

# The Advocate

Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

July 2008

Issue #14

## Greetings

Happy summer to everyone!!! This summer has been very eventful so far. This issue of "The Advocate" contains important information about RAC trainings, Flood 2008, Rule Changes and the Smoke-free Air Act. Please call the Ombudsman's Office if you have any questions or comments about any of these articles.

As always, we appreciate your time and dedication as a volunteer for this office. THANK YOU for all that you do!

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

-Leo Buscaglia

## RAC Rule Changes

The Iowa Administrative Code – Chapter 9 is adopting many rule changes that will go into effect August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008. These changes will effect what you do as a volunteer for this office. Please read all of these rule changes carefully and let Tonya know if you have any questions.

### Application Process

*CURRENT:* Applicants with conflicts are asked to fill out a waiver. The waiver application is reviewed by the Elder Affairs Commission to determine approval status.

*NEW:* Persons applying who have a conflict of interest (worked at a facility within the last 3 years, has a relative that works at the facility, has financial interest in the facility, etc.) will still fill out a waiver application. The waiver will be reviewed by the Ombudsman's Office and the Administrator of the facility. If both parties agree, the applicant will be approved. If both parties do not agree, the Ombudsman's Office will make the final decision to determine if the person will be accepted into the program.

*INTENT:* The intent of this rule change is not to lift restrictions for persons with a conflict of interest. However, there will now be a process that can be done internally which will reduce waiting time for the applicant.

### Orientation

*CURRENT:* New volunteers are required to participate in the orientation that is conducted via teleconference.

*NEW:* All new members must participate in the orientation process or they will not be approved as a volunteer.

*INTENT:* The intent of this rule change is to ensure that all new members know the requirements of their volunteer duties before beginning their visits as a resident advocate.

### Reasons for Termination

*CURRENT:* The reasons for termination are: falsifying information on an application, acting as a member without appointment, attending less than one-half of the meetings convened each year by the RAC Chairperson and actions which are founded by the Ombudsman's Office to violate these rules or the intent of the program.

*NEW:* The reasons for termination have been expanded to include: conviction of an illegal activity and failure to attend RAC training for 2 consecutive years.

*INTENT:* The Ombudsman's Office firmly believes that anyone committing illegal activities should not be volunteering as an advocate for this office due to the sensitive nature of the volunteer duties. Each year, this office works hard to develop training material that is new and informative to our volunteers. We will continue traveling to approximately 50 counties across Iowa to provide this training, and will also explore other options for those who can not attend in-person. If a volunteer does not attend for 2 years in a row, they may be terminated.

## Flood 2008

The flood of 2008 brought on many challenges for people living in long-term care facilities. Several facilities in Iowa were required to evacuate and residents were living in other facilities, churches or emergency shelters. To prevent a chaotic situation, every facility should have an emergency plan. We have put together some questions that Resident Advocates can ask the staff members about their plans.

- How will residents and visitors requiring assistance be evacuated?
- How will the facility ensure that each resident can be identified during the evacuation?
- Where will the residents go?
- How will their families be notified?
- Will family members be able to bring their loved one home, rather than evacuating, which is often less traumatic than a move to a new facility?
- How will the family members be able to contact the facility staff during the evacuation or after the residents have moved?
- How can Resident Advocates or family members assist during the evacuation? For example, would it be helpful for Resident Advocates to come to the facility to assist?

If not evacuating, these questions may be helpful:

- Does the facility have power? If not, does the facility have a generator? (Many residents may need electricity for oxygen concentrators, nebulizer treatments, etc).
- Is there an adequate source of food and water available to meet the residents' basic needs?
- Does the facility have back-up for water and sewer?
- Are staff able to make it to the facility to work?

This year, we asked several of our volunteer advocates to visit residents whose facility was in danger or to visit those places where people had been evacuated. Because of road closures, our local Ombudsmen were not able to travel to those areas. Thank you to the volunteers who spent extra time talking to residents who were affected by the flood! If you hear of an evacuation or an emergency in your area, please call our office. We

have many resources within this office and would be able to offer assistance if needed.

For those of you who were personally affected by the flood, our thoughts have been with you and your communities. The Department has been very active in helping older adults connect with services in their community. If you or someone you know still needs assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

## 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.....

### ***Shirley Pantini***

Shirley was nominated by the Local LTC Ombudsman, Pam Railsback:

"I would like to recognize Shirley Pantini for her outstanding efforts as the Resident Advocate Chair for the Winslow House Care Center in Marion. She has been a member for 2 years, and started as a RAC member when her mother was a resident at Winslow House. Since she had a family member at this facility, she knows first hand what it is like to have a loved one in a long-term care facility. With her kind heart, Shirley has earned the trust of the residents and family members at Winslow House. She is an excellent resident advocate and she works effectively with the staff at Winslow to get any and all issues resolved. Shirley and her committee recently suggested a "Family/Resident Orientation" for the newer residents and their family members. The facility staff appreciated this idea and soon they will make this suggestion a reality. Shirley is thorough, organized and thinks "out of the box" when it comes to resolving issues. I appreciate the heart and soul she puts into this committee, along with her follow-through. Shirley is very capable, competent and a compassionate individual. I am honored to work with her through the Resident Advocate Committee. Thanks, Shirley for all of your dedicated work!"

