



The National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

Position Statement: Systems Advocacy

The National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs releases its paper, "Systems Advocacy and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program."

As mandated by the Older Americans Act, the mission of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is to seek resolution of problems and advocate for the rights of residents of long-term care facilities with the goal of enhancing quality of life and care. Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs are entrusted with and mandated to provide individual and systemic advocacy for residents to positively affect care environments across communities and states. It is the unique role and duty of the ombudsman to take positions that represent the voice and interests of residents, which may or may not be in agreement with the positions of government and others. Ombudsman systems advocacy gives policy makers valuable input from residents.

In some states, fulfillment of the systems advocacy federal mandate is restricted or denied; thus, residents lose their advocacy voice. Individual residents with physical or mental conditions who cannot advocate for themselves are put at greater risk of poor care without the independent, public voice of an ombudsman.

The Administration on Aging is charged with implementing and enforcing the Older Americans Act. This includes the responsibility to evaluate each state's systems advocacy performance and enforce the Older Americans Act's provisions by requiring all states to support and permit the lawful functioning of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. Millions of Americans who live in long-term care facilities have no one but an ombudsman to be their voice in systems advocacy, not just for one person or one home, but for residents in all long-term care communities.

The National Association of State Ombudsman Programs urges the Administration on Aging to focus attention on the need for systems advocacy and enforce all provisions of the Older Americans Act, Title VII, Sec. 712 (42 U.S.C. 3058g).