

# What is an Ombudsman?

## **What is a Long Term Care Ombudsman and what do they do?**

A Long Term Care Ombudsman is a certified advocate who works to resolve any problems that impact the quality of life and quality of care of residents living in licensed long-term care settings such as nursing homes, skilled rehabilitation facilities, adult foster care homes, and homes for the aging which are commonly referred to as assisted living communities. Ombudsmen work one-on-one with residents and/or their representatives who have complaints by helping them address their concerns, understand and exercise their rights, ensure they are receiving the care they deserve and desire and protect them from abuse and neglect. Services are provided at no cost.

## **What matters and issues do Ombudsman address and advocate for?**

A complaint can be about any aspect of a resident's life in a nursing home or assisted living community that effects their health, safety and well-being. These can range from the quality and service of meals, addressing if call lights are answered for residents in a timely manner or advocate for residents who are facing involuntary discharge.

Residents' rights are guaranteed by the Federal 1987 Nursing Home Reform Law. Ombudsmen can utilize the Federal and State laws to protect residents and provide mediation and assistance.



**Laura Foerster AAA's  
Long-Term Care Ombudsman  
(800) 442-2803**

## **What are the steps when someone calls, and how is it kept confidential?**

When someone reaches out with a complaint, the ombudsman must first establish exactly what their concerns are and what the resident or their representative ultimately wants. Their wishes will guide all investigative actions and communication regarding the complaint. Ombudsmen cannot disclose any personal information about a resident without their consent and only advocate with their permission and direction. There are laws that protect a residents' right to privacy and ensure they always have confidential access to the services of the ombudsman program.

**[AreaAgencyOnAging.org/Elder-Rights](https://AreaAgencyOnAging.org/Elder-Rights)**