## Resident Advocate Training - Change

Due to flooding issues, we had to reschedule training for Linn County. It has been rescheduled for August 19<sup>th</sup> from 9:30-11:30 a.m. It will be at the Marion Library, 1095 – 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Parking is located across the street on the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>; there is a sign to direct you. If you plan to come to the training, please RSVP by August 12<sup>th</sup>. You can RSVP by calling 800-532-3213 or e-mailing Tonya at [Tonya.Amos@iowa.gov](mailto:Tonya.Amos@iowa.gov).

## Resident Advocate Survey

In the last newsletter, we included a survey that we asked all of the volunteers to fill out. We are excited to announce that 645 of you completed the survey and sent it back to our office! We are currently compiling the responses and plan to inform you of the results soon. Thank you to those of you who took the time to fill this out and send it back.

## Rule Review

Please call Tonya if there are certain topics that you would like reviewed in our "Rules Review" column. This quarter's topic: Resident Advocate Committees and families.

Resident Advocate Committee.

*Chapter 481-58.27(3) states "When requested, names, addresses and telephone numbers of family members shall be given to the resident advocate committee, unless the family refuses. The facility shall provide a form on which a family member may refuse to have the family members' name, address or telephone number given to the resident advocate committee".*

Family members are very informative; they may be able to provide information about residents who can not speak for themselves. In addition to visiting with residents, Resident Advocate Volunteers are asked to explain to families what their role is and how advocates can help people living in long-term care facilities. If you can not meet with the family in person, do not hesitate to ask the facility staff for the resident's family information. The facility staff can only refuse to give you the information if the family has requested that they don't want you to have it – and this should be in writing.

Remember:

People who live in long-term care facilities vary from being alert and oriented to not being able to speak to you at all.

- If a person is alert and can have a conversation with you, please make your visit as you would normally. If the resident has a concern or a problem that they would like help with, please remember that a volunteer can only share information with the family if the resident gives you permission.
- If you are visiting with a person who is uncommunicative and you have a concern about their care, then you should contact a family member. Call or visit with the family member to ensure that you have permission to speak to the facility staff about the concern. If the family does not want you to speak with the facility staff, please share ideas with them on how to resolve the concern on their own.
- As a volunteer, your names and phone numbers are posted at the facility. If you have a family member contact you about a concern, gently remind them that you are an advocate for the resident. Inform the family member that you would like to have the resident's permission before talking with a staff person.

## Smoke-free Air Act

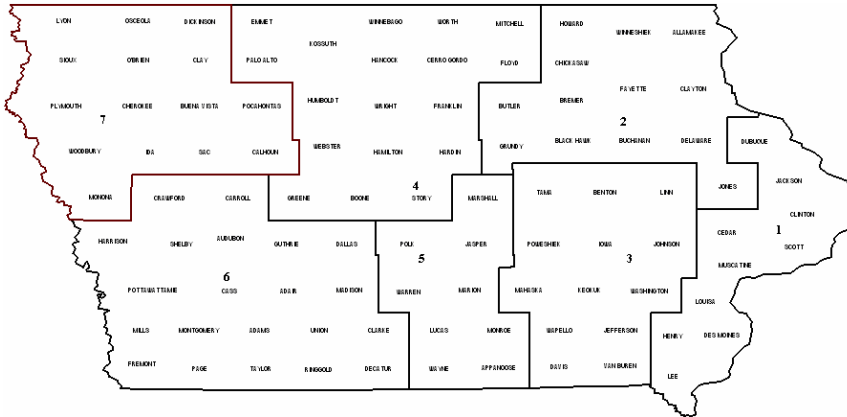
As you all know, the Smoke-free Air Act went into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The Iowa Department of Public Health has put out the following information about smoking in long-term care facilities.

- Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed places of public and private health care provider locations.
- Smoking is prohibited on the grounds of public health care provider locations. This would include long-term care facilities that are owned by the city, county or state.
- The Smoke-free Air act does not regulate smoking in outdoor areas of private health care provider locations. This would include any long-term care facility that is NOT owned by the city, county or state.

# 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



1. Kim Cooper, SE  
kim.cooper@iowa.gov
2. Carol DeBoom, NE  
carol.deboom@iowa.gov
3. Pam Railsback, SE Central  
pamela.railsback@iowa.gov
4. Connie Hadden, N Central  
connie.hadden@iowa.gov
5. Angie O'Brien, S Central  
angie.o'brien@iowa.gov
6. Julie Pollock, SW  
julie.pollock@iowa.gov
7. Kim Weaver, NW  
kimberly.weaver@iowa.gov

Jeanne Yordi, State LTC Ombudsman  
515-725-3327  
jeanne.yordi@iowa.gov

Tonya Amos, Program Coord.  
515-725-3342  
tonya.amos@iowa.gov

Katie Mulford, Ombudsman Assistant  
515-725-3344  
katie.mulford@iowa.gov

Shirley Taylor, RAC Secretary  
515-725-3304  
shirley.taylor@iowa.gov

Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman  
510 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Jessie Parker Building Suite 2  
Des Moines, IA 50319

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