

National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

Future Directions for Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

*Position Paper
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Vermont Meeting*

The National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs recognizes that the frail elderly have a great need for advocacy services and quality assurance, regardless of where they are living.

State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs have struggled for many years to meet the requirements of the Older Americans Act to investigate complaints about nursing homes and board and care homes. Because of a lack of funding, many state programs have not fulfilled the current requirements under federal law. This is particularly true in the area of advocacy for residents of board and care homes.

There has been discussion in recent years of expanding the Ombudsman Program to include investigation and resolution of complaints about other health services such as home health care, hospital based care and even renal dialysis clinic care. Several states have received grants or additional state funding to provide ombudsman assistance to consumers of these services.

The National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs supports such expansion only when:

1. The federal requirements of the Older Americans Act, regarding advocacy services for residents of long-term care residents are fully met,
2. Ombudsman expansion into other service areas will not be under-taken at the expense of a reduction of advocacy for nursing home and board and care home residents,
3. Conflict of interest issues are considered and addressed, as many states' Older Americans Act programs are direct providers of home and community based programs, and
4. Additional funding is available to support the expanded program.