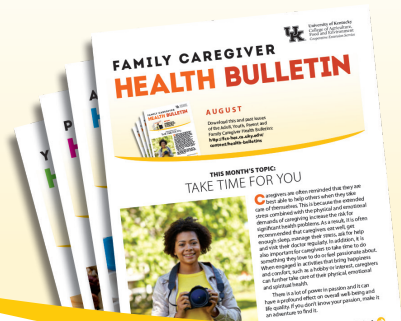




University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



MAY 2022

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMEN GIVE RESIDENTS A VOICE



Abuse and neglect within the long-term care system affects thousands of individuals and families, according to Nursing Home Abuse Justice. To help improve care and conditions in nursing homes and give vulnerable residents a voice, President Nixon's administration funded nursing home ombudsman demonstration projects in 1972. By 1978, every state was required to have an Ombudsman Program with specially defined functions and responsibilities. Over time, the Older Americans Act and Amendments expanded the program to include other long-term care facilities, such as board and care homes. It authorized ombudsmen to serve all long-term care residents, regardless of age.

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Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

Long-term care ombudsmen make regular visits to facilities to observe resident care and living conditions.

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Today, long-term care ombudsmen make regular visits to facilities to observe resident care and living conditions. They make themselves available to serve as advocates for those who cannot communicate their own wishes, for those who do not have a representative, and for those who are too afraid to speak out. According to the Kentucky Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, ombudsmen's responsibilities include:

- Processing complaints made by a resident or on behalf of residents related to various forms of abuse, neglect, and improper care
- Resolving problems and recommending changes in law related to health, safety, welfare, and basic human rights
- Representing the best interest of residents before governmental agencies
- Seeking ways to protect residents
- Educating long-term care consumers and the general public about issues in long-term care
- Recruiting volunteers and promoting citizen participation
- Developing resident and family councils to protect resident rights and well-being
- Advocating for change to improve resident life quality and overall care

If you have a complaint on behalf of a loved one in long-term care, the Kentucky Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program suggests trying to resolve the concern with the care facility or health-care provider first. In many cases, action and improvement follow. When issues are not resolved, however, a certified ombudsman can help. With your permission, the ombudsman will investigate the concern, verify, and document reports. With your permission, the ombudsman will work with you to find appropriate solutions to resolve the concerns. Ombudsmen do not act without consulting you first. Complaints are kept confidential. Names of residents and/or reporting family members are not identified unless consent to do so is provided or a court orders identification to be shared. To confirm ongoing resolution and to prevent future concerns, ombudsmen will follow up on complaints.

Kentucky has more than 100 trained volunteer and paid ombudsmen who work with the state Ombudsman Program and the 15 district ombudsman programs across the state. Everyone needs an advocate. Giving residents a voice is an important role, and Kentucky needs more certified volunteers. Certification requires a minimum of 36 hours of initial training, including up to 7 hours of independent study, at least 10 hours in the field, and 16 to 20 hours of classroom training. Classroom training includes eight areas of study: history of program, the aging process, residents' rights, problem-solving investigation and resolution, long-term care characteristics, legal issues, visitation policies, and reporting systems. After training is complete, volunteers must also pass a competency exam. The ombudsman program also offers opportunities to become "friendly visitors." Friendly Visitor training includes two hours of classroom training and supervised visitations.

To contact an ombud or find out more information about the Kentucky Ombudsman Program, including volunteer opportunities, contact State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Sherry Culp at (859) 277-9215 or email sherryculp@ombuddy.org. You can also visit the website at <https://ombuddy.org>

SOURCES:

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**FAMILY CAREGIVER
HEALTH BULLETIN**

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