience as a Volunteer Ombudsman.
- Have genuine plans to recertify and continue service as a Volunteer Ombudsman.
- Consistent completion of minimum volunteer expectations (unless advance notice was given), such as visiting his/her facility for three hours or more and submitting a report each month.

VOP Scholarships for Continuing Education

We now have a process to help fund our volunteer's attendance at future conferences and events that are aging or long-term care related and require a cost to attend. Contact Sarah Hinzman for more information at sarah.hinzman2@iowa.gov or 515-657-1479.

Building Respect for LGBT Older Adults

This online learning tool is a first step in learning about how to create safe, welcoming and inclusive services for LGBT older adults. The tool is intended for long term care and other aging service providers as an introduction to LGBT aging. This tool is split up into six modules, each approximately 10 minutes long. We recommend that you watch them in order. They do not need to be watched all at once. Click the link: <http://lgbtagingcenter.org/training/buildingRespect.cfm>

Congratulations and Celebrations!

Nwanneka Eke, Volunteer Ombudsman in Des Moines, recently brought a little one into the world. She is pictured here with baby Serenity Antonia Gabriela, who was born on August 21. Congratulations, Nwanneka!

Do you have something special to share and celebrate with our volunteer family? Please let us know!

Monthly Reports

Here's your friendly reminder that monthly reports should be dropped in the mail September 30th, or as soon as possible if you have not already done so. For those that had orientation in the last two weeks, you do not need to send in a report unless you were able to visit after your orientation.

*Thank You
for serving
Iowa's
Long-Term
Care
Residents!*

